

Enhancing The Role of Rural Agricultural Extension Programmes in Poverty Alleviation: A Review

¹Eromedoghene, Ezekiel Ovoh, ²Owigho, Ogheneovo & ¹Amafade, Ughwe Goodluck

¹Department of Agricultural Extension, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

²Department of Agricultural Economics, Delta State University of Science & Technology, Ozoro, Delta State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author Email: eromedoghenezekiel@gmail.com / 08162014675

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7475-5244>

Abstract: Extension service is traditionally assumed to be the conduit for transferring technologies developed by the research system to the farmers. The paper reviewed studies on enhancing the role of rural agricultural extension programmes and poverty alleviation. The objective of the study was to investigate various approaches and tools used in enhancing rural agricultural extension programme delivery and find out the role of rural agricultural extension programmes in poverty alleviation. From an initial search of 107 articles, only 25 articles which met the article in terms of relatedness to the title were peer-reviewed and published in the English language between 2019 and 2023 were used for the study. Therefore, a "one-size-fits-all" strategy is not necessary for efficient service delivery and outcome due to the variety of needs of farmers that are influenced by their geographic location, social structures, and economic status. It was determined that rural extension projects could offer a long-term remedy for poverty; nevertheless, the right strategies should be developed, considering the farmers' requirements and the local market dynamics.

Keywords: Rural communities, extension programmes, poverty alleviation

Introduction

Nigeria is blessed with abundant and arable land but finds it difficult to produce sufficient food for the growing population to alleviate poverty. One of the basic challenges confronting Nigeria is poverty alleviation. In Nigeria, where poverty is a significant problem, eradicating it is essential to ensuring sustainable development. (Arejiogbe *et al.*, 2023). Nigeria's estimated 180 million people, or 86.9 million people, live in extreme poverty, which is a major portion of the country's overall poverty rate. (Oladapo, & Olaseni, 2019).

Low income, unemployment, hunger and malnutrition, poor health, restricted or unreliable access to education and other essential health services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness, and an inadequate and harmful environment are just a few ways poverty emerges. Low income, unemployment, hunger and malnutrition, poor health, restricted or unreliable access to education and other essential health services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness, and an inadequate and harmful environment are just a few ways poverty emerges. The efforts of governmental and non-governmental agencies to alleviate poverty through food production led to initiating and implementing agricultural extension programmes in Nigeria. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), which was started in 1976 to promote widespread food production, and the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), which was started by the Federal Government in 1972 to speed up the production of six important crops in Nigeria: rice, maize, cassava, sorghum, millet, and wheat, are just a few of these initiatives. Green Revolution (GR), launched in 1979 which, sought to bring about radical changes in Nigerian agricultural production, and Agricultural Development Project (ADP) launched in 1984 to increase food production and to raise the income of small-scale farmers (Malabe, Wakawa & Gwary, 2019).

Nigerians who live in rural areas primarily work in agriculture. These rural residents work in small-scale farming with low salaries since they produce mostly for their own needs and have little surplus to sell or raise money for, leaving them in utter poverty (Nda & Obande, 2021). The plight of rural dwellers who engage in farming could be addressed through agricultural extension programmes. Based on this concept, the paper explored how rural agricultural extension programmes contribute to reducing poverty. The several methods and instruments utilized to improve the delivery of rural agricultural extension programmes, the function of rural agricultural extension, and the principles of agricultural extension programmes and poverty reduction were examined.

Objectives of the Study

This review presents existing academic articles for advancing knowledge relating to enhancing the role of rural agricultural extension programmes in poverty alleviation. Specifically, the review

- i. Investigate various approaches and tools used in enhancing rural agricultural extension programme delivery
- ii. find out the role of rural agricultural extension programmes on poverty alleviation.

Methodology

The study was conducted by exploiting existing and relevant literature for the study. The article must be related to enhancing the role of rural agricultural extension programmes in poverty alleviation published in the English language between 2019 and 2023 were used for the study. Based on this concept, the paper explored how rural agricultural extension programmes contribute to reducing poverty. The principles of agricultural extension programmes and poverty reduction, and several methods and instruments utilized to improve the delivery of the rural agricultural extension programmes and the function of rural agricultural extension were examined. Any article which is non-peer reviewed was excluded from this article.

The major indexing sources used includes Google Scholar, Thomas Reuters, Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct and Scimago. The names of authors, titles of articles and keywords were used in searching for related literature utilized in this article. After a thorough search and review of many articles, 25 articles which were found to meet the criteria of this research in terms of relatedness to the title, peer-reviewed and published in English between 2019 and 2023 were used for the study.

Agricultural Extension Programmes

Agricultural extension programmes are enlightenment and assistance given to farmers to help them improve their crop and livestock production. The Government could initiate agricultural extension programmes, non-governmental organizations or groups of individuals for disseminating information, introducing and supporting farmers on improved crop cultivation and livestock production methods. Agricultural extension programmes, according to Eromedoghene and Owigho (2023); and Deekor and Emanerame (2021), are activities that educate farmers about new agricultural production methods and practises through the media or direct interactions with agriculture agents. Agricultural extension projects are empowerment efforts that encourage the application of new information and scientific research to agricultural practices through farmers' education and support Oke (2019).

Agricultural extension programmes are initiatives for encouraging, empowering and supporting farmers on ways to improve their farming activities. According to Danso-Abbeam, Ehiakpor and Aidoo (2018), an agricultural extension programme is any policy tool for promoting the safety and quality of agricultural production by assisting farmers in problem-solving and educating them on modern means of farming. These authors also noted that the primary goals of agricultural extension programmes are to increase farmers' knowledge of rural development, combat rural poverty, and solve food insecurity. According to Owigho and Eromedoghene (2022), and Anyanwu and Udoh (2022) and agricultural extension programmes are activities and practices of putting important information to farmers or rural people to make thorough decisions to improve their agricultural production.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept. There is no universally accepted definition of poverty due to the multifaceted nature of the concept. Poverty is an abominable condition in which a person cannot take advantage of the resources available to him to better himself in any way economically, socially, politically, or otherwise (Okolie, Onyema & Basey, 2019). Lack of access to needs of life like food, water, housing, medical care, and education is referred to as poverty. Araga *et al.* (2022) defined poverty as mental, financial, social, and economic injustice that deprives individuals of the basic needs of existence (food, shelter, education, and health) and prevents them from living a comfortable life.

Poverty could be viewed in terms of extreme, moderate and relative poverty. According to Okolie, Onyema, and Basey (2019), extreme poverty is the inability of an individual or group to meet basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, potable water, healthcare services, basic education, transportation, and gainful employment. Such people are perpetually hungry, lack access to healthcare, they lack amenities for safe drinking water and sanitation. Families in extreme poverty cannot afford education and shelter for their children. The condition of barely meeting one's fundamental necessities is known as moderate poverty. A household income level below a certain percentage of the average national income is regarded as relative poverty. Poverty indicates poor access to good nutrition, healthcare, adequate housing, ICT facilities and proper sanitation. According to Abdullahi *et al.* (2021), poverty is associated with poor health, low calories in one's diet, low education, poor access to shelter and low employment. Abubakar, Lawal and Aliyu (2022) defined poverty as a condition where individuals cannot access education and basic infrastructure, such as electricity, safe drinking water, and improved sanitation. In the same vein, Abdulrahman, Akanbi and Oniyide (2023) pointed out that poverty has various manifestations, including deprivation of education, limited access to health care, low standard of living and a lot of social vices in the country, such as kidnapping, banditry, hooliganism theft and ritual killing. Poverty alleviation is very crucial to the development of any country.

Poverty alleviation is the reduction or eradication of limited access to food, drinking water, shelter, education, health care and sanitation facilities among the populace. According to Oladapo and Olaseni (2019), poverty alleviation is the means through which insufficiency and limited access to basic needs are reduced. It is the amelioration of the living conditions of individuals in t

society. Poverty alleviation is when an individual, a group, or a population are empowered to access basic survival needs like food, shelter, education and health care.

Various Approaches and tools used in Enhancing Rural Agricultural Extension Programme Delivery

Mass media is a tool for effective communication between the research organizations, the extension workers and the farmers for the delivery of agricultural extension programmes. According to Anyanwu and Udoh (2022), mass media is the means and channels of getting valuable information to an extensive audience in the shortest possible time. Shaibu *et al.* (2021) noted that mass media include radio, posters, drama, television, newspapers, films, and slide shows to disseminate information. According to Nwibo *et al.* (2022) and Awhareno *et al.* (2023), the mass media is a channel via which information can be read, aired, or spoken to a large audience. Communities and individuals are continuously overwhelmed with messages via mass media from various sources, including TV, billboards, and publications. Mass media acts as a communication channel between the Government and the farmers. The problems of farmers and ways to tackle them are communicated to them through mass media.

One of the approaches to the delivery of agricultural extension programmes is through shows and exhibitions. Farmers could be taught improved farming practices of crop cultivation, rearing of animals and processing of farm products through shows and exhibitions. Demonstration and exhibitions of innovative farming practice is crucial to convincing farmers to engage in them. Shaibu *et al.* (2021) asserted that individuals who attend exhibitions and demonstrations would have an opportunity to acquire and practice new skills.

The use of farmer's cooperative societies is vital for the delivery of rural agricultural extension programmes. Ubandoma *et al.* (2022) noted that cooperative roles in agricultural development are timely distribution of inputs, dissemination of information, provision of credit facilities and improving access to government services. Ominikari (2022) noted that cooperative societies can contribute towards distributing raw materials and necessary inputs such as seeds, pesticides and fertilizers.

Adult education centres are established for the delivery of rural agricultural extension programmes. Deekor and Emanerame (2021) pointed out that the Government, in an attempt to help reduce poverty, particularly among people in rural areas, established adult education centres for the delivery of agricultural extension programmes to empower them to carry out farming activities effectively. The participation of farmers in the agricultural extension programmes of adult education centres could equip them with the knowledge of new farming methods for improving agricultural outputs, income generation and poverty alleviation.

Interval meetings with farmers are approaches and tools for enhancing Rural agricultural extension programme delivery. Shaibu *et al.* (2021) noted that a meeting is an interaction between the farmer and the extension agent. According to the authors, it involves a face-to-face conversation between a farmer and an extension agent in a casual setting with a specific goal.

Role of Rural Agricultural Extension Programmes on Poverty Alleviation

Rural Agricultural Extension Programmes are designed to educate farmers on using modern facilities in farming activities. Deekor and Emanerame (2021) and Owigho *et al.* (2023) pointed out that rural agricultural extension programmes are designed to educate and assist farmers to acquire knowledge and access loans to engage in farming activities like poultry and fish farming, which will increase food production, create job opportunities and alleviate poverty. According to the authors, agricultural extension programmes are created to teach farmers about the advantages of cooperative activities and innovative farming techniques to improve agriculture as a source of income and ensure that the teeming population has enough food. It is geared towards the enlightenment of farmers on innovative undertaking agricultural activities, resulting in job and income creation.

Access to credit facilities is necessary for improving agricultural activities. Rural agricultural extension programmes allow farmers to access credit facilities and subsidies for farm inputs. In the same vein, Oke (2019) and Eromedoghene *et al.* (2023) claimed that farmers with access to cash or credit will expand the size of their agricultural holdings and productivity, which will result in an increase in production and profit and the reduction of poverty.

Agricultural extension programmes enlighten and persuade farmers to apply improved methods of farming practices to better their standard of living and alleviate poverty. Oke (2019); and Ureigho (2018) noted that agriculture extension programmes are geared towards transforming from traditional to modern agriculture which leads to an increase in farmer's productivity, income and profit to bring about poverty alleviation. The author also emphasized that agricultural extension activities have made and continue to make important contributions to rural areas' food security, information diffusion, and farming groups' empowerment to reduce poverty. Agricultural extension programmes provide opportunities for the enlightenment of farmers on innovative ways of applying fertilizer and the latest means of using fungicides and insecticides.

Farmers could be exposed to marketing channels to sell their products through agricultural extension programmes. To increase crop output and reduce poverty, Javeid and Nawab (2021) observed that the agricultural extension programme fosters strong ties between farmers, agricultural research, and other information sources.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Rural extension programmes can provide a sustainable solution to poverty in rural areas. Agricultural extension programme has indisputable impacts on the development of farmers' skills and knowledge, which is a tool for poverty reduction. It is one of the mechanisms that could empower farmers to improve their food production, contributing to poverty alleviation. Without an effective agricultural extension programme, any nation can achieve no meaningful poverty alleviation through food security and income generation. Appropriate strategies should take into account the needs of the farmers and the local market's characteristics.

1. Since various farmer demands are influenced by their geographic location, social structure, and economic status, there is no need for a "one-size-fits-all" approach to delivering agricultural extension services and outcomes.
2. Extension workers should be provided with adequate facilities and supports to enable them to travel to rural areas to educate farmers on innovative farming practices.
3. The Government should organize annual training programmes for extension workers to enable them to acquire specific skills needed in various localities to render suitable extension services to farmers.
4. The Government should develop a handbook to serve as guidelines for implementing agricultural extension programmes.

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