

## Issues for Agricultural Extension Policy: Structures and Institutional Arrangement

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examined issues pertaining to structures and institutional arrangement for agricultural extension policy. It highlighted the broad objectives of the new policy thrust in agriculture in Nigeria, and identified sub-policies that were expected to facilitate growth of the agricultural sector of the economy. Agricultural extension, among others, was identified as an integral part of the agricultural policy. Transfer of agricultural information and innovations was highlighted as the prime responsibility of agricultural extension. It was observed that extension has not lived up to this responsibility due to a number of reasons, principal among which is inadequate funding among others. The Agricultural Development Programmed (ADP) was identified as the institutional agency responsible for the transfer of agricultural information and innovations to farmers. The ADP was observed to operate the Unified Agricultural Extension System (UAES) using the Training and Visit (T&V) extension system. In order to ensure effectiveness in the discharge of its mandate to its clientele, the extension agency needed to maintain working linkages with research organisations/institutions. About 15 national agricultural research institutes, which are mainly concerned with technology (innovation/ knowledge) creation/development, were identified. Also three universities of agricultures as well as faculties of the conventional universities in the country were identified. The need to secure a stable and sustained source of financing agricultural extension was identified as the most difficult and challenging policy issue facing the agricultural extension services in Nigeria today. It was recommended that a legal legislative action be put in place, which would, among other things, define the responsibilities of the various tiers of government towards financing agricultural extension services in Nigeria. It was also recommended that a demand-driven (private) extension service be institutionalized to thrive along with the UAES, which has often been seen as part of the social services rendered by government for the farming populace.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Agriculture in Nigeria: Overview of the New Policy Thrust**

Nigeria's agricultural policy has been described as the synthesis of the framework and action plans of government designed to achieve overall agricultural growth and development. The policy aims at the attainment of self-sustaining growth in all the sub-sectors of agriculture and the structural transformation necessary for the overall solid-economic development of the country as well as the improvement in the quality of life of all Nigerians (FRN, 2001).

The broad policy objectives were stated as:

- i. attainment of self-sufficiency in basic food commodities with particular reference to those which consume considerable shares of Nigeria's foreign exchange and for which the country has comparative advantage in local productions;
- ii. increase in production of agricultural raw materials to meet the growth of an expanding industrial sector;
- iii. increase in production and processing of exportable commodities with a view to increasing their foreign exchange earning capacity and further diversifying the country's export base and sources of foreign exchange earnings;
- iv. modernization of agricultural production; processing, storage and distribution through the infusion of improved technologies and management so that agriculture can be more responsive to the demands of other sectors of the Nigerian economy;
- v. creation of more agricultural and rural employment opportunities to increase the income of farmers and rural dwellers and to productively absorb an increasing labour force in the nation;
- vi. protection and improvement of agricultural land resources and preservation of the environment for sustainable agricultural production;
- vii. establishment of appropriate institutions and creation of administrative organs to facilitate the integrated development and realization of the country's agricultural potentials (FRN, 2001).

The foregoing highlighted the broad policy objectives of agriculture in Nigeria. It must be stated and unequivocally too, that the policy is all embracing and has all it takes to transform the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy into the desired stated. Perhaps what is most expedient is to create an enabling environment, possibly by infusing the desired level of funding which will ensure implementation of the policy objectives for the common good of the Nigerian nation. As a means of ensuring implementation, the agricultural policy is supported by sub-policies that facilitates the growth of the sector. These sub-policies, according to FRN (2001) cover issues of labour, capital and land whose prices affect profitability of production systems; crops, fisheries, livestock and land use; input supply, pest control and mechanization; water resources and rural infrastructure; agricultural extension, research, technology development and transfer; agricultural produce storage, processing, marketing, credit and insurance; cooperatives, training and manpower development, agricultural and information management.

It must be observed that agricultural extension is an integral part of the new policy thrust in agriculture in Nigeria. It is indeed the subject matter of a sub-policy which is expected to facilitate the growth of the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy. Under this sub-policy, a nationwide, unified and all-inclusive extension delivery system under the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) was put in place in a joint Federal and State Government Collaborative effort (FRN, 2001).

The clarion call, therefore, is for the various tiers of government as well as other stakeholders to put in place an enabling environment, allocate and ensure judicious use of scarce funds/ other resources and also to muster the guts to ensure strict implementation of the policy as well as the sub-policies in agriculture with a view to realizing the stated policy objectives for the common good of all Nigerians.

## **1.2 The role of agricultural extension**

Agricultural extension is a difficult term to define precisely. It is known to have different meanings at different times, in different places, to different people. Maunder (1973), defined agricultural extension as a service or system which assists farm people through educational procedures, improved farming methods and techniques, increase production efficiency and income, better their levels of living, and lift the social and educational standards of rural life. On the other hand, agricultural extension has also been viewed as the promotion of any aspect of technology development: how people acquire the necessary resources, how new technologies are evolved, what influences their choice, the kind of support a given technology requires, how its adoption can be financed and encouraged, and the kind of protection it entails (Moris 1991, Amalu 1998). This definition according to Amalu (1998) is all-encompassing in the sense that it embraces all types of technology and all types of support. He contended that this is especially so since any technology can become the thrust of promotional activity by any agency.

Thus it is the responsibility of agricultural extension to transfer agricultural information and innovations to farmers as well as ensure adoption of same for the socio-economic development as well as improvement in the levels of living of the citizenry (farmers).

Ene-Obong (2007) posited that agricultural practices must change in tropical Africa in order to achieve the millennium development goals in agriculture. According to him these countries can no longer rely completely on traditional systems that result in poverty and hunger. He maintained that new technologies still lie in Universities and crop improvement centres that require more effective and practical extension services in order to deliver to the growers.

This implies that the existing extension delivery system has not lived up to expectation. Onu, (1988) stated that the performance of Nigeria's rural development and public extension agencies has not been particularly satisfactory. More so, the ineffectiveness and inefficiencies, which characterize the public extension service, have given rise to the wide-call for a private sector-driven extension services (Ozor and Madukwe, 2005). There is therefore the need to strengthen the existing extension delivery service in the country to make it more effective and efficient. To achieve this onerous task, agricultural extension deserves to be appropriately funded by government as well as all other stakeholders in agriculture in Nigeria.

### **1.3 Structures and institutional arrangement for agricultural extension practice in Nigeria**

The new policy thrust in agriculture, among other things, stated that a nationwide, unified and all inclusive extension delivery system under the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) was put in place in a joint Federal and State Government collaborative effort. Apantaku et.al. (2005) pointed out that in Nigeria, the responsibility of transferring agricultural information and innovations to farmers is usually coordinated by government owned agricultural extension outfits. This responsibility is presently discharged nationwide by the ADPs (Apu, 2006).

Each of the thirty six states including the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria has an Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). Each of the ADPs operates a Unified Agricultural Extension System (UAES), Agbamu, (2006). According to Agbamu (2006), today, Nigeria operates the Unified Agricultural Extension System (UAES) using the principle of the Training and Visit (T and V) extension system. He contended that the UAES arose from the National Policy on Unification of Extension service approved by the National Council for Agriculture at its 1989 meeting in Maiduguri. Again at its Port Harcourt meeting in February, 1990, further clarifications on the implementation of the policy on UAES were made and states were advised to adopt the system as a matter of urgency (Mijindadi, 1991).

The concept of unification of extension services which came into being in 1990 implies that parallel extension services carried out by state and Federal Ministries of Agriculture as well as specialized development schemes ceased to exist (Agbamu, 2006). According to him, the ADPs have full administrative control over the entire agricultural extension services covering crops, livestock, fisheries, agro-forestry and off-farm production. This implies that the ADPs have well articulated organizational structures, which clearly assigns responsibilities to each of the operators of the programme in each of the states of the federation.

In order to ensure the attainment of the policy objectives of agriculture in general and extension in particular, the Agricultural Extension Agency-ADP maintains close and permeable collaboration with research organizations. This implies establishing linkages between the extension and research organizations. Agbamu (2006) stated that linkage between agricultural research and extension organizations is to a large extent characterized by constant interaction among the personnel of both sides. According to him, in order to foster strong linkages between agricultural research and extension organizations, continuous communication at different levels of the administrative hierarchy and during activities of field personnel become imperative. This is not only aimed at developing appropriate technologies that are geared toward solving the problems of farmers, but also at creating the necessary awareness among all the stakeholders (including extensionists and farmers) that will lead to adoption of those technologies.

There are about fifteen National Agricultural Research Institutes in Nigeria today as well as three other agro-industrial research institutes (Akpabio, 2005). These include:

- Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, (CRIN), Ibadan;
- Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR), Zaria;
- Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IAR and T), Ibadan;

- Lake Chad Research Institute (LRCI) Maidugiri;
- National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS), Zaria;
- National Animal Production Research Institute (NAPRI) Zaria;
- National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI) Badeggi;
- National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research (NIFFR) New Bussa;
- National Institute for Horticultural Research (NIHORT) Ibadan;
- National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike, Abia State;
- National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI) Vom, Plateau State;
- National Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR), Lagos;
- Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR) Benin City;
- Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN) Benin City;
- Nigerian Stored Products research Institute (NSPRI) Illorin.

Each of these national agricultural research institutes has its own research mandate, along which lines they mirror their research activities. Technologies developed by these research institutes are diffused and communicated to the target audiences (mainly farmers) by the extension agency, represented by the ADP. This is with a view to ensuring adoption of the innovations for purposes of enhancing the socio-economic development of the farmers as well as raising their levels of living.

In addition to these national agricultural research institutes, there are also three universities of agriculture as well as the faculties of agriculture of the conventional universities in the country. The universities of agriculture include: The Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike in Abia State; The University of Agriculture, Abeokuta in Ogun State, and the University of Agriculture, Makurdi in Benue State. Each of these knowledge creation centres conduct research into various facets of agriculture as well as engage in the extension of its research results to the ultimate end users.

#### **1.4 Policy issues challenging agricultural extension in Nigeria**

The most difficult and challenging policy issue facing the agricultural extension service today is how to secure a stable source of funding (Agwu and Chukwuone, 2005). According to them, since the 1980's funding of agro-technology generation and transfer became an increasingly important policy issue. They contended that this is because of progressive decline in financial support for extension. This decline is occurring in a situation where funding of extension has been chronically inadequate (Agwu and Chukwuone, 2005). They have also argued that, although the ADPs have been very successful development initiative, the programme, especially since 1995, has suffered serious setbacks due to poor funding and funding instability following the expiration of the World Bank's component of the funding arrangement. They maintained that contributions from States and Federal government always fall, grossly, short of budget, hence hindering the proper implementation of extension programmes in the ADPs.

Consequent upon the foregoing, a legislative action is therefore proposed. The proposed legislation is expected not only to lay a solid foundation for a sustainable extension delivery service in Nigeria, but also to clearly define the responsibilities of the various tiers of government towards funding agricultural extension delivery in the country. This has become expedient because according to Contado (1997) countries that have enacted extension policy through legislative action tend to have well organized, financially stable extension system that have sustained effectiveness and cumulative impact. He gave examples of legislative extension policies which have worked well to include:

- The Cooperative Extension Services in the United States, which was established through the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914;
- Japan's Cooperative Agricultural Extension Services, which came into being through the Japanese Agricultural Promotion Law of 1948;
- The Agricultural Extension Policy in South Korea which is embodied in the 1957 Agricultural Extension Law and in the Rural Development Law of 1962;
- Thailand's agricultural extension policy which was codified in the 1956 Law that created the Development of Agricultural Extension as one of nine departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative;
- Zimbabwe's Department of Agricultural Technical Extension Services, which was established by law in 1981.

The proposed legislative action is expected to go a long way in redressing the problem of inadequate funding of extension delivery service in the country.

Further to this, it is also recommended that a demand-driven (private) extension strategies/service be institutionalized to thrive along with the UAES, which is often seen as part of the social services rendered by government to the farming populace.

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