

AVAILABILITY OF IMPROVED CROP PRODUCTION PRACTICES IN AGUATA AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

***M. O. AHAIWE AND **ETEDO, T. O.**

***Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, Nigeria**

****National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

The study focused on availability of improved crop production practices in Aguata area of Anambra State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was administered to one hundred randomly selected respondents from twenty communities in five local government areas. Data analysis was by the use of frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores. Findings of the study revealed that the following improved crop production practices were available to the respondents: adequate crop spacing, optimum plant population, seed dressing, use of fertilizer, use of insecticides, regular weeding, adequate disease control measures, timeliness of planting, yam miniset technology, improved maize varieties, improved cassava varieties, dry season vegetables. Herbicide use was however identified as less available.

Key words: availability of improved crop production practices

INTRODUCTION

The mainstay of Nigerian economy is agriculture which at the same time is a major source of income (Mathews- Njoku, 2004). Hence, a farmer who farms as his fore-fathers did cannot produce enough food for more than a family of five, even if he works very hard, where as, the one who adopts modern/improved crop production packages can produce ample food for as many as thousands of people. Farming based entirely upon traditional agriculture has low economic returns. A nation which is dependent upon traditional agriculture is inevitably poor, as a result it spends much of its income on food (Okoye, 1989).

Agricultural scientists in many parts of the world are striving to improve upon the overall state of agriculture with particular reference to the developing countries. This increased effort has been necessitated by the desire to improve the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor who have been trapped in the “vicious cycle of poverty”. The rate of population growth is very rapid and the fear of reverend Thomas Matthews, of the rate of alive today. Improved varieties of crop plants must be developed and introduced to the farming population for adoption so as to improve yield. It would amount to wasted effort to continue to carry out research aimed at discovering high-yielding and disease resistant varieties of crop plants if they are not to be adopted by the farming population. (Mgbada, 2002). According to NATT (2001), the adoption of technology in agricultural practices by the rural dwellers is worthy of consideration if only this group of people could be taken out of their present predicament. This is because their hitherto old method can no longer cope with the present demand in terms of production and as means of their livelihood. Consequently, modern technology has been evoked to serve as an antidote for their shortcomings. Technology can only be of greatest asset to the people if it is adequately provided and judiciously distributed. Vengara and Meduken (1990) contended that technology that can improve income level are of no value if they are not relevant to the people’s high priority problem and needs and as a consequence are neither adopted nor applied by those for who reluctantly embrace new technology due to their social, cultural health, economic, political, education and psychological background are worthy and proper scrutinizing. Nevertheless, the fact remains that no society can exist without adopting one form of technology or the other to meet the present day’s demands. This is especially true of rural dwellers who had been living

Journal of Agriculture and Social Research (JASR) VOL. 8, No. 2, 2008

below the poverty line. Most of the rural dwellers, whose means of livelihood is agriculture, are living below poverty line. Rural farmers used to experience low yield from agricultural investment due to low level of technological adoption. Agricultural technologies are proven innovations from research in agriculture. These technologies become meaningful and useful only when they are adopted by farmers. Adoption is therefore the mental process of decision making by a farmer on an innovation leading to either the utilization or rejection (Nnadi and Onuoha, 1998). An innovation is an idea or thing perceived as new by the individual and it is essentially the newness or novelty of the idea that determines the individual's immediate reaction to it. Okoye (1989) observed that Anambra state government has intensified agricultural production. The state ministry of agriculture, Division of Extension service in co-operation with the existing institutions of high learning, has been holding symposia, conference and seminars on the problems of agricultural development and substantial increase in food production, farm income by introducing different types of agricultural innovations. Agricultural extension service in the state began over 50 years ago, yet the level of living among rural farmers has not improved significantly. Contact with the small farm holders is necessary to produce the required crops. CTA (2000) noted that rapidly increasing population pressures overwhelmed traditional farming systems and farm holding were no longer large enough to support the growing systems and growing number of people in household. It is therefore necessary to make available improved crop production practices which are geared towards achieving sustained and efficient food production and as well increase income which enables the farmer to meet up with the growing number of people in the household. This study therefore investigates availability of improved crop production practices in Aguata area of Anambra State, Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Aguata Agricultural Zone of Anambra State. The target population was the rural women in Aguata Agricultural Zone. From the four agricultural zones in Anambra state, Aguata agricultural zone was taken as a case study. Five local government areas in the zone were selected to include Augata, Orumba South, Orumba north, Nnewi south and Nnewi North. From each of the Local Government, four communities were randomly selected and a random sampling of five respondents were selected from each of the communities to give a total of one hundred respondents. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents through the extension agents. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean scores. Availability of crop production practices, was measured using a four-point Likert Type rating scale of very much available (3), moderately available (2) less available (1), not available (0).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the availability of improved crop production practices. For adequate crop spacing, 89 percent of the respondents indicated that the technology is available while 11 percent indicated that it is not available, the mean score of 2.58 confirms availability of adequate crop spacing. Optimum plant population is available as 89 percent of the respondents affirmed its availability and 11 percent indicated that it is not available but the mean score of 2.44 also confirms that it is available. Seed dressing as an improved crop production practice is available since 85 percent said it is not available, seed dressing is confirmed available by mean score of 2.27. Use of herbicides is confirmed not available since it has the mean mark of 1.37. Use of fertilizer is affirmed available by 81 percent of the respondents and 19 percent indicated that it is not available, the mean score 2.29 suggests its availability. Use of insecticide is identified available by 52 percent of the respondents and not available by 48 percent.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution according to availability of improved crop production practices

Improved crop production practices	V.M.A	M.A	LA	NA	Mean	Remarks
Adequate crop spacing	70(70)	19(19)	10(10)	1(1)	2.58	Available
Optimum plant population	58(58)	31(31)	8(8)	3(3)	2.44	Available
Seed dressing	47(47)	38(38)	10(10)	5(5)	2.27	Available
Use of herbicides	14(14)	29(29)	37(37)	20(20)	1.37	Less available
Use of fertilizer	48(48)	33(33)	19(19)	-	2.29	Available
Use of insecticides	16(16)	36(36)	31(31)	17(17)	1.51	Available
Regular weeding	81(81)	13(13)	6(6)	-	2.75	Available
Adequate disease control measures	25(25)	39(39)	35(35)	1(1)	1.88	Available
Timeliness of planting	68(68)	14(14)	15(15)	3(3)	2.47	Available
Yam miniset technology	62(62)	24(24)	11(11)	3(3)	2.45	Available
Improved maize varieties	42(42)	38(38)	20(20)	-	2.22	Available
Improved cassava varieties	45(45)	37(37)	16(16)	2(2)	2.28	Available
Dry season vegetables	26(26)	49(49)	12(12)	13(13)	1.88	Available

Figures in parentheses are percentage.

The mid point for this frequency table is 1.50. Any mean score that is ≤ 1.50 suggests less available, and any mean score that is > 1.50 suggests available

V.M.A= Very Much Available, V.A= Moderately Available; L.A= Less Available; N.A= Not Available

Regular weeding is indicated available by 94 percent of the respondents while 6 percent indicated it not available, the mean score of 2.75 affirms its availability. Adequate disease control was indicated available by 64 percent of the respondents and 36 percent indicated that it is not available, 1.88 mean score conforms that adequate disease control measure is available. Timeliness of planting is observed available by 82 percent of the respondents and not available by 18 percent and the mean score of 2.47 confirms its availability. Yam miniset technology is an available technology as affirmed by 86 percent of the respondents and 14 percent identified it not available, the mean score of 2.45 proves its availability. Improved maize varieties is indicated available by 80 percent of the respondents and not available by 20 percent and the mean score of 2.22 confirms that improved maize varieties is available improved cassava varieties is identified available by 82 percent and mean score of 2.28 affirms its availability. Dry season vegetables as a technology is seen available by 75 percent of the respondents and not available by 25 percent and the mean score of 1.88 confirms the technology available.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that most of the interesting challenges for extension agent's involvement in agriculture. There is every need for regular visit by extension agents to the farmer so as to encourage and enlighten the farms on the need to adhere to improved crop production practices. This study as well suggests that rural women should be equipped with adequate resources and materials needed for efficient agricultural production which many include; farm inputs, capital, land, credit facilities and they should as well be informed of the improved crop production practices.

Journal of Agriculture and Social Research (JASR) VOL. 8, No. 2, 2008

REFERENCES

- CTA (2000). *The Economic Role of Women in Agricultural and Rural Development, Promoting Income Generating Activities*. Summary Report of a Seminar, pp. 5, 9, 21 and 41.
- Mathews–Njoku, E.C (2004) Involvement of Women in Community Development Process in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State. *Journal of Agricultural Forestry and the Social Science* Vol. 2 (1).
- Mgbada, J,U. (2002) *Elements of Agricultural Extension*. Richfield and Frank Law and Science Publishers pp. 72-89.
- Nnadi, F.N and E.R Onuoha (1998), *Fundamentals of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology* Sibon Book Ltd, Ibadan. Pp. 87.
- Okoye A.A (1989). Factors Affecting Adoption Process by Farmers in Selected L.G.A of Anambra State. *Journal of Agricultural Society of Nigeria* pp. 124-127.