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Access to Production Information among Citrus Farmers in Atisbo Local Government Area of Oyo State

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the level of awareness, access and utilization to sixteen, citrus production information by citrus farmers in ATISBO Local Government Area of Oyo State. Structured interview scheduled were administered on sixty citrus farmers who were purposively selected from six communities. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages and rating were used to analyse the data. Ninety-eight point three percent (98.3%) of the respondents were male and 85 percent were married. The main source of information were village extension agents and contact farmers as indicated by 46.7 percent and 41.6 percent of respondents. Sixty eight percent of the farmers experienced low yield of citrus. Level of information awareness, access and utilization on citrus farm practices was low. That is 63.3, 56.66 and 50 percent of the respondents had low scores respectively. The extension agents have been encouraged to release to farmers necessary information that could lead to high citrus production in the area.

Keywords Information awareness, access, utilization, citrus production practices and management.

INTRODUCTION

Food security has been defined as a situation in which all households have both physical and economic access to adequate food for all members and where households are not at risk of losing such access (FAO, 1996). The word food referred to above, embraces the following classes: Carbohydrate, Protein, Vitamins, Minerals, Fat and Oil and Water. It has been concluded that the one that gains prominence in consumption in Africa is the carbohydrate aspect of the food (FAO, 1996). Various nutritional deficiencies leading to high mortality rate have resulted from very low intake or lack of other classes of food in our diets.

About 42 percent by weight of the food taken in the tropic each year is of animal origin, including red meat, poultry, fish, egg and dairy products. Fifty eight percent consist of plant products such as vegetable, fruits and melon, flour and cereal products, sugar, sweeteners, potatoes in various forms and other products including beverages. The foods of animal origin contribute about 36 percent of our energy supply, the foods of plant origin gives the remaining 64 percent (Briah, 1991).

Citrus has been noted as one of the world's third finest fruits grown commercially in countries throughout the tropic and subtropics around the globe (Williams and James, 1975). Citrus fruits are produced in many parts of West Africa, but production is mainly for home consumption, since the limited quantity of fruits produced is insufficient to supply an export market. Citrus production in Nigeria has not reached a stage of exports (USDA, 1990).

Problems encountered by citrus farmers in Africa ranges from the choice of good varieties and its availability, agronomic practices to storage, processing and marketing. Specifically, it is observed that citrus farmers particularly in the study area are unaware of management practices of citrus seedlings. As such, the growth of the scion is suppressed or terminated.

Thus, information has been identified as one of the resources required for improvement in citrus production. It is defined as the data for decision making. It is said to be a resource or input that must be acquired and used judiciously in order to make an informed decision. Those who possess appropriate and timely information will make a more rational decision than those without appropriate and timely information (Aina, 1988).

Every individual, whether literate or non-literate, needs information in order to take decisions. Thus, every sector of the population engaged in agriculture need access to information and its utilization in a way that will increase productivity. The act of taking the information to the grass root via radio, television, print media and internet has been referred to as way of clipping off the long standing rural poverty and transformation into another class or status (Bessie, 2004). The latter also emphasizes that there must be adequate manpower to provide supportive services for rural farmers in order to facilitate its easy utilization. That most of the time information technologies are taken to rural settings without adequate provision of experts to teach the farmers who are purely illiterate and are not ready for a change. Improve access to global information networks and adequate capacity building are essential for Africa agricultural producers (Willy currie, 2005).

Objectives of the study

The research examined the level of information awareness, access and utilization among citrus farmers in ATISBO Local Government Area of Oyo State.The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the socioeconomic characteristic of citrus farmers in the area of study;
2. identify the major sources of information available to and utilized by the citrus farmers and
3. determine effect of the information received on citrus productivity.

Materials and Method

The study area is ATISBO Local Government Area of Oyo State. It consist of the following towns and villages: Ago-Are, Irawo, Ofiki, Sabe, Baasi, Owo and Agunrege, Alakuko, Ore, Ojeyinka, Adeoye, Tede as the headquarter and other hamlets. The average annual rainfall is 1200mm. It lies within latitude 08.41^{0}N and longitude 03.23^{0}E. (OYSADEP 1987). The population of the study consist of citrus farmers. In selecting the sample size, six communities were randomly selected from 24 communities that made up the Local Government. Sixty citrus farmers were purposively selected from the six (6) communities with the assistance from the extension agent. Ten (10) respondents from each community, thus making sample size sixty (60) respondents.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reveals that 98.3 percent of the respondents were male. This implies that, that women do not or prevented from growing tree crops as a result of land right attached to Yoruba culture. About 40 percent falls between ages of 50 - 59 years with 1- 6 year of formal schooling. Also 85 percent of the respondents were married.

TABLE 1: The Distribution of the Respondents According to Socio-Economic Information

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
SEX		
Female	1	1.7
Male	59	98.3
AGE		
20 – 29 years	1	1.7
30 – 39 years	10	16.7
40 – 49 years	16	26.7
50 – 59 years	24	40
60 years and above	9	15
NUMBER OF YEARS OF FORMAL SCHOOLING		
Nil	16	26.3
1 – 6	24	40.0
7 – 12	20	33.7
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	7	5
Married	51	85
Divorced	1	1.7
Widowed	4	6.6
Widowed/Divorced	1	1.7
RELIGION		
Christianity	43	71.3
Islam	16	26.7
Others	1	1.7
Total	**60**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2000

Table 2 indicates that 28 (46.7%) of the respondents in receive information on citrus from village extension workers. These results corroborate that of (Alao, 1980) which came up with the finding that extension agents in Nigeria are the most important sources of information to the farmer on agricultural innovations.

BLE 2: Frequency Distribution Showing Sources of Information on Citrus Production

iable	Frequency	Percentage
ge Extension Workers	28.0	46.7
ntact Farmers	25.	41.6
nds and Neighbours	5.0	8.3
lio	1.0	1.7
evision	-	0.0
wspaper	-	0.0
ter Pamphlet	-	0.0
ers	-	0.0
Response	1.0	1.7
al	**60**	**100**

rce: Field Survey, 2000

The above source with contact farmers and Radio were also those emphasized Olowu and Igodan, 1989) in a study carried out in Kwara State. The agricultural tices they considered are part of this study.

rmation Awareness on Farm Practices

***LE 3:* Frequency Distribution Showing the type of Agricultural Information Needed by Citrus Farmer in Atisbo Local Government Area of Oyo State**

Farm practices	Frequency	Percent
ommended Spacing	29	48.3
oved Varieties	12	20
mation on Planting Procedures		
t depth destroy the polythene bag)	29	43.3
mation on Pruning Method	31	51.0
mation on Irrigation	23	38.3
ommended Fertilizer Application	19	31.7
od of Mulching	42	70
mation on Pest and Diseases	24	40
mation on Harvesting Period	35	58.3
olishment of a Ground Cover of Legumes	26	43.3
mation on Weed Control	35	58.3
od of Storing	19	31.7
mation on Recommended Cropping Pattern	28	46.7
et Outlet		
Extraction	12	20.0
Preparation Method	31	51.7

ces: Field Survey, 2000

From Table 3, one can deduce that less than 50 percent of the respondents are aware of information on citrus farm practices. For instance, 31(52.7%) and 48(80%) of the respondents are not aware of information on recommended spacing and improved varieties respectively. These may eventually led to their low yield or production.

TABLE 4: Information Access on Farm Practices

N = 60

Citrus Practices	No Access (0)	Difficult Access (1)	Easy Access (2)	Very Easy Access (3)	No Responses (4)
Spacing	20(33.3)	2(3.3)	28(46.7)	4(6.7)	6(10.0)
Improved Varieties	22(36.7)	6(10.0)	24(40.0)	1(1.7)	7(11.7)
Planting Procedure	15(25.0)	5(8.3)	31(51.7)	1(1.7)	8(13.3)
Pruning Method	12(20.0)	8(13.3)	30 (50.0)	5(8.3)	5(8.3)
Irrigation Method	18(30.0)	13(21.7)	20(33.3)	3(5.0)	6(10.0)
Fertilizer Application	17(28.3)	5(8.3)	26(43.3)	9(15.0)	3(5.0)
Mulching Method	14(23.3)	9(15.0)	23(38.3)	6(10.0)	4(6.7)
Pests and diseases	14(23.3)	4(6.7)	32(53.3)	6(10.0)	4(6.7)
Harvesting Period	17(28.3)	2(3.3)	30(50.0)	7(11.7)	4(6.7)
Ground Covers of legumes	18(30.0)	11(18.3)	20(33.3)	5(8.3)	6(10.0)
Storing Method	17(28.3)	13(21.7)	19(31.7)	6(10.0)	5(8.3)
Cropping pattern	20(33.3)	6(10.0)	24(40.0)	2(3.3)	8(13.3)
Juice extraction	21(35.0)	2(3.3)	27(45.0)	2(3.3)	8(13.3)
Weed control	18(30.0)	6(10.0)	26(43.0)	5(8.3)	5(8.5)
Market outlet	24(40.0)	3(5.0)	24(40.0)	3(5.0)	6(10.0)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages

Sources: Field Survey, 2000

Table 4: Above indicates that 33.3%, 36.7%, 35%, 30% and 40% of the respondents did not have access to the right information on spacing, cropping pattern improved varieties, juice extraction, irrigation method, weed control and market outlet respectively.

TABLE 5: Citrus Farmers Information Utilization on Sixteen Farm Practices in Atisbo Local Government Area of Oyo State

Citrus practices	Never used (0)	Used before (1)	Still using (2)	No response
Spacing	20(33.3)	2(3.3)	28(46.7)	4(6.7)
Improved Varieties	22(36.7)	6(10.0)	24(40.0)	1(1.7)
Planting Procedure	15(25.0)	5(8.3)	31(51.7)	1(1.7)
Pruning Method	12(20.0)	8(13.3)	30(50.0)	5(8.3)
Irrigation Method	18(30.0)	13(21.7)	20(33.3)	3(5.0)
Fertilizer Application	17(28.3)	5(8.3)	26(43.3)	9(15.0)
Mulching Method	14(23.3)	9(15.0)	23(38.3)	6(10.0)
Pests and diseases	14(23.3)	4(6.7)	32(53.3)	6(10.0)
Harvesting Period	17(28.3)	2(3.3)	30(50.0)	7(11.7)
Ground Covers of legumes	18(30.0)	11(18.3)	20(33.3)	5(8.3)
Storing Method	17(28.3)	13(21.7)	19(31.7)	6(10.0)
Cropping pattern	20(33.3)	6(10.0)	24(40.0)	2(3.3)
Juice extraction	21(35.0)	2(3.3)	27(45.0)	2(3.3)
Weed control	18(30.0)	6(10.0)	26(43.0)	5(8.3)
Market outlet	24(40.0)	3(5.0)	24(40.0)	3(5.0)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages

Sources: Field Survey, 2000

Table 5: Infers that 33.3%, 36.7% 35%, 40% of the respondents have never used any information on the required spacing, cropping, pattern, improved varieties, juice extraction and market outlet respectively. The above suggest the realiabilty of the information available to the citrus farmers.

TABLE 6: Level of Information Awareness, Access and Utilization on Seventeen Citrus Farm Practices

Level of Information Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0 - 17)	38	63.3
High (18 - 36)	22	36.7
Level of Information Access		
Low (0 -17),	34	56.66
High (18 - 36)	26	43.34
Level of Information Utilization		
Low (0 -16)	30	50.0
Medium (17 - 34)	08	13.33
High (35 - 51)	22	36.67
Total	**60**	**100.00**

Sources: Field Survey, 2000

From Table 6, one could deduce that 63.3%, 56.66% and 50% of the citrus farmers in Atisbo Local Government Area have low awareness, access and utilization to citrus information since the Village Extension Agents and contact farmers are the major sources of their information. These extension agents only have mandate of disseminating information on cereals, legumes, root and tubers. Thus, only few experts among them assist farmers in other areas of agriculture.

Also, low utilization has been experienced as a result of the above reason too.

TABLE 7: Effect of Information Received on Citrus Productivity

	Frequency	Percentage
Brings very high yield	1.0	1.7
Brings high yield	16.0	26.7
Low yield	41.0	68.3
No response	2.0	3.3
Total	**60**	**100**

Sources: Field Survey, 2000

CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken to determine the level of information awareness, access and utilization among citrus farmers in Atisbo Local Government Area of Oyo State. It was concluded that 98.3 percent of the respondents were male, 85 percent married with 26.3 percent that have never attended any formal education. Village extension workers (VEW) and contact farmers were the major sources of information to the citrus farmers. It was further concluded that the VEW did not convey the right information to the citrus farmers, low level of awareness access and utilization of citrus information were recorded that eventually led to low yield of citrus.

RECOMMENDATION

Extension agents should come alive with their work by communicating to farmers all the required information that could boost citrus production.

Extension agents should be more resources oriented.

Demonstration methods, pictures and other modern communication devices should be employed to teach farmers.

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