Farmers' Level of Satisfaction with Farm Inputs Services in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated farmers' level of satisfaction with inputs support service. Data were collected on sources of farm inputs, preferred sources of inputs and levels of satisfaction with input services from randomly selected 136 farmers in the five local government areas within Ogbomoso Zone of Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme. Frequencies and percentages, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used in data analysis.

Farmers are most satisfied with improved planting materials. However, farmers are not satisfied with fertilizer procurements, agro-chemicals and tractor hiring services in the state. It has been statistically established that there is no significant difference in the levels of farmers' satisfaction with input support services. It is recommended that government should establish drop points at grass-roots level and reduce cost of farm inputs and services.

1.0 Introduction

Researcher have clearly identified small scale farming as the cornerstone of Nigeria's agricultural development. Idachaba (1980), Olayide (1975) and Norman (1967) have confirmed the dominant position of small-scale farmers in Nigeria's agricultural production. There are evidences that make it clear that inspite of all the efforts being made to modernize agriculture, the small-scale producers still hold the key to our food supply.

The greatest problem plaguing agricultural production in Nigeria is probably input delivery and support services. Fertilizer and agrochemicals supply have been erratic since the 1992 planting season and have been responsibile for reduction in grain production especially maize. Inputs such as improved seeds and planting materials, fertilizers and agrochemicals are the few important improved technologies that have been adopted by farmers, since majority still depend on crude implements and family labour for production. The problem of discontinuance is probably best adduced to inavailability of these external inputs rather than farmers' unwillingness to continue with adoption.

Great emphasis is placed on input support services by almost all strategies aimed at increasing production at the farm level. For instance, the improvement and the structural transformation approaches for agricultural expansion recommended that measures should be taken to improve supplies of fertilizers and improved seeds since they are divisible and neutral to scale for both small and large scale farmers (Colman et al, 1978). The various agricultural development programmes operated in Nigeria such as the River Basin Development Authorities, Operation Feed the Nation, The Green Revolution and Agricultural Development Projects/Programmes all created awareness for increased use of external inputs to farmers, but the continued availability has been a problem.

One other important fact is that pressed by their economic situation and the World Bank, many developing countries have adjusted their economic policies. Hence subsidies on agricultural inputs have decreased leading to increase in price of agrochemicals and other farm inputs (ILEIA, 1995). As a result, farmers now use only very limited amounts of external inputs (Mortimore, 1993).(ILEIA,, 1995) reported that farmers who cannot afford to use them (anymore) rely primarily

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on optimal use of local natural resources and natural processes. This in effect, has shifted farmers interest to cheep alternatives such as bio-fertilizers and biopesticides.

This study attempts to examine the level of farmers' satisfaction with input distribution system in Oyo State and proffers suggestions for improvement.

2.0 Methodology

The primary data for this study were collected from farmers in Ogbomoso Zone of Oyo State. Random samples were taken from each of the five local government areas namely, Oyo Oluwo, Surulere, Orire, Ogbomoso South and Ogbomoso North. Two "cells" were randomly selected form each of the five local governrnent areas in the zone. The register of farmers were collected form each extension agent supervising the selected "cells". Systematic random sampling technique was used for sampling. The first name was selected and every fifth name thereafter was selected. A total of 136 respondents was selected through this procedure and interviewed.

Statistical tools like frequency counts, percentages and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for data analysis. Matrix was used to establish the level of farmers' satisfaction with input services. A set of scores obtained from the matrix represent the satisfactory frequency index for each service. These scores were then subjected to ANOVA to establish significant satisfactory levels. It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the levels of farmers' satisfaction with inputs support services.

3.0 Findings and Discussions

3.1 Inputs/implements used by farmers

Responses from farmers interviewed showed that above 50% of the farmers use the following inputs/implements on their farms, cutlasses (96.00%); hoes (94.00%); fertilizer (90.00%); agrochemicals (87.00%) and seeds/planting materials (74.00%). Other inputs/implements mentioned by farmers include tractor (36.00%); "Go-to-hell" (22.00%); axe (18.00%); knives (19.00%); basket (8.00%); sprayer (7.00%); watering can (6.00%); jute bag (3.00%) and maize sheller (2.00%).

The findings show that majority of the farmers still depend on crude implements for their farming operations. Thus, these inputs are very essential to their continued productivity and their inability to get them will be detrimental to food production. The minimal use of tractor implies that individuals will mostly depend on availability of labour and finances to meet inrease in wage-rates. Thus, Nigeria's agriculture needs a lot of modern machineries to improve agricultural production and to augment the human effort of the ageing farmers.

3.2 Sources of inputs available to the farmers

Table 2 reveals the soures of farm inputs used by farmers. The table shows that farmers obtain farm inputs from government agencies (86.00%); open market (60.00%); commercial stores (37.00%); friends and neighbours (30.00%) and own stock (9.00%). The result shows that government agecies, if adequately funded, are capable of supplying farm inputs required by farmers. The availability of farm inputs at affordable prices from government sources probably accounted for its being ranked as a major source of inputs to farmers. It can be reasoned that if the government agencies are located at grassroots level, the ease of procurement of inputs will increase the productivity of individual farmers.

Table 1

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Distribution of sources of the inputs used by farmers N = 136

Sources	Frequency*	Percentage
Government agencies	117	86.00
Open markets	81	60.00
Commercial stores/dealers	50	37.00
Friends and neighbours	41	30.00
Own stock (previous saving)	12	09.00

*Multiple responses hence total is greater than 136.

3.3 Farmers' level of satisfaction with the supply of inputs

Table 2 shows the level of farmers' satisfaction matrix with respect to the following:

i. Ease of procurement

ii. Timeliness of benefit

iii. Cost of implication

iv. Equitability of distribution

v. Quality of product/service and

vi. Benefit for community

i. **Ease of procurement:** Improved seeds/planting materials are ranked highest, followed by fertilizer procurement, then agrochemcial and lastly, tractor hiring.

ii. **Timeliness of Benefit:** Extension advisory services are ranked highest, followed by improved planting materials, fertilizer procurement, agrochemicals and tractor hiring.

iii. **Cost of implication:** Improved planting materials are ranked highest followed by fertilizer procurement, tractor hiring and agrochemicals.

iv. **Equitability of Distribution:** Extension advisory services are ranked highest followed by improved planting materials, fertilizer procurement, agrochemicals and tractor hiring.

v. **Quality of product/service:** Extension advisory services rank hihest, followed by fertilizer procurement, improved planting materials, agrochemicals and tractor hiring.

vi. **Benefit for community:** The extension advisory services rank highest, followed by improved planting materials, fertilizer procurement, agrochemicals and tractor hiring.

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Table 2
Respondents of satisfaction scores

Input/ Service	Ease of Procure-ment	Time-liness of Benefit	Cost Impli-cation	Equita-bility of Distribu-tion	Quality of Products/ Service	Benefit for Com-munity	Scores Total	Rank
Agrochemicals	154	194	152	172	244	274	1190	
Fertilizers' Procurement	216	200	220	176	312	224	1348	3
Tractor Hiring	104	108	168	126	216	198	920	5th
Improved Planting Materials	232	210	224	202	274	310	1453	1st
Extension Advisory Service	-	362	-	354	370	360	1446	2nd

The implication of these findings is that tractor hiring services are not satisfactory to the farmers. While the extension advisory service is commendable, fertilizer procurement is the lowest on equitability of distribution. This shows that efforts should be taken to improve distribution of fertilizers. Often times, fertilizer has been reported missing in transit, hence the need to check the loopholes.

3.4 Analysis of Variance for satisfactory scores

The satisfactory scores of five input support services, namely, agrochemicals, fertilizer procurement, tractor hiring, improved planting materials and agricultural extension services were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to test the null hypothesis that no significant differences exists between their means. The summary of analysis of variance is presented on Table 3. With Fcal = 18.14 and Ftab at 0.05 = 2.71, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the levels of farmers' satisfaction with inputs services.

Table 3
Summary of analysis of variance for levels of farmers' satisfaction with inputs support service

Source of Data	d.f	Sum of Square	Variance Estimate	Fcal	Ftab	Decision
Between-group	4	111269.72	27817.43	18.14	2.71	Reject
Within-group	28	42934.86	1533.39			Ho
Total	32	154204.58				

Level of Significance = 0.5

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3.5 Preferred sources of farm inputs

Table 4 shows farmers' preferences for input distribution channels and their reasons for the preferences. It is noted that majority of farmers (85.00%) prefer government agencies. Their reasons for preferences include low prices (82.00%) and high quality of product (82.00%). Other sources indicated by farmers are farmers' groups (26.00%); open market (21.00%) and commercial dealers (14.00%). Reasons mentioned for preferences include ready availability (19.00%); cheap price (3.00%) and good services (2.00%) from open markets. Also, very few farmers believe that marginalization will be removed, and regular supply of inputs will be ensured by farmers' groups.

Table 4
Distribution of farmers' preferences for input distribution channels and reasons for preferences

Distribution Channels	Frequency	Percentage
Government agency	115	85.00
Farmers' groups	35	26.00
Open markets	28	21.00
Commercial dealers	19	14.00
Reasons for Preference		
Low price from government agencies	111	82.00
High quality product from government agencies	111	82.00
Ready availability from open markets	26	19.00
Cheaper price from open market	04	03.00
Good services from open market	03	02.00
Marginalization will be removed by farmers' groups	05	04.00
Regular availability will be ensured farmers' groups	08	06.00

This finding implies that if government agencies such as farm service centres and agro-input services centres are located at farm levels where farmers can easily procure their needed farm inputs, efforts aimed at agricultural development will increase individual production and boost food production prorammes at various levels. Also, government agencies should ensure ready availability of inputs and services in open markets. This will increase farmers' reliance on such agencies and ensure that government efforts on subsidizing farm inputs are beneficial to farmers who actually engage in production.

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Table 5
Distribution of farmers' suggestions for improvement N = 136

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Establish drop points at grassroots	60	44.00
Government should stabilize prices	20	15.00
Reduce cost of inputs	11	08.00
Distribute inputs through farmers' groups	7	05.00
Sell inputs through cooperative societies	24	05.00
Reduce loopholes in input distribution	27	18.00
Government should provide more inputs	46	20.00
Timeliness of service should be ensured	17	34.00
Monitor inputs distribution	11	12.50
Check adulteration of products	05	08.09
Distribute inputs through extension agents	05	3.68
Provide good road network	04	2.94
Government should sell throughout season	19	13.97
Avoid private involvement in distribution of farm inputs	32	23.53
Use local leaders	17	12.50

3.6 Farmers' suggestions for improvement in input services

Farmers' suggestions for improvement were collated and tabulated on Table 5. The table shows that over 20.00% of farmers suggested the following, establishment of drop points at grassroots level (44.00%); provision of more inputs by government (34.00%); avoidance of private involvement in distribution (24.00%) and reduction of loopholes in inputs distribution (20.00%). These are the four major suggestions aimed at improving input support services. The farmers' suggestions are centred on ready availability within their localities, adequate and timely provision of inputs and unhindered distribution of inputs to farm populace.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

This study examined farmers' level of satisfaction with supply of farm inputs. Data were collected from randomly selected 136 farmers in five local government areas with the use of pretested interview schedules. The results reveal that the input-support services need to be improved to satisfy farmers in the state. Among the available sources of inputs, farmers preferred government agencies because of low prices and high quality of products.

It is recommended that inputs distribution should be improved so as to check saboteurs, and private involvement in distribution should equally be minimized to ensure that farmers actually benefit from government's farm inputs subsidy.

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