ROLES OF AGRICULTURE EXTENSION TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVE RURAL LIVELIHOOD

IBRAHIM ABDU

Department Of Agricultural Education, College Of Education Azare Bauchi State Nigeria

Abstract- This paper presents the contribution of agricultural extension to achieve food security and improve rural livelihood. It discussed the current opportunities and challenges facing effort to increase the impact of rural and agricultural extension on the life of rural dwellers who depend on agriculture for their survival. The paper proved the general problems preventing extension from achieving its desired goals. It recommends intensive training of extension agents and increase funding of public extension system in order to revamp the system and mobilized extension workers for effective extension work.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bardsly (1982) cited by Nwuzor (2009) view agricultural extension as a service or system which assists farm people through educational procedures in improving farming method and techniques, increasing production efficiency and income, bettering their levels of living and lifting social and educational lives of rural people. It insures information obtained and assembled from research studies based on experience, trail and demonstration for the purpose of extending knowledge to the rural dwellers. The use of farm visit group method and discussion, mass media, posters and audio visual and are very effective means of extending knowledge to the rural populace.

Food and agricultural organization (FAO) 1992 view agricultural extension as informal out of school educational services for training and influencing to adopt improved practices in crops and livestock production, management, conservation and marketing. (STAN 1999) defined agricultural extension education is a teaching and learning process in which the farmers are taught better, method farming in order to raise productivity and their standard of living. Agricultural extension has become a strategy for transforming our traditional agriculture in to progressive and modern one. It is also a strategy for rural transformation and development in which the entire rural areas including humans, water, energy and physical resources are improved. This will enhance the farmers capacity to produce and impact on his standard of living.

Agriculture extension is essentially and educational process. The farmers are the students while agricultural extension workers are the teachers. Through agricultural extension, farmers are taught better and new ideal and innovations in agriculture. New technical and economic practices are demonstrated to the farmers extension is a non-formal educational function that applies to any institution that disseminates information and advice with the intension of promoting knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspiration, although the term extension tend to be associated with agriculture and rural development (Alex, Zijp and Byelre 2001). No matter what the name of the system, approach or programme (e.g cooperative extension, advisory extension special programme for food security, technical assistance or technology transfer) the function remains that extension.

II. AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROGRAMME FOR FOOD SECURITY

The federal government of Nigeria have embarked on various extension programmes. These performance are aimed at making extension services more effective in order to realize the objectives of increasing productivity and thereby raise standard of living of the rural people. Some of the programmes include River Basin Development Programme (RBDP) Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Green Revolution (GR) the Directorate for Food, Roads And Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

Not with standing these interventions, imparts bills of Nigeria kept soaring such that she impact approximately US $ 3.5 billion in food products annually making food impacts to grow at an unsustainable rate 11% per annum (www.doreopartner.com).

III. ROLES OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION FOR FOOD SECURITY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural extension brings about changes, through education and communication in farmers attitude, knowledge and skills. The role of agricultural extension involves dissemination of information; building capacity of farmers through the use of a variety of communication methods and help farmers make informed decisions. Sinkaye, (2005) equates help in extension to empowering all member of the farm house hold to ensure holistic development.
Chamalsa and Mortis (1990) said extension workers role is to help farmers and rural communities organized themselves and take charge empowerment of their growth and development. This help to develop group management skills. Extension now support rural livelihood; improve farm and non-farm income; develop market instead of giving information only use diverse and involving approaches, facilitate evolution of learning by doing and experimentation (Suleman and Hall 2004) and encourage capacity to improve planning and managerial capability of rural farmers. (Alex Zijp and Byer lee 2001). No matter what the name of the system approach or programme the function remain for food security and rural development. Extension is extremely important in helping to confront problems of availability, aces and utilization. It helps to enhance the productivity and consecutively the production of food. It can assist in providing opportunities for income generation. And it generally provides improvement of nutritional advice through home economies programme and enhances the quality of rural life by way of community development.

IV. CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

Food security in a broader sense has to do with having at all times and adequate level of food products to meet increasing consumption demand to migrate fluctuation in output and price (indria, Gwary and Shehu 2008) United Nation (2009) defined food security as “all people at all times having both physical and economic access to the basic food they need”. The world food summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people at all-time have access to sufficient, safe nutrition food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Ladele and Ayoola (1997) view food security as a function of food production levels that is high levels of food production is equals to food security. However to oriala (2009) food security entails producing food that will go round every citizen both quality and quantity. Yakubu (2001) showed that in 1985-1993 plan placed embargo on importation of some food items in the hope that will encourage local production which will support use of agricultural raw materials for the local industries. For Nigeria to achieve full production of food and to be able to have full food security there is need for the government to revisit all these past policies for effective food production and food security for the nation.

V. CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AT ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVING RURAL LIVELIHOOD IN NIGERIA

The Nigeria extension service is attack by several problems as identified by Agbamu (2005) These include inadequacy and instability of funding, poor logistic support for field staff, use of poorly trained personnel at local level, in effective agricultural research extension agent; farm family ratio and lack of clientele participation in programme development. Others are poor input supply irregular evaluation of extension programme and policy, institutional and programme instabilities of national agricultural extension system. San (2000) stated non availability of food in Nigeria is related to poor infrastructure; including poor feeder roads between the rural areas of food production and urban areas of food consumption in addition there is lack of on farm and off farm storage facilities which inhabit expansion of farm land. According to FAO (2001) when compared to other African countries Nigeria has one of the highest per capital food output; it account for about 70% of the world Yam and 19% of global market share for cassava. Food losses have a great impact on food availability and security (Osunde 2008) Nkana, Adamu and Igene (1994) revealed that 20% to 30%, 5% 10% to 15%, 20% and 20-67% of maize rice, cassava and yam are lost respectively at post-harvest stored levels in Nigeria. In addition to this extension service delivery system suffers from in adequate number of extension workers and impart tariff on fertilizer and other agricultural inputs.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper will be concluded by putting down these recommendations.

➢ Government should encourage extension through on the job training for higher qualification
➢ Increase funding of public extension system in order to revamp the extension system and mobilized extension agents for more effective extension work.
➢ Streamlining the role of agricultural development project (ADP) to sharply focused on extension work.
➢ Community partnership should be encourage in extension activities in order to achieve food security and rural development.
➢ Seminars, conferences, workshops should be organized for extension worker on regular basis so as to keep them a breast with development in their field of specialization.
➢ Government should rapidly increase investment on rural infrastructure and market institutions.
➢ Government should remove tariff on fertilizer and other agricultural inputs and should sold at subsidized price.
➢ Government should develop newly conceived policy agenda through extension for food security and rural development.

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