



Assessment of Access to Information by Fish Farmers in Yola-North Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in 2017 to analyse access to information among fish farmers in Yola North Local Government Area (LGA), Adamawa State, Nigeria. Thirty (30) fish farmers were purposely selected from five wards out of ten (10) in the LGA. The data were generated through application of structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics which include frequency tables, percentage count and rank order. Findings indicate that majority (53.33%) of the farmers were into fish farming for period not more than 6 years, however, sizable (26.67%) number had experience of 7 years and above. Further, 14.0% of the fish farmers needed information on feeds, followed by credit facilities (12.56%), while 12.06% of the farmers required information on marketing. The major sources of information among the fish farmers were seminar/workshop and radio. This is followed by the internet through which 11% sourced their information. Furthermore, majority (94.02%) found the information to be effective in the operation of their activities. Major constraints faced by farmers were high cost of accessing information (23.63%) and language barrier (22.72%). Conclusively, fish farmers in the study area did not have adequate access to information, as greater chunk only access information during seminar/workshop and on radio. It is recommended that there should be a formal packaging of information to meet the needs of the fish farmers. Information dissemination should be consistent and apt to eliminate the bottlenecks experienced in improving productivity.

Keywords: Fish farmers, access, information, analysis

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture still remains the most important economic activities for most developing nations. The sector which provides foreign exchange, employment, food and raw materials for industries also provides livelihood for at least 53% of the economically active population of Africa (Ajala and Ononogbo, 2008; Mohammed *et al.*, 2009). Fish farming which is one of the different aspects of agricultural practices has gained popularity in Nigeria (Omar, 2011). The enterprise has continued to make a huge contribution to the food security and income for sizable population of small scale fish farmers and entrepreneurs who are engaged in fish production (Omar *et al.*, 2011). Recently, increase in the population of fish farmers has been noticed in Nigeria partly due to dwindling wild fishing (Sandra, 2014). This has really put pressure on fish farming to meet up with increasing fish demand. It can be stated here therefore, that fishing is no longer a venture common to wild practice alone, but also found around villages, towns and even in homes.

To support and sustain this trend, information relating to fish farming should be made available because information is key and veritable instrument in any development process. Information is not only important in improving and sustaining agricultural production of any nation, but a moral imperative (Aina *et al.*, 1995), According Oladele (2006), information is a driving force in increased production, improved marketing and distribution strategies. Improved and sustained local fish production can be achieved by enhancing access to information (Ikoja-Odong and Ochalla, 2003). Farmers with appropriate and timely information are likely to make a more rational decision than those without information (Ekoja, 2003). Information needs of fish farmers may focus on farming technologies not limited to pond construction and management, breeds and spawning, processing, storage and marketing (Ofuoku *et al.*, 2008). Agricultural information normally emanates from National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) and related information centers. Other sources include Agricultural research institutes and Schools or Faculties of Agriculture in the Universities as agencies of the federal and state ministries of agriculture. The question to ask here is whether fish farmers have access to information required for their activities?. This is what necessitates this study; to analyse access to information by fish farmers in Yola-North Local Government of Adamawa State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The Study Area

Yola North LGA is situated in the central part of the State, and lies between latitude 9°14'N to 9°23' and longitude 12°28'E to 12°17'E. It is the administrative centre of Adamawa State, Nigeria and shares common boundary with Girei Local Government in the north, Yola south in the east, west, east and south. The area has a total population of about 198,257 people (NPC, 2006).

Yola North has a typical climate marked by distinct dry and raining seasons. Dry season commences in November and ends in March, while the raining season starts in April and ends in October. This LGA has gypsum which is perhaps the single most important solid mineral found in commercial quantity. Major agricultural activities include among others, crop farming (maize, rice, sorghum, cocoyam, cowpea, sweet potato, mango guava, melon etc.), livestock production (cattle rearing, sheep and goats, poultry etc.), wild fishing and fish farming,

Sampling and Sample size

This study employed purposive sampling method to select the wards and respondents for the research due to high number of fish farmers. The study area consists of ten wards namely; Demasawo, Nassarawo, Doubeli, Luggere, Jambutu, Rumde, Karewa, Limawa, Alkalawa, and Gwadabawa. Of this number, five (5) wards were selected namely; Jambutu, Karewa, Limawa, Alkalawa, and Luggere. The distribution of total number of 30 fish farmers from the selected wards is as indicated in Table 1:

Table 1: Respondents Sampled for the Study

S/No.	Ward	Fish farmers selected
1.	Jambutu	12
2.	Karewa	06
3.	Limawa	03
4.	Alkalawa	02
5.	Luggere	07
	Total	30

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Methods of Data Collection

The study employed the use of primary data. The data were sourced through the use of structured questionnaires administered on fish farmers. Trained enumerators assisted on collection of the data.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data for the study. This is in form of frequency tables and percentage count. The analysis focused on fish farming experience, fish farmer’s information needs, sources of information, effectiveness of information sources and constraints to accessing information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fish farming experience among the respondents

The farmers were asked to respond on their years of experience in fish farming. As the result shows, majority (53.33%) of the respondents were into fish farming for the period ranging from 1 – 6 years, while 26.67% fell within the range of 7 – 12 years of fish farming experience. The result further revealed that 6.67% had farming experience of 13 – 18. A total of 3.33% had farming experience of 19 – 30. About 6.67% had farming experience of 31 and above. Even though majority were into the enterprise for a period not more than 6 years, sizable number had experience of 7 years and above.

Table 2: Fish farming experience among the respondents

Experience (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank order
1 – 6	16	53.33	1 st
7 – 12	08	26.67	2 nd
13 -18	02	6.67	3 rd
19 – 24	01	3.33	6 th
25 - 30	01	3.35	5 th
31 – 36	02	6.67	4 th

Source: Field survey, 2017

Farming experience has the implication of increasing the chances of utilising improved technology because experienced farmers tend to have better knowledge and information on fish production technology (Khodamoradi and Abedi, 2011). The foregoing result therefore, indicates that the fish farmers were well experienced in fish production in the study area.

Information Needs of Fish Farmers

Fish farmers need information in order to improve and increase yields. The farmers require information on various aspect of their activities ranging from feeds to marketing of their products, As the result in Table 3 shows, a larger proportion (14.0%) of the fish farmers needed information on feeds. This may not be unconnected with the scarcity and high cost of feeds.

Table 3: Information needs among the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank order
Feeds	28	14.07	1 st
Record keeping	06	3.02	10 th
Disease control	21	10.55	5 th
Credit facilities	25	12.56	2 nd
Equipment	21	10.56	6 th
Drugs	18	9.05	8 th
Fingerlings	22	11.05	4 th
Storage	12	6.03	9 th
Processing	19	9.54	7 th
Marketing	24	12.06	3 rd

*Multiple responses were observed.

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Most local fish farmers lacked the knowledge of local feed formulation and therefore, need information on how to produce feed locally to reduce scarcity and high cost of the products among themselves. The result further indicates that 12.56% of the farmers needed information on credit facilities, while 12.06% of the farmers required information on marketing. This trend of the finding is obvious, as the farmers may require additional capital to expand their business. On the other hand, fish farmers' needed information on market outlets to help sell their products at a better price. Other findings indicate that 11.05% needed information on sourcing fingerlings, 10.55% on diseases and equipment, 9.05% on drugs and government support. Ofuoku *et al.* (2008), also share the view that fish farmers information need on fish farming technologies, construction and management, breeds and spawning, processing, storage and marketing. The reason for this is not far-fetched, so as to have the urge to improve yield (Philip and Udoh, 2011)

Sources of Information to Fish Farmers

The farmers were asked to indicate their source of information as it relates to their activities. The major sources of information among the fish farmers in the study area were seminar/workshop and radio. For instance, 14% of the respondents got their information on fish farming during seminars/workshops and 13% indicated radio as their source of information on fish farming (Table 4). This is followed by the internet through which 11% of the fish farmers sourced their information. The findings further indicates that 10.55% of the respondents sourced information on their activities from libraries and only 10.00% got information through the extension agents (Table 4). From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that no single source has proved effective in providing information on fish farming. This means that much attention has not been paid to fish farming by either government or non-governmental agencies, despite huge importance of the enterprise. For example, only 8.83% and 3.33% got related information on fish farming from ministry of agriculture and non-governmental organisations, respectively. Television provided information to only 6.11% of the entire sample population. This finding has negates the important role of television in disseminating improved technologies to farmers.

Table 4: Source of information among the respondents

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank order
Workshop/Seminars	26	14.44	1 st
Friends/Neighbors	08	4.44	10 th
Ministry of Agriculture	15	8.83	6 th
Magazine	05	2.77	13 th
Extension Officer	18	10.00	5 th
Local Government Officer	11	6.12	7 th
Non-governmental Org.	06	3.33	12 th
Television	11	6.11	8 th
Radio	25	13.88	2 nd
Internet	21	11.66	3 rd
Traditional rulers	06	3.34	11 th
Journals	09	5.00	9 th
Library	19	10.55	4 th

*Multiple responses were observed.
Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Effectiveness of information sourced by the farmers

Responses in this context are measured by effectiveness of information which is further measured by adequateness, timeliness and clarity of message as observed by Njoku (2004). The respondents were asked to comment on the effectiveness of information sourced. As the result indicates, majority (94.02%) of the farmers found the information to be effective in the operation of their activities despite limited information provided by the various sources. On the other hand only 5.88% of the respondents found the information to be not effective in their activities (Table 5). This is a demonstration of the fact that no matter how little or small information is, it plays a significant role in improving the lots of its beneficiaries.

Table 5: Effectiveness of information sources among the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank order
Effective	28	94.02	1 st
Ineffective	02	5.88	2 nd

Field survey, 2017

Constraints to accessing information

The respondents were asked to respond on the problems faced when accessing information. The results as shown in Table 6 revealed that there are many constraints to accessing information among fish farmers in the area. This ranges from high cost of access to unavailability of the information. As the findings show, the major constraints faced by farmers were high cost involved in accessing information (23.63%) and language barrier (22.72%). This means that apart from high cost, the messages or information were packaged in a form difficult for farmers to understand. This is followed by unavailability of the information (16.36%) among the farmers (Table 6). The earlier finding that no single source of information has lived up to expectation is a confirmation of this trend of result. The implication of this result is that unavailability of information has limited access among the farmers. The result further suggests that there were inadequate (11.82%) visits by the extension workers. Hosseini *et al.*, (2000), in a similar findings reported inadequate extension services among farmers as a constraints to accessing information. The extension officers who would have served as interpreters of what were in the information bulletins and practical instructors on the field for fish farmers were insufficient (Omar *et al.*, 2011).

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents based on constraints of Information

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Rank order
High cost involved	26	23.63	1 st
Unavailability of extension visit	13	11.82	5 th
Lack of relevant materials	12	10.91	6 th
Method of presentation	16	14.55	4 th
Language barrier	25	22.72	2 nd
Unavailability of information	18	16.36	3 rd

*Multiple responses were observed.

Source: Filed Survey, 2017

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

Conclusions

From the foregoing results, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents had experience in fish farming and therefore, need information to help improve on their activities. Information would create a platform for improved yields of fish and a more profitable and meaningful job for the fish farmers. It can also be concluded that various sources of information exists, however, only radio and workshop/seminar had proved effective in disseminating information on fish farming in the study area.

Policy implications

Based on the foregoing results, the following recommendations are made:

- i. There should be formal packaging of information to meet the needs of the fish farmers. Information delivery and dissemination should be consistent and apt by stakeholders in the agricultural sector. This would eliminate the problems experienced by fish farmers.
- ii. There should be regular information on fish farming on local media outfits or farm broadcast be established. This can make it possible to reach out to fish farmers.
- iii. There is also the need for adequate training of extension personnel, packaging of information in modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and collaboration with fisheries research institute to help bridge the gap in knowledge. Hence, state government and private partnership advocacy is needed for support to achieve this task and boost fish farming in the State and beyond.

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