

Redirecting Nigerian Youths to Agriculture through Communication for National Development

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Abstract

This study examines how communication has been employed as a tool for encouraging Nigerian youths to accept and embrace agriculture for self-reliance and to grow the nations' ailing economy. It was premised on the fact that it is only through the diversification of the nation's economy through active involvement of the youths in agriculture that Nigeria can exit the economic recession brought about by the mono-economic nature of the economy. The study adopts the descriptive survey research design to study members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Rivers state. The study found that many of the corps members became conscious of the importance of agriculture through communication. However, those who may be willing to embark on agricultural ventures see it as a last resort. Many of them believe that their participation is possible if the right atmosphere through incentives is created. The study recommends among others, that government should intensify the communication efforts to convince the youths to engage in agriculture. This can be done by showcasing those agricultural entrepreneurs who are doing well to serve as models to the youths.

Key Words: Youths, Agricultural Ventures, Communication, Economic Diversification, National Development.

Introduction

The youth constitute a very important segment of any country's population. The importance of the youth in any economy is derived from the fact that they provide the bulk of the manpower needed to drive the growth of every sector of the economy. However, what they lack is the capital to establish business concerns and so, many of the out-of-school youths in search of paid employment, which is scarce, end up in crimes while others migrate to other countries in search of greener pastures. A former Nigerian president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in a newspaper interview, stressed that identifying and addressing the issues that will enhance the lives of the youths would improve overall national development. He admitted that youths constitute Nigeria's only hope of a real future (*The Guardian*, 2016).

The Nigerian government characterize the youth as ambitious, enthusiastic, energetic, and promising. They are considered vulnerable in the society because of the rapid pace of change they experience at this time in their lives. It is believed that given the right incentives, the Youthful energies could be channelled into productive ventures, especially in agriculture to guarantee food sufficiency and earn the country foreign exchange.

Youth as a concept has been defined variously by different institutions, sub-regional organisations and even countries. The United Nations (UN) sees youths as those aged between 15 and 24 years (General Assembly Resolutions, 2008). On its part, the African Union (AU) identifies youths as persons within 15 and 35 years of age (African Union, 2006). However, in the thinking of the Federal Government of Nigeria “the youth shall comprise of all young males and females aged 18–35 years” (National Youth Policy, 2009, p. 6).

It is said that Africa has the world's youngest population, given the fact that it turns out about 12 million youths annually (Sanginga, 2015). Ashford, Clifton & Kaneda (2006) claim that 33 percent and above of the African population is made up of youths and these young people are struggling to make impressions from the powers of their age. However, the United Nations estimate has it that the youths make up to 38 percent of the population of developing countries (UNDP, 1997). In Nigeria, the population of youths is put at about 70 million. Sadly though, the budding energies of these set of people who are seeking to earn a living have not been adequately tapped and turned into productive ventures to make the continent self-sufficient in basic needs such as food and shelter. Oduwole (2015) was apt to say that “unemployment and poverty are both reflective and precipitants of plethora of contemporary social challenges such as leadership, security, governance, etc. that are inimical to human social existence” (p. 23). Out of the number of youths in Nigeria, an estimated 54 percent are unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Youths in Africa and Nigeria, for instance, are faced with several challenges, chief among which is that of unemployment. The process of utilizing the potentials available in the environment is not easy to come by because of the prevalent low level of development buoyed the unfriendly institutional framework that does not guarantee a level playing field for the youths to compete in the economic arena. They do not have access to credit facilities to undertake entrepreneurship ventures due to institutional obstacles created by the lack of collateral and unwillingness of many to guarantee loans for the youth. These challenges can frustrate an average mind to the point of engaging in illicit acts.

Although, several administrations in Nigeria have initiated plans to cater for the employment need of the youths by creating different agencies and ministries, such plans have not

worked or achieved its objectives. Take for instance, the creation of the Ministry of Youths Development at both the federal and state levels have not adequately addressed the peculiar needs of the youths. It only created more bureaucracy and enriched some corrupt so-called civil/public servants. The attempts also saw the initiation of programmes such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Youths Enterprise Scheme (YOUWIN), among other programmes geared towards meeting the employment needs of the youths. Even though these programmes had genuine intentions of turning participating youths from job seekers into job creators, the benefits of the programmes were not noticed because of improper implementation and inconsistencies in the policies of different administrations.

Agriculture is one sector in the economic world that is acclaimed to have prospects for almost all individuals within a given society as it is a veritable means of livelihood. Observably, the practice of farming (crop rearing, animal husbandry, livestock rearing, horticulture, aquatics etc.), holds so much promise for people and communities only if they explore and exploit the abundant land resource that nature has endowed them with. Agrarian societies are said to be sufficient in both subsistence and commercial practices. Thus, all efforts necessary in the promotion of agricultural practices are given attention in every informed economy.

As a people, Africans are blessed with climatic conditions and geography that encourages all shades of agricultural practice. While the West and the Asia region prides highly in technology, Africa has the opportunity to galvanise its agricultural practice to an enviable height. According to Sanginga (2015), while it is said that the continent is experiencing tremendous economic and social growth, in that its states' economies improve not less than six percent (6%) annually, the populace are yet beset with poverty and massive unemployment rate with the greater percentage being among the young people.

Every year, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme turns out hundreds of thousands of youths who have graduated from different disciplines into the over saturated labour market. Many of these labour seekers end up doing menial jobs like taxi driving, security guards, fuel attendants at filling stations, petty trading, among others to survive. Very few of them foray into agriculture, perhaps, because of the erroneous believe that farming is unprofitable and unprofessional field meant only for the uneducated and so, many scramble for the scarce white collar jobs. Even though agricultural development holds the solution to youths' unemployment needs, it has been observed many interested minds do not have adequate information that would spur them to venture into agriculture as they know very little about the potentials and the incentives available for those who want to participate in agriculture. In order to encourage youth participation in agriculture, there is the need to provide them with adequate information about the benefits that would accrue to them if they participate in the sector.

Some Media Agricultural Programmes

By the expression, media agricultural programmes are broadcast series that are aired in Nigeria radio and television stations that promote agricultural practices both as means of livelihood and subsistent living. But the major objective is to encourage audience members, especially youths, to go into agriculture. However, there are very few of such programmes in the media and the identifiable ones are domiciled in the government-owned establishments. Three of such programmes are “Food Today”, “Young Boss” and “Make We Farm”.

Food Today is a national television programme aired by the NTA (Nigeria Television Authority) on Sunday by 10:30am with a repeat broadcast on Mondays at the same time. The main focus of the programme is enlightening the audience about food crops. It strives to expound on the characteristics, nurture, and

value of crops. For instance, it could focus on maize in a particular episode – outline the best practices of maize cultivation and highlighting its salient use beyond the common knowledge. It is expected that the viewers will appreciate whatever agricultural product that is discussed in each episode. Sadly though, this programme has been put on hold in the broadcast schedule of NTA.

Young Boss is another informative and educative programme from the stables of NTA. It is an interactive programme geared towards promoting entrepreneurship. In *Young Boss*, a potential or growing entrepreneur is featured from several fields, one of which is agriculture. It highlights the strength, weakness, opportunities and threat of a given business venture with the goal of enlightening young minds on how to think, create and be successful. It is aired nationally on Sundays at 9:30am.

Make We Farm is a 30-minute local radio discussant programme on Treasure 98.5 FM, Port Harcourt. The title alone is a call for action that should direct the attention of listeners at the first instance. The radio programme was usually aired on Wednesdays at 1pm, which was produced and anchored by Emeka Churchill. It was programmed to run in Pidgin English, as a means of reaching the largest number of listeners residing within the station's circumference. Similar to “Food Today”, *Make We Farm* emphasizes good agricultural practice by discussing a crop or an aspect of agriculture as well as the benefits of engaging in such venture. It focuses on making business out of the subject of agriculture. Thus, through the knowledge of professionals interviewed in each series, it is expected that the listeners would be better informed about the product.

Statement of the Problem

With the economic meltdown in Nigeria and other countries, attention has shifted to agriculture as an avenue to escape the economic doldrums and government has initiated programmes

and policies to encourage agricultural production. Such programmes and policies must be understood by the target people to elicit acceptance and participation. Understanding and acceptance can only be achieved through an efficient information dissemination mechanism. Information about agriculture has been and can be disseminated through the mass media and other avenues for information sharing to sensitise the people on government agricultural development programmes. The provision of information, through the mass media, especially when it is structured over time is capable of turning mass media agenda into the individual agenda of the members of the publics. Hence, Sawant (2000, p. 31) notes:

The mass media has (sic) power (and in some cases it uses the same) to mould the minds of people and influence their decisions in private and public life. Its capacity to make and unmake individuals and institutions including governments cannot be underestimated.

Isika (2012) seems to support Sawant's view by observing that communication, especially through the mass media has a role to play in projecting the opportunities that abound in the agricultural sector.

Communication is vital in encouraging youths participation in agric-oriented vocation or business because as channels that disseminate information about modern ideas, the mass media and other personal channels can help in re-organising conflicting norms in society, changing value systems and refining traditional beliefs and practices. The fundamental question arising from the foregoing is: What role has communication played in encouraging youth participation in agriculture? This is concern of this study.

Objectives

This investigation was concerned with the following objectives, which were to:

1. examine Nigerian youths' exposure to agricultural communication;
2. ascertain the relevance of communication in projecting agricultural practice among Nigerian youths;
3. identify factors other than communication that encourage youths' participation in agriculture; and
4. identify the hindrances to the use of communication to encourage Nigerian youths' participation in agriculture

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What agricultural development messages are Nigerian youths exposed to?
2. What is the relevance of communication in projecting agricultural practice among Nigerian youths?
3. What factors other than communication that encourage youth participation in agriculture?
4. What are the hindrances to the use of communication in encouraging Nigerian youths' participation in agricultural?

Theoretical Framework

This study was hinged on an amalgam of two media theories, the Development Media Theory and the Individual Difference Theory.

Development Media Theory: The development media theory enunciated by McQuail in 1987, sought to explicate the role of the mass media in countries classified as developing countries. The tenet of the theory is that the mass media have very crucial roles to play in stimulating development in developing countries. The thrust of the development media theory is that the media are to be deployed to serve the public good of the nation by functioning as instrument for attaining economic growth that is precursor to national development. Asemah (2011) observed that

the origin of theory can be traced to the UNESCO Commission on Communication Problem of 1979, popularly called the MacBride Commission. He added that the theory is opposed to foreign dependency and dominance and accepts that economic development and nation building should be the overriding objective. Thus the mass media are supposed to disseminate messages that meet the development needs of the society in which they are a part.

It is the assumption of this theory that communication, especially the mass media should in their contents and programmes, support the developmental initiative of government and act as agents of development by creating awareness and encouraging participation of the citizenry in development initiatives in all spheres of public life. The import of this theory to this study is underpinned by the fact that agriculture has been described as the sector that can take Nigeria out of economic doldrums and launch the country to economic prosperity. The diversification of the economy through the participation of the youths in the agricultural sector is only possible if they are convinced to become involved in agricultural production. It is assumed that mass media portrayals in news and commentaries have the potential to stimulate youths' participation in agriculture development.

Individual Difference Theory: The Individual Difference Theory of mass communication on the other hand, presumes that individuals respond differently to mass media messages according to their psychological traits, culture, esteem, curiosity, intelligence, and belief system and needs. It is those factors that determine how individuals respond to media messages. This is perhaps the reason McQuail (2010) citing Klapper says: "Mass communication does not ordinarily serve as a necessary or sufficient cause of audience effect, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors" (p. 457). The mediating factors to a very large extent, determine how the

individual audience members react to the message. Many youths in Nigeria, especially the educated, see agricultural enterprises as ventures only fit for the old, uneducated and the unskilled. Therefore, media messages and other communications regarding youths participation in agriculture is likely to elicit different responses from the youths based on their personality traits, attitudes, orientations and beliefs. This assertion is agreed with position of Ahmad (2016) that “the mitigating power of human differential attitudes on media effects is a big factor in the explanation of how media interact with the audiences and the limitation of such interaction” (p.144).

The justification for the application of the two theories to this study is embedded in that fact that the development media theory emphasizes the relevance of the media in the dissemination of development-oriented information and encouraging the participation of the target audience in the development initiative. The individual difference theory recognizes the fact certain mediating factors determine audience response (acceptance or rejection) to such development-oriented information. Whereas the mass media are expected to disseminate information about the need to diversify the nation's economy through agriculture and encourage youth participation in it, certain mediating factors determine the response of the target audience to the messages.

Conceptualizing Communication

Communication is the process whereby people exchange information by means of shared meaning. The concentration is usually on how messages are structured and interpreted through symbols for all levels and type of audiences. This communication can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or mass communication. Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis and Piele (2010) categorized the structure of communication discipline into ten. Communication and technology (chat-mediated communication and audiences' entertainment or information drive); group

communication (of three or more, as a family); health communication (issues relating to wellness); instructional communication (the teaching power of communication, pedagogy); intercultural communication (people from other climates); interpersonal communication (interactions and relationships); language and symbolic codes (verbal and non-verbal); mass communication (electronically mediated medium from organized institutions to heterogeneous and far-flung audience); organizational communication (within formal institutions); and public communication (one-to-many, non-mediated process).

McQuail (2010) notes that “the most important dimensions of communication concerns two points: the degree of response or feedback and the degree to which a communication relationship is also a social relationship” (p. 552). And in social world like ours, the success of any society will not be far from one defined “...to formulate ethical problems and clearly communicate possible solutions at appropriate levels; awareness of different attitudes to scientific innovations and ability to discuss and advice policy for the benefit of society and lessons learning, especially with communities” (Okori & Ekwamu, 2012). This is why every society must explore the potentials of communication in addressing issues that affects it. One of such is dialogue, communication that is active to participants. Communication is becoming more important than earlier years. Ochonogor (2010) therefore argues that it is central in bringing about any form of change in the society, in that it is “the mainstream of activities”. As one would observe, economic life is becoming more sophisticated such that without the required knowledge and information one will lose track. Perhaps, one phenomenon giving it more grounds is the fact that man must communicate or cease to exist.

Agricultural Development

Agriculture has always been the main stay of societies from the

earliest ages till date. It has always been so not just because man finds his physiological needs in terms of food, clothing and shelter from it, but also that practice has been beneficial in catering for self-actualisation of people because they have had their social and security needs met by the provisions derivable from agriculture. It is evidenced that nations which invest so much in agriculture such as USA, China, India, and Russia have never had so much course for fear of recession or food insecurity as some other nations do. No nation deals without the contributions of agriculture because according to Simpson (2016), "...agricultural productivity is important not only for a country's balance of trade, but the security and health of its population as well".

This becomes more critical in the developing countries like Nigeria owing to a monolithic economic practice – over-dependence on oil, at the expense of the more effective and efficient field, which is even synonymous with developing countries. "In developing countries, agriculture continues to be the main source of employment, livelihood and income for between 50% and 90% of the population" (Kwa, 2001). The absence or low level of socio-economic life leaves the greater percentage of the people to depend on the most available occupation. And a country like Nigeria is blessed with arable land, aquatics and weather with which to survive. Agriculture was once the sole means of economic life in Nigeria. Then, the exports were agrarian but the reverse has been the case since the discovery of oil. Despite the fact that about 70 percent of the populace are engaged in agriculture, it is underutilized. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, "Nigeria's employment crisis worsened in the first quarter of 2016, with employment rate rising to 12.1 per cent" (Udo, 2016). It further noted that the rate of unemployment appreciated with 518, 000 to get to 1.45million. This is entirely a gloomy picture but true.

Some countries have less worry because of the push for agriculture. According to Simpson (2016), "countries like China

and India feature prominently in the lists of top agricultural producers; these countries have large populations and internal food security”. The fact is that the ability to provide sufficient food for citizens and inhabitants of a nation is a concrete step to development and the improvement of other spheres. This is also why some states in Nigeria that is more agriculturally based count the lowest rate of unemployment. For instance, Kwara 7.1%, Cross River 12.2% and Benue State 14.2% (Saraki, 2013) as against others with greater percentage burden. It is noted that of the 98.2m hectares, with the cultivable 71.2m hectares, only about 34.2m hectares have been explored. The rest are waiting for exploration. This is abundant areas for investment in the country. Reference can be made to the Shonga project in Kwara State in which mixed farming, dairy and poultry were given maximum attention. Consequently, “the Farm's chicken processing plant produces 2,500 processed frozen chickens per day...the diary farm has the capacity to process up to 50,000 litres of milk per day” (Saraki, 2013), just to paint a little picture. And it is on record that about 3,000 – 4,000 find means of livelihood during the harvesting season, from the Shonga farm.

Ghanem (2015) notes that “agriculture (and the service and processing activities surrounding it), is important for increasing rural standards of living. Thus, it is an essential component of any inclusive growth strategy that aims to reduce inequality and regional disparities” (p. 3). If the local areas where the greatest populace dwell are given maximum agricultural attention, it will reflect on the general landscape. The rate of importation will fall to the barest minimum, ensuring food security, employment and improved living standards. What is needed at this moment is for the populace to engage in industrial agriculture, the use of high inputs to extract maximum produce within a limited time. Agriculture is no longer an endeavour for the low income class. It is now a high income yielding trade. But the bottom line is “we were not looking at agriculture through the

right lens. We were looking at agriculture as a developmental activity, like a social sector. Seed is a business; fertilizer is a business; storage, value added, logistics and transportation are all about business” (Adesina, 2013).

African Youth and Agriculture

Africa is clearly located within the purview of the Third World nations, that is, developing. And by this, it is believed that the pace of socio-economic life is not at its peak. Many of the people are said to be unemployed and underemployed with the bulk of the affected being the youths. This is a source of concern for key agencies, governments and experts in development. For as noted: “The paradox is that while African economies have experienced strong economic growth, the creation of the new has not matched the number of new entrants to the labour market” (FAO, CTA and IFAD, 2014). The fear is that youths are volatile as well as “the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of socio-economic, emotion and other aspects” (Anasi, 2010). Several measures are therefore required to address the issue and ameliorate the effects of its consequences.

It is authoritatively stated that of all levels of people who are of age to work and find meaning in life, from the North to the South, the most affected set of people with unemployment are the youths, not the adults (World Bank, 2009). But so many prospects abound in exploring agriculture at both the urban and rural areas, with greater emphases on the latter, if the issue of capital does not stand as a militating factor. For Muir-Leresche (2013), “Agriculture is not seen as a viable income source and often the youth view agriculture as employment of last resort and may consider becoming a farmer as condemning oneself to subsistence and poverty” (p. 15). Before the eyes of many youths in Africa, agriculture is a venture that should be left for their aged grandmothers and fathers or the less privileged in their country home who cannot find their way to the city. It then becomes absurd

to think of agriculture as a means of livelihood where several white-collar jobs are available for them as a more viable option. More so, for those who have had the privilege of going through the higher institution, they do not see the applicability of farming (with all the other forms included) in the contemporary times. Perhaps, “an obvious solution is through stimulating income-generating rural enterprises based upon the energies and skills of youth” (IITA, 2015).

As some have suggested, it may be very advisable to concentrate attention on the process of youth development, owing to the fact, as Ochonogor (2010) suggested, the negligence of any part of the society would hold down the development of other parts. A step to address youth development would be to face squarely the education of the young people. Education has been found to be a way out by aiding good agricultural practices (Muro & Burchi, 2007). And the young people's access to education is therefore considered as “crucial for addressing the main challenges they face in agriculture” (Goemans, 2014). By virtue of the opportunity to gain access to education and information, the youths would be able to go through the expected mind development that prepares them for a bright future. Blackie, Blackie, Lele and Beintema (2010) note that enshrining agriculture as a sine qua non in academics for the youths is a positive way to improve the situation.

Complementary work can be done by vocational trainings. Although Bennell (2007) did argue that vocational trainings have not always resulted in effective employment rate; it still serves a good deal. Akeke and Oladunjoye (2011) argue that a good number of Nigerian graduates lack entrepreneurial skills to ensure self-employment. There are calls from several quarters in recent times for the meaningful engagement of youths in the Continent. For instance, the present economic problem plaguing Nigeria is traced to a few maladies. One of the most publicized is the increasing spate of militancy in the Niger Delta. It is well known

that the perpetrators are not older folks but are of youthful age. With reference to efforts to solve the then problems, Emaduku (2015) notes: “The Amnesty also inculcated the belief in youths that the best way to easy wealth is through violence. Rather than hard work as was in the days of old, violence is now a constant part of our daily life”. At the end of the day, youths are faced with varied number of challenges that may not be of their own making.

Many young people in Africa watch their leaders enjoy the booties obtained through corrupt means. They even see political leaders earn so much by mere representation in the legislative or executive arms of government and only learn to be like them too. And sadly, they venture into it too early because they can no longer wait for due processes. This is part of the reason a field like agriculture, is not attractive to the youths. This is the reason we strongly argue in this paper that something needs to be done if we truly desire change.

National Development

Development is an issue that has struggled with the pace of time and experience because it is dynamic. From the earliest times, man has had a perspective of looking at the world and its import is modified continuously. As a ubiquitous phenomenon, development is peculiar to climes, experience and people. However, there is a common ground in understanding the concept. Development is “the process of enlarging people's choices – lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living; political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self-respect” (UNDP, 1997, p. 15). Development should cut across levels at which the people are able to express themselves without restrictions of personal ignorance or external forces and that the people enjoy the conditions of their living.

Nwanne (2012) would say that “development is about the improvement of the individual in important and useful ways” (p.

241) this is because a nation is made up of the people who dwell therein. There can only be national development when its citizens are developed. Ihejirika and Ikpegbu (2015) found that governments' development efforts in African states like Nigeria, have always focused on economic terms as against other aspects. Whereas, it is observed that advanced communication has enhanced the level of economic development in some countries of the world (Nwanne, 2006), they now create the process that allows the citizens to hold those in public offices accountable of their common resources, taking active decisions because of decentralized system of leadership (Coonrod, 2016). The sum of the present understanding about development is that it is given a holistic approach to encompass all shades of human and material improvement, what Echenim (2004) outlines as social, cultural, economic and ideological focus. In their own submissions, Soola (2002) and Onosu (2009) argue that it must be qualitative and quantitative to give the people the ample opportunity of manipulating their environment for the good of all.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design to study a population made up of members of the National Youths Service Corps in Rivers State which is put at about 3326 (NYSC Port Harcourt). The sample for the study was 351 Youth Corps members, derived through the Keyton's (2001) prescription. The sample was selected through the stratified random sampling in which youth corps members were put in strata of batches (A, B & C) and selected through the multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage was to select three local government areas from each of the three senatorial districts through ballot to make up nine local government areas. From each selected local government area, 39 Corps members were selected. To achieve the stratification, by batch, 13 corps members were selected from each of the three batches (A, B and C) using the accidental procedure to reach the

respondents at their Zonal Headquarters on their Community Development (CD) days. A 15-item self-administered questionnaire was used to generate data from the subjects for analysis. Out of the 351 copies of the instrument administered, 346 were correctly completed by the respondents which gave a return rate of 98 percent.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What agricultural development messages are Nigerian youths exposed to?

Table 1: Respondents' knowledge of Government Agricultural programmes for youths

Response	Freq	%
Youths Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture	183	53
Youths Employment in Agriculture Programme	59	17
Graduate Enhancement Support	66	19
FADAMA3	38	11
Total	346	100

The data presented in Table 1 above indicate that all respondents are aware of governments' agricultural programmes. The data show that most of the respondents knew about the Youths Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture.

Table 2: Source of Information about Government Policies on Agriculture

Response	Freq	%
Mass media sources	253	73
Friends and associates	17	5
Worship places	21	6
Clubs and associations	55	16
Total	346	100

It is obvious from the data displayed in Table 2 above that mass media sources provided information about the government programmes on agriculture to the greater percentage of the respondents.

Table 3: Frequency of Respondents' Exposure to Media Programmes

Response	Freq	%
Daily	291	84
Weekly	17	5
More than once a week	38	11
Total	346	100

The data on Table 3 above show that the majority of the respondents are exposed to media messages on agriculture on a daily basis. This shows that the respondents are current in terms of information gleaned from the media about agricultural policies and programmes.

Table 4: Familiarity of Respondents to Agricultural Programmes in the Media

Response	Freq	%
“Food Today” on NTA	73	21
“Make We Farm” on Treasure FM	128	37
“Young Boss” on NTA	90	26
Others	55	16
Total	346	100

From the data presented in the Table 4 above, it is clear that the most popular broadcast agricultural programmes among the respondents is “Make We Farm” as most respondents indicate that they were familiar with the programme

Research Question Two: What is the relevance of communication in projecting agricultural practice among Nigerian youths?

Table 5: Ways in which communication encouraged youth's participation in agriculture

Response	Freq	%
Explaining government agric policies and programme	107	31
Provides information on incentives	90	26
Announcing agricultural events and shows	21	6
Teaching practical tips on farming methods	55	16
Give information on availability of agricultural inputs	73	21
Total	346	100

The relevance of communication in promoting agriculture could be seen from the data presented in Table 5 in which most of the respondents averred that communication provided them with explanations on government's agricultural programmes and policies as well the provision of information on incentives.

Table 6: Respondents motivation for consideration of Agriculture as a career

Response	Freq	%
Mass-media campaigns on agriculture	142	41
Conviction from friends/ Associates	66	19
knowledge of the benefits from the venture	51	15
Encouragement from those who are already engaged in agriculture	87	25
Total	346	100

From the data presented in Table 4 above, it is quite clear that many of the respondents would consider taking up agricultural careers due to the information they gleaned from the mass media campaigns on agriculture. Although a large percentage is encouraged by the benefits that those already engaged in the practice are reaping.

Research Question Three: What factors other than communication encourage youth participation in agriculture?

Table 6: Factors other than communication that encourage the consideration of agriculture as a Career by respondents

Response	Freq	%
Absence of employment	135	39
Personal encouragement from others	69	20
Take advantage of govt policies on agric	66	19
Incentives available to agriculture practitioners	76	22
Total	346	100

The response of the respondents on the factors other than communication that would encourage their consideration of agriculture as a career shows that a greater percentage of them would opt for agriculture if they are unable to secure paid employment. This response does mean that the youths would only consider engagement in agriculture if they are unable to secure jobs. However a very significant number claim that they will engage in the sector to take advantage of the governments' policies and programmes as well as utilize the available incentives. Table 6, provides further details above.

Table 7: Factors that discourage the consideration of agriculture as a career by respondents

Response	Freq	%
Land ownership system	107	31
Lack of storage and produce processing	24	7
Lack of collateral for agricultural loans	28	8
Undeveloped infrastructure	187	54
Total	346	100

A major factor that discourages youths from engaging in agriculture according to the data is the land ownership structure which does not favour youths. The land ownership system does not easily give youths access to land which in most cases are owned by families, besides, the acquisition of land in Nigeria is capital intensive and most times cumbersome, which the youths cannot afford. Added to this disincentive is the issue of undeveloped infrastructure like road, water power and communication in those related areas.

Research Question Four: What are the hindrances to the use of communication in encouraging Nigerian youths' participation in agriculture?

Table 8: Problems to African youths' participation in agriculture

Response	Freq	%
Poor perception about agriculture	200	58
Poor media coverage of agricultural activities	28	8
Improper education about agriculture	35	10
Inconsistencies in government policies	83	24
Total	346	100

As shown in Table 8 above, majority of the respondents represented by 58 percent indicated that the major hindrance to youths' involvement in agriculture is the poor perception of agriculture among the youths. This may be because many of them have weird orientation about the agriculture sector which they see as only meant for the old, unskilled and uneducated. Added to this is the issue of inconsistencies in governments' agricultural development programmes to which 24% of the respondents claim

prevents them from taking interest and participating in agriculture. It is instructive to note that lack of information does not pose a primary hindrance to youths' involvement in agriculture.

Discussion

Ascertaining Nigerian Youths' Exposure to Agricultural Communication:

The data displaced in Tables 1 to 4 clearly show respondents were exposed to agricultural communication, through both the personal and impersonal media. This is evident in the fact that many of the respondents could recall some of the programmes they gleaned from their exposure to agricultural communications. They could recall *Food Today*, *Young Boss* and *Make We Farm* which are agricultural educative programmes on radio and television, through which they learn and get informed about agriculture. Furthermore, it was observed that majority of the respondents knew about government policies on agriculture through the communication (Table 3). Thus, the place of communication in encouraging youths' involvement in agriculture is that of informing, enlightening and mobilizing youths for participation. This finding corresponds with Okori and Ekwamu's (2012) view that communication provides awareness to scientific innovations and ability to discuss and advice on lessons learnt from policy for the benefit of society and, especially with communities.

Ascertaining the Relevance of Communication in Projecting Agriculture among Nigerian Youths:

From the data presented in Tables 5 and 6, it can be deduced that communication provided the respondents with explanations on

government's agriculture programmes and policies as well as provided them with information on the incentives available to those who want to venture into the sector. Communication through different channels explained the practical tips to the respondents many of whom became interested in the sector. This finding is in tandem with Sawant (2000) assertion that communication, especially through the mass media, has power to mould the minds of people and influence their decisions about participating in any venture. This finding validates the relevance of the adoption of the Development Media Theory which stipulates that the mass media should assist governments, especially in developing countries in spreading information about development projects. In this sense, the mass media are expected to partner with governments in driving national development.

Communication through the informal modes of interpersonal channels helps to crystallise information obtained through mass media sources and nudge people to make decision whether to participate or not to participate in an innovation. This also points to the fact that there is the need to adopt the appropriate media strategy to galvanize support for and secure participation in any project. With reference to encouraging youths involvement in agricultural enterprises, it may be necessary to combine the use of the mass media and personal (Folk media) to sensitise the people in order to make them understand government development policies and encourage their participation.

Identify Factors other than Communication that Encourage Nigerian Youths' Involvement in Agricultural Development:

It is obvious from the data obtained and used to address this research question that many youths though aware of the policies

and programme on agriculture and whereas communication has availed them with information and available incentives, they would consider agriculture as a career out of wont of other jobs to do. Invariably, the youths are not eager to take up agricultural ventures except as a last resort when they are unable to secure paid employment in other sectors of the economy. Even those who claimed that they would consider agriculture as a vocation to take advantage of the government incentives may have taken this decision in response to the need to survive in the face of dearth of paid employment. This is more so, as even those who studied agriculture and related disciplines in higher institutions or learning opt for jobs in other sub-sectors to the neglect of agriculture.

Another finding of the study is that many youths who would have engaged in agriculture are deterred by the land ownership structure which puts land under the government. Obtaining Certificate of Occupancy for a farm holding takes a long time to accomplish. This when buoyed with the land fragmentation, especially in the southern part of Nigeria, does not encourage large-scale and mechanized farming. Besides, the cost of acquiring land is exorbitant and the process cumbersome.

The deduction that can be made from this discussion is that even though communication has created awareness through enlightenment and advocacy about government agricultural policies and incentives available for the youths to encourage their involvement in agriculture, the dearth of white collar jobs may compel many of the youths to consider participating in agriculture as a last resort.

Identify the Hindrances to the Use of Communication to Encourage African Youths' Involvement in Agricultural Development

In Table 8, it was made very clear the greatest problem to African youths' participation in agriculture is the poor perception about it. Agriculture is seen by many as the occupation for the uneducated, the poor and unprofitable means of livelihood compared to white-collar jobs and the use of certificates acquired in higher institutions of learning. This finding lends credence to the application of the Individual Differences Theory as most youths perceive the agricultural sector as only good for the old and uneducated. It also corresponds with Akinnifesi's (2013) observation that “generally, the younger generation tends to associate agriculture with poverty, drudgery, hardships and low self-esteem” (p. 20). It requires the application interpersonal interactions, modelled after Rogers' diffusion process, using opinion leaders as models to motivate youths to engage in agriculture. It was pointed out that improper implementation of agricultural policies and programmes are fundamental problems to youths' involvement in agriculture.

This may have resulted from inconsistencies in government programmes and policies on agriculture. Many programmes implemented by preceding administrations in Nigeria are abandoned by succeeding administrations for a new policy. These inconsistencies build up in the youths the feeling of alienation and frustration so that those who would have considered agriculture as a vocation end up doing other things. Therefore, we can say that the hindrances to the use of communication to encourage youths engagement in the

agriculture sector is their perception of agriculture as not dignifying a vocation and the inconsistencies in government agricultural development policies and programmes.

Conclusion

Flowing from the findings of this study, we conclude that:

1. The respondents were exposed to agricultural communication through both the personal and impersonal media and that the respondents could recall some of the agricultural programmes they gleaned from their exposure to agricultural communications.
2. Communication provided the respondents with explanations on government's agriculture programmes and policies as well availed them with information on the incentives available as well as provided the people with practical tips to encourage participation.
3. Even though communication has created awareness through enlightenment and advocacy about government agricultural policies and incentives available for the youths to encourage their involvement in the sector, the dearth of white collar jobs may compel many of the youths to consider participating in agriculture as a last resort.
4. The hindrances to the use of communication to encourage youths engagement in the agricultural sector is their skewed perception of agriculture as not dignifying a vocation and the inconsistencies in governments' implementation of agricultural development policies and programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be more media programmes and coverage of events related to or about agriculture in the mass media to encourage the youths to think about agricultural as a viable career in the future. The current radio and television programmes that were highlighted in this paper should also continue to run.
2. Governments, local and international agricultural agencies should use more communication channels, especially the reactivation of Agricultural Extension Programmes to take messages on modern methods of agriculture and to propagate government agricultural policies and programmes. The extension officers should be equipped to provide technical assistance to those practicing agriculture to encourage the Nigerian youths of the availability of such services in case they decide to consider agriculture as a vocation.
3. In order to correct the erroneous perceptions among the youths about agriculture, successful agriculture businessmen and entrepreneurs should be given more publicity to serve as models for those who want to engage in the sector even as government provides incentives by creating farm settlements with modern amenities to attract the youths to the land.

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