

Challenges of Greed and Corruption in Agricultural Extension Development and Practice in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study discussed challenges of Greed and Corruption in agricultural extension development and practice in Nigeria. Corruption is a social-human factor that encompasses unilateral abuses by government officials such as embezzlement and nepotism as well as abuses linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion, influence, peddling or fraud. The study looked at paradigm and dimensions of corruption; emerging trends in agricultural extension practice in Nigeria; challenges of corruption to agricultural extension development and practice as well as institutionalizing anti-corruption measures. Central to the discussions on these is that corruption poses a serious development challenge in many spheres of human endeavour including agricultural development. The study noted that to effectively control corruption in Nigeria ethical standards in decision-making must be the national policy on corruption. It is suggested among others that any effort aimed at improving agricultural extension development and practice in Nigeria would require an articulated and functional policy on agricultural extension.

Key words: Challenges, corruption, greed, agricultural extension and development, bribery, bureaucratic

INTRODUCTION

The twin concept of Greed and Corruption in the recent past has become a topical issue of discourse in several quarters traversing social, economic, political and of course religious arena. This study would attempt to use corruption to convey the same meaning, intent and interpretation of Greed. This is on the assumption that majorly greed and corruption are inseparable terms. Most development efforts have been known to be marred by practitioners, technocrats and policy implementers of such development programmes arising from greed and corruption.

Corruption is a social-human factor that entails the abuse of public office for private gains. It encompasses unilateral abuses by government officials such as embezzlement and nepotism as well as abuses linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion influence peddling or fraud (Centre for Democracy and Governance, 1999). More so, corruption can arise in both political and bureaucratic offices and may be petty or grand organized or unorganized. However, corruption pervades many aspects of human endeavours including agricultural extension development and practice. Corruption can pose a serious development challenge to agricultural extension practices in Nigeria and this by implication to a very large extent limit agricultural production potentials in the country.

The divergent dimensions of problems of agricultural development in Nigeria are enormous, much of which could be traceable to corrupt tendencies of some practitioners. This is because to a large extent, corruption undermines democracy and good governance by subverting formal processes. In this case, some stakeholders are denied involvement in taking vital decisions as they concern agricultural development practices. Ani (2007) had indicated that the best programmes in agricultural development are those determined by the local people and extension staff working together. This to a very reasonable degree would minimize corruption among practitioners in the agricultural sector.

World Bank (2000) observed that despite the emphasis on development in most 3rd world countries towards agriculture and rural areas, development are still hindered by institutional and administrative problems, characterized by schemes imposed on the rural poor, rather than clientele participation. The clientele's perception of the relevance of a recommended innovation and consequent adoption of such a programme is a factor of the extent of involvement of such clientele (Adebayo *et al.*, 2002). Hence, food and agricultural organization (FAO, 2003) affirmed that the main thrust of sustainable agricultural development rests on extension and other agricultural related services. In recognition of this fact however, various approaches and

techniques of extension services had been experimented with little success on the overall. This could largely stem from the fact that little or no room is given to farmers to contribute their own idea in the extension practices as well as corrupt practices meted out to farmers by extension practitioners.

It is in the light of the above that a pertinent question is posed: what are the challenges of greed and corruption in agricultural extension development and practice in Nigeria? To address this question, the study specifically addressed the following:

- Paradigm and dimensions of corruption
- Emerging trends in agricultural extension practice in Nigeria
- Challenges of corruption to agricultural extension development and practice
- Institutionalizing anti-corruption measures

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Paradigm and dimensions of corruption: Corruption is an age-long phenomenon that has been known to pose a serious challenge to developmental efforts of many developing countries of the world. These could be in the areas of agriculture, education, economy, politics as well as in social spheres of human existence. Nigeria's agricultural sector has suffered untold setback due to neglect greed and corruption. The present national food insecurity in Nigeria could be blamed on failed policies and outright manipulation of strategies by public office holders for personal financial gains.

The history of corruption is as old as the world because ancient civilization have traces of widespread illegality and corruption. Corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome and Greece down to the present (Dike, 2003). Corruption is also believed to be endemic in modern governments and it is not peculiar to any content, region or ethnic group. This does not however, mean that the incidence and corrupt activities are the same in every society. However, the forms of corrupt activities prevalent in Nigeria may include political corruption, bureaucratic corruption, electoral corruption, embezzlement and bribery. Dike (2003) had categorized forms of corruption and gave interpretation to them as follows: political corruption which takes place at the highest levels of political authority is a corruption of greed. It affects the manner in which decisions are made, manipulates and distorts political institutions and rules of procedure. Bureaucratic corruption, which occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics is the low level and

street level corruption. This is the type of corruption, the citizens encounter daily at places like the hospitals, schools etc.

It may be necessary to ponder while to ask, who is to blame for the prevalence of corrupt activities in the society. Is it the common man or those in power? Why does it happen at all? What is the attendant result? However, greed and the brazen display of wealth by public officials could significantly point to the fact that those in power are to blame more for corruption than the common people, who are often pushed into corrupt behaviour in their bid to survive the harsh economic circumstances.

Corruption which is a social malady could largely be influenced by cultural dictates and value systems of the society. In many societies, corruption is almost unavoidable, where morality is relaxed and many people struggle for survival without assistance from the government. The influence or pressure of polygamous household and extended family system and pressure to meet family obligations, which are more in less developed countries like Nigeria are some of the causes of corruption. Thus, Merton as cited by Dike (2003) acknowledges the relationship between culture and corruption. This in essence entails that corruption could be linked to strong family values involving intense feelings of obligation.

Another dimension of corrupt practices could arise from poor reward system of government organs and agencies to their workers. In Nigeria, researchers in the employment of government are not regularly paid. Thus, lack of economic opportunity could be a serious problem in a society whose citizens are achievement oriented but have relatively low access to economic opportunities. This no doubt could explain the reason for the upsurge of corrupt behaviours in the country. This is because the cultures of societies that stress economic success as an important goal but nevertheless strongly restrict access to opportunities will definitely have higher levels of corruption. Corruption in this dimension has taught the society a wrong lesson that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law-abiding. Through corrupt means, many political office holders have acquired wealth and properties of different magnitudes and they often display the ill-gotten wealth without getting any sanctions from government.

Corruption could arise where public officials have wide authority, little accountability and perverse incentives. This means that the more activities public officials control or regulate the more opportunities exist for corruption. Furthermore, the lower the probability of selection and punishment, the greater the risk that

corruption will take place. In addition, the lower the salaries, the rewards for performance, the security of employment and the professionalism in public service, the greater the incentives for public officials to pursue self-serving rather than public-serving ends.

A number of factors can predispose groups or societies to disregard formal rules and embrace corruption. In many cultures particularly in the context of poverty or conflict, allegiance to personal loyalties such as one's family or ethnic, religious or socio-economic identity outweighs allegiance to objective rules. Centre for Democracy and Governance (1999) had indicated that in other cases, the low legitimacy of government (because it is repressive, ineffective, discordant with culture, or imposed by foreign rule) induces disregard for formal rules.

Similarly, dominance of a political party or ruling elite over political and economic processes or exclusion of marginalized or poorly organized groups from the same creates incentives for those disadvantaged by the system to operate outside it and thus make room for more corruption.

Emerging trends in agricultural extension practice in

Nigeria: Agricultural extension practice in Nigeria over the years has been grappling with enormous challenges. The agricultural extension function is fundamental in the transformation process of agricultural production and its sustainable development. Extension in agriculture has been a major instrument of emphasis in agricultural development processes (Ani, 2007). Agricultural extension is a dynamic process, its always poised to adequately address emerging issues and trends in agricultural development process. In recent years, the dynamic nature of agricultural extension has been brought to bear with evolving agricultural development processes.

Rural farmers have been known to use technologies that have been developed throughout the centuries. They have always made their selections being fully aware of the interactions between varieties and the ecological environment they have identified fodder species and medicinal plants and have a rudimentary knowledge of animal pathology and understand production systems, which generally pressure soil fertility.

However, external inputs have substituted for natural processes and resources, rendering them less powerful (Roling, 1993). For instance, pesticides have replaced biological, cultural and mechanical methods for controlling pests, weeds and diseases inorganic fertilizers have substituted for livestock manures, composts and nitrogen-fixing crops information for management decisions comes from input suppliers, researchers and extensionists rather than from local sources.

The basic challenge for sustainable agriculture is to make better use of the internal resources. This can be done by minimizing the external inputs used by regenerating internal resources more effectively or by combinations of both as well as maximizing indigenous knowledge of farmers. A necessary condition for sustainable agricultural development is that large number of farming households must be motivated to use coordinated resource management. This could be for pest and predator management, nutrient management, livestock management, nutrient management, conserving soil and water resources. The problem however is that in most places platforms for collective decision making have not been established to manage such resources (Roling, 1994). The success of sustainable agriculture therefore, depends not just on the motivations, skills and knowledge of individual farmers but on action taken by group or communities as a whole.

Many resource-conserving technologies and practices have been widely proven on research stations to be both productive and sustainable, the total number of farmers using them is still small (Ani, 2007). This could be because the technologies involve the substitution of management skills, knowledge and labour for external inputs. The modern approach to agricultural research and extension however, has been to emphasize packages of technologies. Few farmers are able to adopt the whole modern packages of production or conservation technologies without considerable adjustments. Part of the problem is that most agricultural research still occurs on research stations, where scientists experience conditions quite different from those experienced by farmers. Similarly, agricultural extension service providers have not been faithful in delivering their services to the intended audience. Worst still is that most of these service providers either divert most of the inputs meant for farmers use or that they make such inputs highly inaccessible to farmers. This to a very large extent would make the practice of agricultural extension and its sustainability a mirage.

Challenges of corruption to agricultural extension development and practice:

In agricultural development efforts, agricultural extension services are expected to assist farmers to identify and analyse their production problems make them become aware of the opportunities for improvement in farm yields in order to obtain increased income and attain a better standard of living. Obviously, the role of agricultural extension providers involves disseminating information on agricultural technologies and improved practices to farm families and ensuring farmers' capacity building through the use of a

variety of communication methods and training programmes (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1998). However, the normative roles of agricultural extension are either partially or not properly performed because of myriad of problem facing the service. These problems may vary in dimension and magnitude, ranging from inefficiency and fraudulent practices among practitioners. Agbamu (2005) had indicated the following to be major bottlenecks to the success of agricultural extension development and practice.

- The control and direction of activities of agricultural extension systems in developing countries are usually from the top to the bottom with the professional extensionist at the operative level carrying out rigidly designated activities
- The extension systems are typically entrenched as part or parastatal of the Ministry of Agriculture
- Professional development activities, training, motivation and support funds for agricultural extensionists are limited
- The systems are subject to intensive political control
- In addition to the educational functions, agricultural extension researchers in many developing countries are expected to perform a wide range of non-extension duties that include regulatory functions or enforcement of government rules and supply service

The foregoing are typical areas of bottlenecks to efficient agricultural extension service and practice in Nigeria. These areas undoubtedly are where corruption has come to bear majorly against efficient and effective operations of agricultural extension service in this country. For instance, the control and direction of the activities of agricultural extension systems from the top without recourse to determining the prevailing circumstances of the farmers in most cases would be to satisfy the powers that be inherent in this approach is greed and corruption that finds its expression in self-centredness. More so, the limited fund meant for professional development activities, training, motivation and support is either diverted or not released for the purpose after due approval has been made on study by the authority. This is a fragrant abuse of office and power to the detriment of agricultural extension development and practice.

Agricultural extension programmes require adequate funding to ensure successful extension service delivery. Poor financing of extension programmes has been a long standing problem facing the service (Williams, 1989). The current funding situation has been precarious in terms of both limited and unreliable provision of operating resources. One of the implications of this funding problem

is that the governments need to demonstrate the political will to perceive agricultural extension service as a priority area in their development agenda and commit reliable flow of funds to it.

Poor logistic support for field extension staff is another area, where corruption could be identified to play a significant role in undermining agricultural extension development and practice. Whereas, enough budgetary provisions are made on study to take care of this only a meager percentage is practically made available in this regard. Mobility for field staff is very important in operating an efficient agricultural extension service. Good and reliable means of movement for extensionists from place to place to serve farmers in rural areas is one of the factors that holds the key to successful extension research.

In addition to the above is that there has always been failure of input suppliers to ensure effective and timely distribution to farmers. Such inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides and others rarely get to the target audience at the right time and in the right quantity. Part of the reason could be that most of these farm inputs are hijacked by people, who have political power and therefore, either divert them or sell them at very highly exorbitant prices beyond the reach of many rural farmers. This in the main becomes a very big challenge to agricultural extension practice as the teachings of field extension agents to farmers may not have practical application. Another area where corruption has found its expression is in the area of irregular monitoring and evaluation of extension programmes. Agricultural extension programmes are expected to be subjected to monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring attempts to know what is happening with regard to programme input and output. It gives to the management of agricultural programmes indication as to the areas which require urgent and timely corrective measure. On the other hand, evaluation is the process of determining the extent to which objectives of a programme have been achieved. The fact remains that in most cases these activities (monitoring and evaluation) are not actually done. At most what is done is that staff who are trusted with these responsibilities sit down in their offices and conjure up report that may not have any bearing to the true position of the existing programme. This type of scenario will not augur well with agricultural extension practice in any country.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institutionalizing anti-corruption measures: Corruption poses a serious development challenge in many spheres of human endeavour including agricultural development.

In the political realm, it undermines democracy and good governance by subverting formal processes. Corruption in elections and in legislative bodies reduces accountability and representation in policy-making, corruption in the judiciary suspends the rule of law, corruption in administration results in the unequal provision of services and corruption in agricultural practices brings about unequal and limited access to productive resources and outputs. Generally speaking, corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off and officials are hired or promoted without regard to performance. Similarly, it undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values as trust and tolerance.

Corruption in its entirety is not good for any government or private sector because it undermines economic development by generating considerable distortions and inefficiency. Therefore, it is onus on government to institutionalize anti-corruption measures so as to stem the tide. Centre for Democracy and Governance (1999) had articulated some anti-corruption measures to include:

Privatization: Privatization offers a clear means to limit the authority of government. By removing the government from some economic activities; it eliminates employment, procurement and financial contracts. However, the process of privatizing government enterprises and agencies itself could be vulnerable to corruption. To ensure the integrity of the process, privatization requires special measures of transparency and thus should have adequate regulatory and commercial legal framework to protect consumers and investors.

Liberalization: This offers a more straightforward means to limit government's authority. Eliminating tariffs, quotas, exchange rate restrictions, price controls and permitting requirements could simply strip officials of the power to extract bribes. At the same time, removing such controls reduces transaction costs, eliminates bottlenecks and fosters competition.

Freedom of information legislation: This will improve accountability by enhancing the transparency of government operations. It counteracts official secrets acts and claims of national security that impede corruption inquiries. Freedom of information legislation also informs citizens of the procedures for government services, curtailing attempts to subvert the system or to demand gratifications for information that legally should be public.

Sanctions: Applying sanctions to corrupt acts is an important step forward establishing accountability. In large part, sanctions are centred on legislation to criminalize corruption, which many countries have introduced in recent years. For example, in Nigeria some corrupt-fighting commissions were instituted which include-the Code of Conduct Bureau, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Accountability requires not just establishing sanctions but enforcing them on an impartial basis. Without enforcement, tough laws have no impact on reducing corruption and may foster general cynicism about reform efforts.

Societal reforms: These entail changing attitudes and mobilizing political will. In addition to other institutional reforms efforts to fight corruption include societal reforms to change attitudes toward formal political processes and to mobilize political will for change. Societal reforms generate new information about the costs and causes of corruption to stimulate demand for change and provide guidance on what to change. Societal reforms also foster structures to facilitate monitoring and advocacy by civil society. There is need to realign incentives by providing living wage, performance-based incentives, professionalization, ethics codes, eliminating redundant and ghost workers.

CONCLUSION

Agricultural extension development and practice in Nigeria is a fundamental issue of concern necessary for improved agricultural production. With its huge potentials as employer of labour, agriculture remains one of the most effective instruments for overall economic development of the country. There is need therefore that governments at all levels should go beyond mere budget pronouncements by ensuring that provisions for agriculture are faithfully implemented. However, greed and corruption on the part of practitioners of agricultural development process is a big challenge in the agricultural sector.

However, to effectively control corruption in Nigeria, ethical standards in decision-making must be the foundation of the nation's policy on corruption. Therefore, armed with ethics and virtue the nation should reduce personal gains from corrupt behaviour by instituting effective sanctions for corrupt behaviours. Nevertheless, lack of adequate rewards for good skills and honest efforts are among the reasons for the upsurge of corruption in the society. It is necessary therefore that adequately rewarding workers for their services could go

a long way in controlling corruption in agricultural sector. Thus, the keys to effectively and significantly reduce corruption in any society are honest and integrity, effective leadership and governance, transparency and accountability.

Hence, any effort aimed at improving agricultural extension development and practice in Nigeria would require an articulated and functional policy on agricultural extension with defined roles, goals and targets. With this in place, it is hoped that the challenges of greed and corruption in agricultural extension development and practice would be overcome.

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