

PDF - CONSTRAINTS TO ORGANIZING AGRICULTURAL SHOWS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA -
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The study assessed the constraints to organizing agricultural shows in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, it ascertained the roles of agencies involved in organizing agricultural shows; ascertained the procedures in organizing agricultural shows by the stakeholders; identified factors militating against the organization of agricultural shows; and identified strategies required for improving the organization of agricultural shows. The study was carried out in Benue State, Nigeria. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select 30% of the respondents from each of the five (5) agencies to obtain a sample of fifty (50) respondents. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire and interview schedule. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation, percentage) were used to present data while the statistical product and service solution (SPSS) version 16 was the statistical software package used for the analysis. Majority (74.0%) of the respondents were males while (26.0%) were females. Majority (70.0%) of the respondents were civil servants while (30.0%) engaged in farming. Majority (68.0%) of the respondents had 1-10 years of experience in agricultural show while 20.0% had between 11-20 years of experience in agricultural show. 80.0% and 4.0% had 21-30 and 31-40 years of agricultural show respectively. Majority (68.0%) of the respondents belonged to cooperative organizations. Farm inputs (94.0%) topped the list of rewards given to participants of agricultural shows, followed by certificates (90.0%), honours (82.0%); sponsorship to higher competition (72.0%); cash (64.0%); and study tour (32.0%). Factors militating against the organization of agricultural shows were lack of fund (M=2.78), policy inconsistency (M=2.55); lack of incentives (M=2.52); absence of political will by government (M=2.49); non involvement of farmers and their affiliate unions in decision making process (M=2.46); lack of infrastructural facilities (M=2.43); political interference in management (M=2.40); lack of farmers interest in agricultural shows (M=1.37); only lack of farmers' interest in agricultural show was rated as having the lowest grade. The major strategies for improvement of agricultural shows as suggested by the respondents included; functional policy for agricultural shows to be held regularly (M=2.3); conception of agricultural shows by organizations with strong capital base (M=2.59); theme selection to address sensitive and topical issues (M=2.94); capacity building (M=2.17); and cost recovery measures (M=.200). It was recommended that a major strategy for improving agricultural shows is for functional policy to be made a regular feature. There should be provision of adequate funding and timely release of funds by agencies to properly plan and organize agricultural shows. Farmers should be organized into viable associations to ensure their active participation in the organization of agricultural shows.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background information

Agricultural show is a public event exhibiting equipment, animals, sports and recreation associated with agriculture and animal husbandry (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2009). It is the display of the achievement of agricultural production and science. Van-Osdell (2008) stated that in socialist countries, agricultural show serves the interest of the whole state and all the people. Their purpose is to accelerate the development of agriculture in the technical, technological and organizational aspects on the basis of introducing the achievements of agricultural science and progressive practice into farm production. Rasmussen, (1999) reported that in capitalist states, agricultural shows pursue primarily commercial purposes and are at the same time referred to as fairs. In other words, agricultural fairs, exhibitions and shows are used interchangeably (Wikipedia, 2013).

The WorldBook Encyclopedia (2004) defined agricultural show as an event held for presenting and viewing of exhibits. Depending on the theme of the show, the exhibits may be agricultural, commercial, industrial, or artistic. Roberts (2011) opined that some agricultural shows are called expositions or exhibitions. Small shows last just a few days and involve exhibitors and visitors from a local area, while large shows run for months. They attract exhibitors and visitors from a large number of nations. Agricultural show is a major industry in the United States and Canada. More than 3,200 shows are held annually in the two countries, and they earn more than \$1.7 billion for the areas in which they are held (World Encyclopedia, 2004).

An agricultural show is one of the powerful communication techniques that is used to convey information to some persons or groups of persons (Mbata and Iwueke, 2007). For an agricultural show to communicate effectively, the exhibitor must know the target audience and must choose the medium or channel most likely to convey information to the audience. The success of an agricultural show is judged by the extent to which it informs, educates and explains methods and motivates the target audiences (Okereke, 2004). Gerald and Fuchs (2008) reported that in agricultural shows, the target audiences are usually farmers, extension workers and persons engaged in the agricultural industry. Since there is a mixed audience in any show, intended meanings can usually be conveyed by the use of simple communication techniques.

Agricultural shows hold contests for the best breeds of crops, livestock, poultry, local crafts, farm machinery and other farm products. Most agricultural shows organize competitions for various home prepared foods. Companies exhibit and demonstrate agricultural machinery and other equipment. Farm youth groups and adult organizations also participate (Ifenkwe, 2012).

Agricultural shows and field days are temporary exhibition events that offer farmers the opportunity for study tours. Such shows serve as occasions for participants to come and see and, in addition to the optical (sight) experience gained, put other sensory organs like kinesthetic (touch), gustatory (taste), olfactory (smell) and auditory (hearing) organs into productive use (Jones and Garforth, 1997).

Agricultural shows can be divided into three general categories, primarily based on their size. The categories are; national shows, regional and state shows. National and state shows normally last for two to three days and are operated by government with permanent staff. States come together to organize regional shows. In other words, regional shows comprise many states. However, in recent years, a number of state agricultural shows are organized by non-profit organizations (World Book Encyclopedia, 2004).

Agricultural shows have a long history worldwide. The United States' first agricultural show was held in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1811 (Kniffen, 1949). Agricultural shows were often considered the principal event for many rural areas (Getz, 1991 as cited in Mihalik & Ferguson, 1994) and were historically viewed as a special entertainment excursion for families (Mihalik and Ferguson, 1994). Williams and Bowdin (2007), supported this view as they state that important subset of these entertainment choices is that of special events or festivals, defined as away – from – home, themed celebrations lasting for a limited amount of time. Wine festivals, fall festivals, or agricultural shows are examples of special entertainment events that have their roots in agriculture. Many of these agricultural related special events are steeped in American tradition and history. Agricultural shows in U.S. were often enlivened with competitive events, including sheaf tossing, show jumping food competitions and tent pegging.

Robertson (2011) reported that in Britain, the first agricultural show was held by Salford – Agricultural society, Lancashire in 1768. Since the nineteenth century, agricultural shows have provided communities with an opportunity to celebrate achievements and enjoy a break from day – to – day routine. The 150 years of agricultural shows in Britain cast useful light on the changing relationship between man and the countryside (Goddard, 2011). With a combination of serious competition and light entertainment, annual shows in Britain acknowledge and rewarded the hardwork and skill of primary producers and provided a venue for rural families to socialize and network. City shows also provided city people with an opportunity to engage directly with rural life and food production. The royal agricultural society show is a ground breaking initiative in innovations in agriculture. Examples of such shows include royal Launceston show in Australia, expointers show in Brazil, Fielday Hamilton in New Zealand, International agricultural show in Australia, salon international de l' agriculture de Paris in France and many more.

In Africa, agricultural shows will continue to play a very important role, especially in ex-British colonies including Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ghana, South-Africa, Benin Republic etc. (Robertson, 2011). During the colonial period, national and international agricultural shows were organized, and following independence these have continued in some countries in Africa. Federal Government of Nigeria (2002) reported that since the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in 1965, various attempts have been made to organize national agricultural shows. These attempts include "The fifth national agric-business show 2000" coming after about eight (8) years break since there were no shows between 1992 and 1999. This was followed by "the All Nigeria Food and Agricultural Show (ANIFAS) in 2002.

Federal Government of Nigeria (2008) reported that the first truly organized national agricultural show in the country was "the international agricultural show, 2007" held at the permanent show ground, Karu – Abuja. The show was a result of discussion held between All-Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and

the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) following the experiences gained from the 2006 United Kingdom Royal Agricultural show held in Coventry, United Kingdom. Subsequently, a joint committee of principal organizers comprising Federal Government, the National Agricultural Foundation of Nigeria and other stakeholders was established to initiate, organize, sponsor and institutionalize it as an annual event in perpetuity. The matter was adopted at the national council on agriculture and federal executive council granted its approval and formal inauguration on May 15, 2007.

The evolution of agricultural show in Benue state is intertwined with her political history. By 1976, Benue State was created and was organizing agricultural shows at both local and zonal levels on a routine basis. Between 1976 and mid 1980's, the state governments adopted an interventionist approach with the government engaged in activities related to organization of agricultural shows and other development programmes in the state. The introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the mid 1980's which had privatization and commercialization as its cardinal principles had a negative effect on the organization and management of agricultural shows in the state (Benue State of Nigeria, MOA, 2003). According to Agbara, Ejembi et al (2002), there appears to be no official reasons to account for the apparent shift of government's interests away from the sponsorship of state agricultural shows. Kpelai (2003) reported that properly organized central farmers associations were virtually absent in the state. In fact, as at 2002, there were only two registered agricultural associations in the State. This did not help the cause of agriculture in general and agricultural shows in particular. The reason for this development is that when government appeared to be dragging its financial feet on sponsorship of agricultural shows, there was no well mobilized pressure group to fight against the decline (Oche, 2004). According to Ifenkwe (2012), suitable institutional framework for organizing agricultural shows are federal government through the federal ministries of agriculture, education, science and technology; state governments; federal universities of agriculture; federal and state polytechnics; federal and state colleges of education; federal and state secondary schools; state primary schools; private schools etc can organize agricultural shows focusing interest on their research, teaching and extension mandates.

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