

# PDF - ACCESS AND UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AMONG WOMEN FARMERS IN AGRICULTURAL ZONES ABAK - researchcub.info

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The sustainable production of food is the first pillar of food security, and millions of women farmers work as farmers, and natural resources managers. In doing so, they contribute to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security (Onyemibi, 2000).

According to Nnadozie and Ibe (2006) women play a very significant role in Nigeria Agricultural production, processing and utilization. Agricultural Extension Personnel are very important in the development of agriculture. They utilize strategic vital agriculture information for the individual and general improvement of the farmers, homemakers and youths. This could be in the area of their family technique, family nutrition, and community development. Therefore, according to Nnadozie and Ibe (2006) the integration of women in extension is essential for the achievement of some goals such as increase food production, food self-sufficiency and sustained reduction of poverty and mal-nutrition.

The participation of women in agriculture has attracted greater attention in recent times over the years. In the past two or three decades, considerable research has been done on gender-related issues in Nigerian agriculture. These have had some effect on policy formulation and programme including perhaps the creation of women-in-agriculture (WIA) unit in several states and federal government ministries of agriculture and the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP's). It is however, difficult to measure how effective this has been especially in terms of moving agriculture forward (2007) [www.unn.edu.ng](http://www.unn.edu.ng). Women-in-agriculture (WIA) are sub-components in the extension unit of the ADP's and it focus on improving agricultural production, processing and marketing by rural women. Women-in-agriculture (WIA) were mandated to carry out gender specific activities among 30% of farmers which of necessity must be women in Akwalbom State Agricultural Development Project (AKADEP), (2000). The agent works directly with women farmers, identifying and directing women into groups in the blocks and registering groups into cooperative societies. The formation of WIA group facilitates dissemination of Agricultural innovation and farm inputs and credit than they would have as individuals (Saito and Gadzame 1996). The greatest activities of WIA still remains to form women groups and assist them establish group-farms. It is through these groups that WIA extension agent transfer recommended technologies to the women for adoption. However, the WIA programme places much emphasis on off-farm activities of the women and has concentrated in the transfer of the following home economic technologies;

- (1) Cassava processing and utilization-pancake, flow and odorless fufu.
- (2) Processing and storage of maize, garri, cassava flour, tapioca maize flour, malted maize drink, corn meal; pap (wet and malted maize flour).
- (3) Processing and utilization of soybean into soymilk, flour paste and soymeal.
- (4) Processing and storage of fresh tomatoes into tomato paste.
- (5) Rabbit meat processing and utilization.
- (6) Processing and storage of melon.
- (7) Cocoyam processing and utilization into cocoyam flour for soup thickening and cocoyam chips.
- (8) Dry season vegetable garden.
- (9) Harvesting and storage of paddy rice.

All these cannot be achieved without the effective use of communication. Any means by which information can be transferred between women in agriculture and rural women is very important for sustainable agriculture.

Information and Communication Technology is the scientific, technological and engineering disciplines and the management technologies used in the handling of information, processing and application related to computer. It is also concerned with the interaction with man and machines; and associated socio-economic and cultural matters (Osuagwu, 2011).

Information Technology according to Marshall (1984) in Madu (2000) is the coming together of computing and telecommunications for the purpose of handling information tools and processes to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, produce, present and exchange information by electronic and other automated means. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an umbrella term that includes any communication devices or application, encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite system and so on, as well as the various services and applications. Associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning (search target.com, 2017). It also encompasses diverse sets of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store and manage information. Also, Hazelma and Flor (2004) stated that ICT refers to all information and communication systems and technologies inclusive not only of digital formats interface with radio; cable and wireless, television, video cellular phones, print media and others. The above definitions have revealed a number of ICT tools which are highly crucial to any agricultural development system and to women farmers in particular.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Sustainable agriculture is best defined as a way of producing food that meets the needs of the nation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Okori, 2003). Women are major actors in all aspects of life. They are farmers, civil servants, home managers, craftsmen, traders which or combination of two or more of these activities.

Generally, women play significant roles in agriculture all over the world. According to FAO (1996), they contribute as high as 70% of workforce, 80% producers (Rahman and Usman, 2014) 10% processors of basic foodstuff 60-90% of farm laboratory. Also they keep livestock, fetch water, carry fuel wood (Akpabio, 2005) and contribute 74% of fish producers and marketers. However, in order to complement the effort of women to provide adequate food in quantity and quality to the ever-increasing population. Women in agriculture programmes sought to improve agriculture extension services for women. Women in agriculture (WIA) programme ensure that extension services in every level of operations from state inadequate down to the village. Extension is fundamental to rural way. But according to Egbuna (2003) the need for information and communication technologies is inevitable if extension must succeed in their important task.

The role of ICT enhances food security and support rural livelihoods was officially endorsed at the world summit on the information society (WSIS) in 2005. ICTs are technologies involve in retrieving, disseminating and implementing data and information using microelectronics, optics and telecommunication and computers (FAO, 1993). Although it is recently a new phenomenon, evidence of its contribution to agricultural development and poverty alleviation is becoming increasingly recognized.

According to Meera et al (2004) ICT can bring about new information services to rural areas where women farmers will have much greater control of their resources than ever before. However, there is still dearth

of knowledge and information and new technology in agriculture that is yet to be exploited. Access to such information sources is a crucial reference for sustainable agricultural development especially among women farmers. Presently, it is still quite unclear whether farmers in Akwa Ibom State are adequately exposed to the use of ICTs in their farming operations. It is expected that there should be a flow of knowledge and new information from various research institutions to the farmers. Also, with the exposition of ICTs in the nation, there is great expectation that women-in-agriculture (WIA) agent would have substantially empowered information to women farmers. This is because of how far farmer's progress in whatever actually depends largely on the awareness, accessibility, relevance and reliability to accurate information. It is against this that this study seeks to provide answers to the following questions.

- (1) What are the socioeconomic characteristics of women in the study area?
- (2) What are the available ICTs in the study areas?
- (3) What is the extent of ICTs accessibility to women farmer in the study area?
- (4) What is the level of utilization of ICTs among women farmers in the study areas?
- (5) What factors constraints women farmers from utilizing ICTs in the study area?

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to investigate the access and utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT's) among women farmers in Akwa Ibom State.

The study sought to;

- (i) examine socio-economic characteristics of women farmers in the study area.
- (ii) identify the various ICT available in the study area.
- (iii) ascertain the extent of accessibility of ICT among women farmers in the study areas.
- (iv) determine the level of utilization of ICTs among women farmers in the study area.
- (v) identify perceived constraints to the use of ICT tools among women farmers in the study areas.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to guide government, to formulate policies and generate programmes as they relate especially to women and information disseminating to their counterparts in rural areas.

According to Madukwe (2000) the promise of ICTs in agricultural extension is that they can energize the collection, processing and transmission of data, resulting in faster extension of quality information to more farmers in the bottom-up and interactive channel of communication. Also increasing the use of ICTs in agricultural extension will now narrow the gender disparities in terms of access to agricultural information. It is expected that this study will expose different areas of use of ICT which will motivate the ADP's and other agricultural organizations/agencies to adjust and recognize programmes in favour of ICT utilization by women in agriculture. Researchable areas should also be exposed to students and researchers though this study for further relevance of ICTs in agricultural development generally.

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