

Agricultural Extension and the Challenges of Insecurity in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Nigeria

Inedu Samuel Akor

Department of Home Economics, School of Vocational and Technical Education, FCT College of education, Zuba-Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract

The adoption of improved farming systems and techniques remain relevant as they impact positively on Nigeria's agricultural landscape. Agricultural extension activities yield notable dividends for the farmers and the nation at large. Insecurity has however become a threat to agricultural extension services in Nigeria. This paper therefore investigates agricultural extension and the challenges of insecurity in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The study adopts descriptive survey research design. The population was made up of 201 staff of Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria. The sample size of 103 staff was used for the study, using purposive sampling technique. Eleven items structured questionnaire titled "Agricultural Extension and Challenges of Insecurity (AECI) Questionnaire" was used as instrument for data collection. Content validity was used. Test-retest method of reliability was used to obtain the internal consistency. The reliability index was obtained through Cronbach's alpha (0.78). Out of the 103 questionnaires administered, 97 were returned valid, representing 94% success rate. The analyses of data were carried out based on the specific objectives and research questions of the study. Data collected was imputed into the SPSS (25) software package where descriptive statistics (percentage) and graphs were used for data analysis. The study revealed that agricultural extension service in the Federal Capital Territory is confronted with major security challenges which are kidnapping and banditry as well as insurgency. It is recommended that E-extension services (television and radio broadcast, mobile phone sms, internet etc) establishment of grazing site around the forests and aerial surveillance by security agents will serve as better measures to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, insecurity, E-extension services, kidnapping and banditry

Introduction

Agricultural activities and production is fundamental to the satisfaction of human daily food need. Most fundamentally, agricultural sector is the key drive towards employment generation for the teeming population. It could increase earnings which serve as a boost for individual and national income. To meet the food security need of the country and also raw materials needed for industrial revolution of the country, there is the need for an improved agricultural production process. This has become of paramount importance to both the individual and government at all levels.

According to Adediran (2018), agricultural extension programs (AEP) involves activities that are primarily concern with the improvement of agricultural production and by implication achieve food security, archive diversification for the Nigerian economy which is dependent on oil and increase the country's earnings through improved food production. The Food and Agricultural Organization (2010) defines agricultural extension as a system that facilitate the access of farmers, their organizations and other market actors

to knowledge, information and technologies; facilitate their interaction with partners in research, education, agribusiness, and other relevant institutions; and assist them to develop their own technical, organizational and management skills and practices. This definition reveals that an extension is a primary tool for making agriculture, its related activities as well as other economic activities more effective and efficient to meet the needs of the people.

There is still a preponderance of small scale farmers in Nigeria. The type of farming system prevalent is the traditional subsistent farming. In terms of technology, Nigeria is still lagging behind when compared to other nations in Europe and Asia. Also there are few extension officers to transfer new technology to the farmers (Metu, Okeyika & Maduka, 2016). The adoption of improved farming systems and techniques remain relevant as they impact positively on Nigeria's agricultural landscape. This is why investments in agricultural extension activities by governments and foreign partners become important. Agricultural extension activities yield notable dividends for the farmers and the nation at large. But all is not well with agricultural production and, indeed, extension service delivery in Nigeria. In fact, farming and extension continue to face daunting challenges that require urgent attention. The problem of insecurity at the top of problems confronting farmers has negative implication on implementation of agricultural extension services to affected communities.

The spate of insecurity in Nigeria is rising over the years. According to Abdullahi (2019), crime against persons, including murder, rape, abduction, cultism, theft, car snatching, robbery of farms, homes and offices, waylaying of travelers (high-way robbery) have become the forms of insecurity threatening the fabric of society, causing a breakdown of the social order. Many Nigerians have recently found themselves in dilemma on how to find solutions to the incessant killings, kidnappings, abductions, destruction of properties by criminal gangs and insurgents. Oduehie, Ifenkwe, Shu'aibu and Adolphus (2023) cited Premium Times revealed that 1,416 lives were reported to have been lost to insecurity in the first quarter of 2020 in Nigeria. Sources of this violent death range from attacks from insurgency, banditry, cult clashes, herdsmen attack, communal clashes, mob action and rape. In the first quarter of 2014 alone, 262 persons lost their lives in 15 separate attacks in Benue State, and the clashes have continued overtime. In one instance, bandits brazenly attacked the State Governors' convoy. Similarly, 16 separate attacks were reported in Plateau and Kaduna States in the same period. They led to the loss of 139 lives, with scores of people injured (Oduehie, Ifenkwe, Shu'aibu & Adolphus, 2023).

Security crisis particularly in northern Nigeria has contributed to the worsening problem of food insecurity and extension services to farmers. Herders and farmers conflicts, banditry, kidnapping as well as the security threats of Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWA) have all contributed to the problems of food insecurity, as farmers are unable to go to farm to cultivate. Also, extension workers find it difficult to discharge their responsibility because of threat to life. The challenge of extension service is the problem associated with farmer- herders conflicts for arable land, banditry attacks and other forms of terrorism (Shehu, Victor, & Binta, 2017). Increasing frustration and impoverishment of farmers occasioned by perennial and extensive farm plot destruction and the ensuing bitter conflicts are eroding the gains of extension efforts. This is a problem for extension services because the ultimate objective of extension service is the enhancement of living standards of farming households. The Fulani herdsmen of lower Sahel and Sudan Savannah are now being found in almost every farming community in Nigeria in search of greener pasture for their herds (Oyesola, 2000; Ajuwon, 2004).

The fear of farmers and prospective agro-investors due to insecurity has limited many of these categories of people not to take the risk of investing in agriculture by setting

up farm settlements for large scale farming activity. The issue of Fulani herders who have been reported on national dailies and TV news of overtaking and destroying farmlands so their cattle could get something to feed on. They do this by engaging farm owner in serious arguments that later lead to riot thereby leaving the farmer helpless while they destroy the farm. Many extension workers could not go for under spot assessment and training of farmers owing to the killings and kidnappings that were rampant on Kaduna-Abuja and Lokoja-Abaji express-ways among other major high-ways and community roads in the country. This insecurity on our highways have limited the number of extension programmes, workshops and conferences that may promote agricultural productivities or motivate individuals most especially investors in seeing the opportunities in the value chains and investing in it.

Regrettably, successive governments have failed to successfully tackle the issue of insecurity. The inability of government to provide a secure and safe environment for lives and properties has direct negative implication on agricultural extension workers and farming communities at large. Robertson and Steve (2012) reported that incessant resource-based conflicts have adversely affected the effective delivery of extension services by extension agents, which in turn reduced farmers' level of utilization of technologies in the area. The authors further stated that extension agents are hindered by insecurity of various magnitudes which make it difficult to carry out extension services like the number of visits per extension agent, number of contact with farmer groups, training of contact farmers and demonstrations on small plots or management training plots (MTPs) to teach the farmer new techniques and practices which enable them to compare the results of the old and new practices were greatly affected by insecurity. Adelakun, Adurogbangba and Akinbile (2015) related that the effect of insecurity on availability of extension services, adoption of improved technologies by both crop and livestock farmers and continued use of adopted technologies was very severe.

Adzenga, Umar, Olaleye, Ajayi and Onyenkazi (2019) cited Kimenyi, et al state that agricultural extension agencies and institutions like the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) and research institutes that support the agricultural sector are also affected during security crisis. Insecurity may have forced most of these institutions (government agencies, ADPs and research institutes) to reduce their activities like field trials and monitoring among others to minimal functions, relocate to areas where attacks are minimal or cancelled some activities. The use of farm visit group method and discussion, mass media, posters and audio visual are very effective means of extending knowledge to the rural farmers in agricultural extension service programme to alleviate food insecurity in Nigeria. Extension is extremely important in helping to confront problems of food availability, access and utilization. It helps to enhance the productivity and consequently the production of food. It can assist in providing opportunities for income generation.

A number of measures have previously been put in place by successive government to tackle the problem of insecurity as it affects extension services. Integrated Regional Information Networks (2010) reports that the Nigerian government continues to carve out new stock routes for herdsmen, especially in the North-Central states. The IRIN (2010) reports that the government is also demarcating a 1,400km livestock route from Sokoto State in the northwest, to Oyo State in the southwest and another 2,000km route from Adamawa State in the northeast to Calabar in the delta region. This is in addition to demarcating 175,000 hectares of grazing land, building veterinary service centers, and constructing settlements for nomads to use en route, at a cost of US\$247 million. Unfortunately, these conflicts between herders and farmers not only continue to persist, they are on the rise.

Oduehie, Ifenkwe, Shu'aibu and Adolphus (2023) however suggest that security agents at all levels should through modern methods of intelligence gathering, and sharing, training, logistics, motivation, and deploying advanced technology should manage security challenges across the country. Also, Adediran (2018) argues that a workable environment should be created by government where the agricultural extension workers can objectively undertake the various extension programs and policies that will impact positively on the rural farmers whose productivity is consequent upon the quality of information and knowledge available to them. It is against this backdrop that this paper investigated agricultural extension and the challenges of insecurity in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Extension service delivery system suffers from inadequate number of extension staff and impart tariff on fertilizer, machineries and other agricultural inputs. But the researcher observes that for a decade, insecurity has become a threat to agricultural extension service in Nigeria. No part of the country is excluded from the problem of insecurity in various dimensions. Problem of kidnappings, farmers-herders' clashes, insurgency and banditry among others have greatly affected the agricultural extension services and investments in the country. It is now a usual thing in our dailies and TV/Radio headlines, for reporters to report incidents that happened due to the insecurity in the country and this does not leave any part of the country behind as it applies to all the thirty-six (36) states of the federations including the Federal Capital Territory- Abuja. These problems thus necessitated this study on agricultural extension and the challenges of insecurity in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives the study sought to achieve were to:

1. Ascertain the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
2. Identify the strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the investigation:

1. What are the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?
2. What are the strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population was made up of 201 staff of Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria. The sample size of 103 staff was used for the study, using purposive sampling technique. Eleven items structured questionnaire titled "Agricultural Extension and Challenges of Insecurity (AECI) Questionnaire" was used as instrument for data collection. Content validity was used. Test-retest method of reliability was used to obtain the internal consistency. The reliability index was obtained through Cronbach's alpha (0.78). Out of the 103 questionnaires administered, 97 were returned valid, representing 94% success rate. The analyses of data were carried out based on the specific objectives and research questions of the study. Data

collected was imputed into the SPSS (25) software package where descriptive statistics (percentage) and graphs were used for data analysis. Discussions of findings were done immediately after each data analysis.

Study Area

Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria is located at House, Plot 223D, Cadastral Zone B6, Mabushi, Abuja, Nigeria. The ARC was established as far back as 1999. But it actually came into being in 2007, with the appointment of the first Executive Secretary, Professor B.Y Abubakar. The ARC is a Nigerian government agency coordinating and monitoring agricultural research to increase agricultural productivity for economic development. The agency also trains farmers. In 2021, the agency inaugurated Agricultural Radio and Television to disseminate information to farmers more effectively. The Council is under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. Any form of agricultural research, any form of agricultural training or extension, falls under the purview of the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria. The current Executive Secretary of the Council, Professor Garba Hamidu Sharubutu, represents Nigeria on the Board of Trustees of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation, an organization that works towards promoting food security prospects in the continent through agricultural technology and giving support to farmers and governments Sub-Saharan Africa to easily access tools and resources that will give them the needed competitive edge in the 21st century agriculture markets.

Results

Research Question One: What are the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

Table 1: Major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers

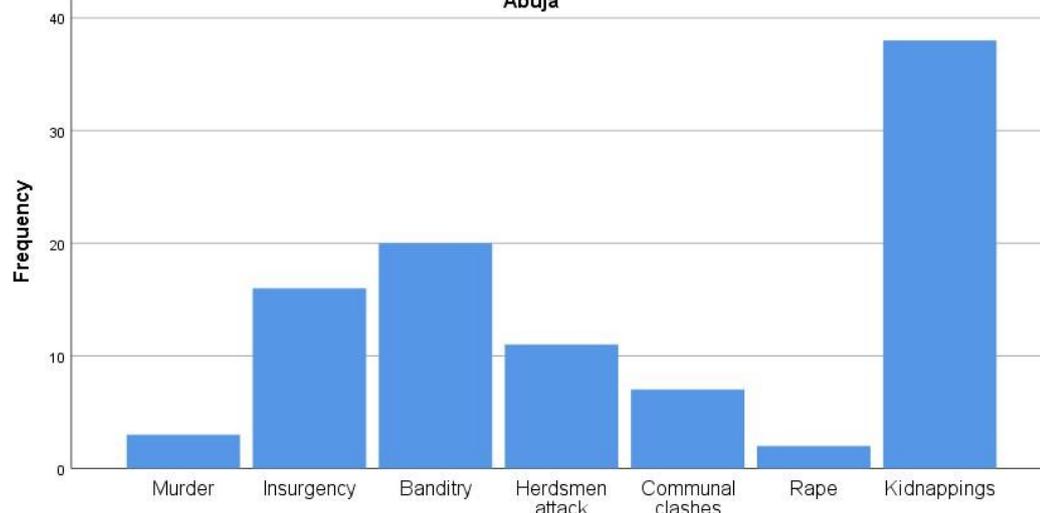
Variables	Frequency	Percent
Murder	3	3.1
Insurgency	16	16.5
Banditry	20	20.6
Herdsmen attack	11	11.3
Communal clashes	7	7.2
Rape	2	2.1
Kidnappings	38	39.2
Total	97	100.0

Source: SPSS, version 25

Table 1 reveals the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. 38 (39.2%) of the respondents were of the view that kidnapping is the major security threat. 20 (20.6%) of the respondents were of the view that banditry is the major security threat, 16 (16.5%) of the respondents were of the view that insurgency is the major security threat and 11 (11.3%) of the respondents were of the view that herdsmen attack is the major security threat. While 7 (7.2%) of the respondents were of the view that communal clashes is the major security threat, 3 (3.1%) of the respondents were of the view that it is murder and 2 (2.1%) of the respondents were of the view that it is rape. The general overview of the table indicates that greater percentage of the respondents were of the views that kidnapping (39.2%) and banditry (20.6%) were the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in

the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The graph in figure I give a clearer picture of the major security threats to extension workers in the FCT.

Figure I: Major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja



An overview of the graph indicates that kidnapping (39.2%) and banditry (20.6%) were the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Research Question Two: What are the strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja? **Table 2:** Strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers

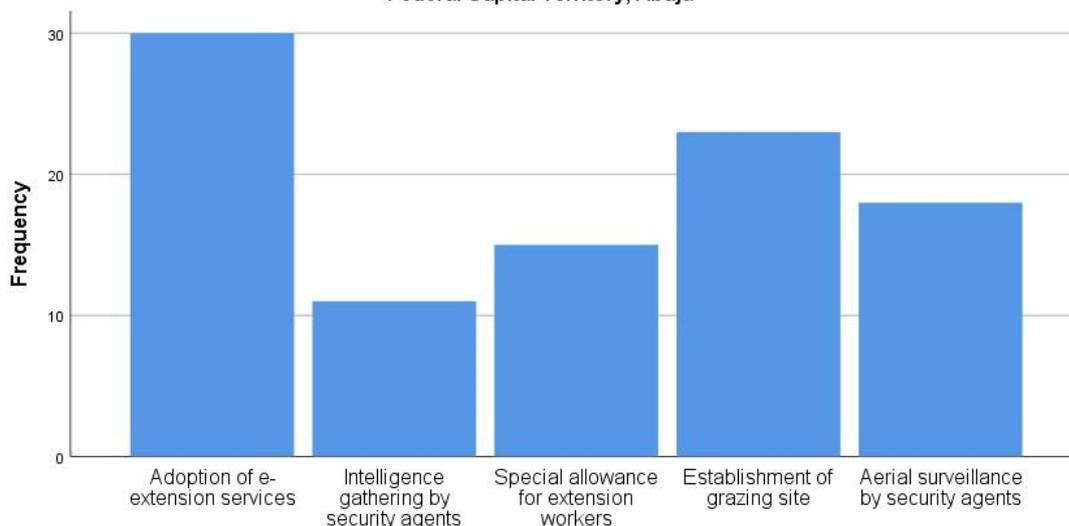
Variables	Frequency	Percent
Adoption of e-extension services	30	30.9
Intelligence gathering by security agents	11	11.3
Special allowance for extension workers	15	15.5
Establishment of grazing site	23	23.7
Aerial surveillance by security agents	18	18.6
Total	97	100.0

Source: SPSS, version 25

Table 2 reveals the strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. 30 (30.9%) of the respondents were of the view that adoption of e-extension services is a better strategy to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers, 23 (23.7%) of the respondents were of the view that establishment of grazing site is a better strategy and 18 (18.6%) of the respondents were of the view that aerial surveillance by security agents is a better strategy. While 15 (15.5%) of the respondents were of the view that special allowance for extension workers is better strategy, 11 (11.3%) of the respondents were of the view that intelligence gathering by security agents is a better strategy. The general overview of the table indicates that greater percentage of the respondents were of the views that adoption of e-extension services (30.9%) and the establishment of grazing site (23.7%) were better strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension

workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The graph in figure II give a clearer picture of the respondents' view.

Figure II: Strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja



An overview of the graph indicates that adoption of e-extension services (30.9%) and the establishment of grazing site (23.7%) were better strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Discussion of Findings

The findings as shown in Table 1 revealed the major security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja to include kidnapping and banditry. There is also security threat of insurgency and herdsmen attack. But kidnapping and banditry are the major security threats to extension workers. These findings contradicted the earlier work of Abdullahi (2019) who found that crime against persons, including murder, rape, abduction, cultism, theft, car snatching, robbery of farms, homes and offices, waylaying of travelers (high-way robbery) have become the forms of insecurity threatening the fabric of society, causing a breakdown of the social order. However, it corroborated the earlier findings by Shehu, Victor and Binta (2017) that security crisis particularly in northern Nigeria include herdsmen and farmers conflicts, banditry, kidnapping as well as the security threats of Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWA). These have contributed to the worsening problem of food insecurity and extension services to farmers. Extension workers find it difficult to discharge their responsibility because of threat to life. The challenge of extension service is the problem associated with farmer– herdsmen conflicts for arable land and banditry attacks..

In Table 2, it was revealed that the adoption of e-extension services, establishment of grazing site and aerial surveillance by security agents were better strategies to solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Special allowance for extension workers is also considered as better strategy. These findings agreed with the suggestion by Oduchie, Ifenkwe, Shu'aibu and Adolphus (2023) that security agents at all levels should through modern methods of intelligence gathering, and sharing, training, logistics, motivation, and deploying advanced technology should manage security challenges across the country. It also agreed with the suggestion by Adediran (2018) that a workable environment should be created by government where the agricultural extension workers can objectively undertake the

various extension programs and policies that will impact positively on the rural farmers whose productivity is consequent upon the quality of information and knowledge available to them. The findings were also in line with the suggestion by Kimenyi, et al in Adzenga, Umar, Olaleye, Ajayi and Onyenkazi (2019) that the use of mass media, posters and audio visual are very effective means of extending knowledge to the rural farmers in agricultural extension service programme.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The significant contribution of agricultural extension services to food production and overall development of agricultural sector of the economy cannot be underestimated. Based on the findings of the study, it thus concluded that agricultural extension service particularly in the Federal Capital Territory is confronted with major security challenges which are kidnapping and banditry as well as insurgency. It is thus recommended that Eextension services (television and radio broadcast, mobile phone sms, internet etc) establishment of grazing site around the forests and aerial surveillance by security agents will go a long way in solving the security challenges confronting agricultural extension workers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

References

- Abdullahi, A. (2019). Rural banditry, regional security and integration in West Africa. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 2 (3), 644-654.
- Adediran, A.J. (2018). Policy and agricultural extension programs: Implication for improved agricultural production in Nigeria. *Public Policy and Administration Research Journal*, 8 (12), 43-49
- Adelakun, O.E., Adurogbangba, B.A. & Akinbile, L.A. (2015). Socioeconomic effects of farmer pastoralist conflict on agricultural extension service delivery in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 19 (2), 59-70.
- Adzenga, J.I., Umar, I.S., Olaleye, R.S., Ajayi, O.J. & Onyenkazi, H.A. (2019). Farmers' perceived effects of communal conflicts on the delivery of agricultural extension services in North-Central, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 23 (4), 39 -47. Ajuwon, S.S. (2004). Case study: Conflict in fadama communities. In *Managing Conflict in Community Development*. Community Driven Development. Retrieved from http://www.docstoc.com/docs/43037538/CASE-STUDY-ON-FADAMA_CONFLICTISSUES
- Food and Agricultural Organization (2010). Food and agriculture organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Ethiopia Country Brief. Retrieved from www.fao.org/countries/55528/en/eth/.
- Integrated Regional Information Networks (2010, April 30). Nigeria: Farmer-pastoralists' clash leaves 32 dead. IRIN News, Retrieved from <http://irinnews.org/Conflict.aspx> Retrieved 30/4/2010
- Metu, A.G., Okeyika, K.O. and Maduka, O.D. (2016). Achieving sustainable food security in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *3rd International Conference of Africa Development Issues*. 182-187
- Oduehie, T.C., Ifenkwe, G.E., Shu'aibu, H., & Adolphus, G. (2023). Prevalence and consequences of insecurity on livelihood of rural households in Enugu State: Implication for e-extension in Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 27 (1), 27-34.
- Oyesola, D.B. (2000). Training needs for improving income generating activities of agro pastoral women in Ogun State, Nigeria. (*Unpublished doctoral dissertation*), Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan
- Robertson, A. & Steve, O. (2012). *Adapting agricultural extension to peace building*. USA, Report of a Workshop by the National Academy of Engineering. 51p
- Shehu, S. A., Victor, E. & Binta M. (2017). The menace of cattle rustling and banditry in North-west Nigeria: A Case Study of Katsina State. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 7(6), 40-48.

