

STRENGTHENING FISHERIES EXTENSION UNDER THE UNIFIED AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM (UAES) POLICY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the prospect and constraints of fisheries extension under the unification policy. It revealed certain barriers influencing its fullest utilization as well as fisherfolks participation in extension programmes. Some of the barriers identified are related to inaccessibility, logistic support, improper aquaculture methodology, insufficient applied research in small scale fisheries, inability to convert research findings into positive results by small scale fisheries, inadequate number of fisheries research personnel within the existing research centers and institutes catering for the fishers sector, complexity of issues, lack of coordination and continuity in research and data deficiencies in small scale fisheries. Based on the findings, the paper recommends that, the effectiveness of the methods of identifying research needs by practitioners be assessed, the impact of the generated research results in reducing or solving field problems be ascertained, the constraints to diffusion of proven technologies from research being integrated into small scale fisheries be evaluated, the degree of effectiveness of extension delivery tools on fishers technology adoption be ascertained, and lastly, adequate applied research in small scale fishery be emphasized.

Key words: Strengthening, Fisheries Extension, Sustainable Fisheries and Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, aquaculture and artisanal capture fisheries (inland and coastal water) contributes significantly in fish production in Nigeria, providing an average of 84.2 percent of the total domestic output between the years 1990 and 1994 (CBN Annual Report, 1994). This important contribution of inland fisheries in fish production has since brought the attention of the Federal Government of Nigeria to focus immense emphasis on its development.

After the adoption of the Unified Agricultural Extensions System (UAES) by the ADPs in 1989, it assumed completely the extension role of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development s.

The unified agricultural extension system could be perceived as extension under one organization and with one frontline extension agent delivering message to the farmer in all the agricultural sub sectors which include fisheries, crop, livestock, agro forestry and women in agriculture (Okomoda and Ayanda, 1997). The system therefore, is geared towards incorporation as many agricultural activities undertaken with in a farm. Largely, unified agricultural extension system policy indicates joining of all aspect of agriculture (including fisheries) in order to achieve improved food production and income level of farmers to enhance livelihood and sustainable development.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this paper is to examine the prospect and constraints of fisheries extension under the unified agricultural extension system (UAES) policy in Nigeria. The paper centers on the following specific objectives:

- ❖ review of the scenario of fisheries extension in Nigeria,
- ❖ examination of the need for fisheries extension under the unified agricultural extension system,
- ❖ assessment of the prospect of fisheries extension under the unification policy,
- ❖ identification of constraints influencing fisheries extension with respect to unification policy, and
- ❖ making policy recommendations towards the improvement of the fisheries extension.

THE SCENARIO OF FISHERIES EXTENSION IN NIGERIA

The Federal Government has over the years designed fisheries policy to address economic development issues, focusing at sustained fish production and self-sufficiency. And, according to Ogbe *et al* (1986), it is aimed at the following:

- ❖ Effective management and control of inland water bodies,
- ❖ Introduction of selective modern fishing gear responsible for fishing and conservation of inland water resources,
- ❖ Introduction of public enlightenment campaign against bad fishing methods among others.

To actualize the policy, government has undertaken establishment of some institutions like National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFDPP) with mandate on extension, demonstration and pilot projects on improved fishery technology. Others include Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Federal and States Department of Fisheries, Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), foreign agencies, using self and foreign financing. The programmes peculiar to these institutions include;

- ❖ training of fishermen, fish farmer and fisheries extension staff on improved fisheries technologies.
- ❖ provision of credit and infrastructural facilities.
- ❖ mobilization and enlightenment of fishermen and fish farmers.
- ❖ artisanal fishery promotion through stocking of lakes and lagoon with fish seeds.

It is worthwhile to note that these institutions due to political instability and poor funding could not achieve the set goals of most of their programmes.

QUEST FOR FISHERIES EXTENSION UNDER UAES

Data on domestic fish production (in metric tones) has shown downward decline over the years, thus, 1982 (920,484), 1990 (315,000) and 1996 (200,171) as reported by FDF (1990) and FOS (1997). In order to sustain the current average domestic production of 511,000 metric tones per annum (FDF, 2005); an effective extension delivery system must be put in place. This has to take cognizance of the mobilization of fishermen and fish farmers for mass adoption of proven technologies in fish production.

The availability of technological packages to solve identified field problems is a major critical and potent factor in the recent extension delivery system.

The following questions, however, become pertinent:

- ❖ How effective has been the method of identification of research needs by the users,
- ❖ What has been the impact of the generated research in reducing or solving the field problems.
- ❖ How far is the proven technologies from research being integrated into small scale fisheries, and
- ❖ Degree of effectiveness of extension delivery tools on fisheries technology adoption.

Various commodity based research institutes exist in the crop sub sector, unlike the fisheries sub sector with only two fisheries research institutes namely; National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research (NIFFR) and Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR) and a handful of Universities engaged in fisheries research and training. Despite the insufficient number of these institutions, inadequate and untimely funding has persistently posed a major constraint militating against the generation of appropriate technology. Apart from these constraints on fisheries research, there are added constraints, which has been enumerated by Ogunsuyi (1993) to include:

- ❖ Insufficient applied research in small-scale fisheries,
- ❖ Inability to convert research finding into positive result by small-scale fisheries
- ❖ Inadequate number of fisheries research personnel within the existing research centers and institutes catering for the fisheries sector.
- ❖ Complexity of issue, that is, the problems of small-scale fisheries are usually very diverse and complex.
- ❖ Lack of co-ordination and continuity which often results in research being conducted on ad-hoc basis and too many problems are often addressed at the same time with the result that the research may be diffused and may lead to duplication of effort,
- ❖ Data deficiencies which are particularly acute for small scale fisheries
- ❖ Lack of appropriate methodologies/models for small scale fisheries, most available bio economic models are designed for large-scale fisheries

PECULIARITIES IN FISHERIES AS CONSTRAINTS TO UNIFICATION POLICY

The Unified Agricultural Extension System Policy of Nigeria assures the removal of weak linkages, which had characterized the previous paralleled extension services as practiced in the state Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development on sub sectoral basis. The efficacy of this system ensures full integration into the crops as a whole and fisheries in particular (Asala, 1994). Unlike the crop and other agricultural sub sector, the environment and ecosystem in which fisheries is practiced is aquatic and therefore has peculiar issues associated with it. For instance, majority of the fishing communities and villages are located in remote rural creeks, commonly found in a disperse form along the coastline, island, river and or close to large water bodies.

The terrain in which these communities are found dispose them to inaccessibility by road and often a time, accessibility is only through waterways. As a result of the remoteness of the fishing villages and the fragile ecosystem in which operations are carried out, they received very little or no attention from government and as such they are usually deprived of basic amenities that could enhance a better living. Such basic amenities include good road, health care facilities, portable domestic water supply, electricity and other basic infrastructures. Similarly, the acquisition of input necessary for fishing operations; both capture and aquaculture is capital intensive with respect to initial capital outlay (Nwabeze, 2006). This limitation goes a long way to affecting the fisheries extension under the UAES policy in Nigeria. With respect to the forgoing indisputable constraints, the application of the model developed on the crop sub sector has to be modified to incorporate both the various operations engaged in fisheries and the environment at which the activities are embarked upon.

Captured fisheries exploits are renewable resources, which very often are common property and free gift of nature (Ogunsuyi, 1993). Free gift of nature implies open access that warrants competition for the resources, which is unregulated fisheries leading to over exploitation (DFID/FAO 2005).

With respect to the aforementioned varied and complex environment, and activities involved in fisheries, the Training and Visit (T&V) model operated with UAES policy in Nigeria as highlighted earlier demands appropriate overhauling in the entire component to successfully address fisheries extension under the unification policy. This of course could be achieved through the acceptable existing broad approaches such as monthly technology review meeting (MTRM), fortnightly training (FNT) and farmer training at field level.

PROSPECTS OF FISHERIES EXTENSION UNDER THE UNIFICATION POLICY

It is imperative to note that the Small Plot Adoption Technique (SPAT) principle should not be misconceived to always refer to land area. It could be a craft type (such as canoe unit), gear type (fishing nets, hook and line), pond, and cage, among others, depending on the impact point to be disseminated. The SPAT as a tool could be employed for technologies involving gear conservation, stock density, pond fertilization and management, while most to the other achievements practiced in fisheries could be disseminated through demonstration and shows.

The system should take into cognizance the logistic problems associated with the agro-ecology for the practice of fisheries and therefore, the frontline extension agents should be adequately provided with means of transportation and adequate accommodation put in place for the agents to enhance their living among the fisher folks so as to secure their confidence.

CONCLUSION

The prospect of fisheries extension under the unification policy in Nigeria is well recognized and appreciated. Unfortunately, it operates under some constraints. Adequate and prompt training of various extension resource personnel is seen as essential ingredients to effective extension delivery system. Particularly, unification policy influences and enhances effective fishery extension.

As the reviews have shown that the training and visit approach adopted by the ADP operating within UAES policy have significant influence on fisher folks' participation in extension programme. It is important therefore that the system should target fisherfolks and fish farmers based on their need and farming system to enhance the adoption of impact points. Similarly, the degree of the effectiveness of the extension delivery tools should be ascertained. By so doing, the people will be helped to help themselves hence, the overall increase in output and success of the system.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve upon what has so far been achieved, the following recommendations are made for the consideration of the various institutions involved in fisheries research and extension, that:

- ❖ The effectiveness of the methods of identifying research needs by practitioners within the research institutes be assessed to appropriately meet the aspirations of the users,
- ❖ The impact of the generated research results in reducing or solving field problems be ascertained for better appreciation of the returns to society for public investment,
- ❖ The constraints to diffusion of proven technologies from research getting integrated into small-scale fisheries be evaluated,
- ❖ The degree of effectiveness of extension delivery tools on fisheries technology adoption be ascertained, and
- ❖ Adequate applied research in small-scale fisheries technology be emphasized.

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