Assessing The Level Of Awareness And Involvement Of Farmers In Agricultural Programmes Implemented In Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District, Eastern Sierra Leone

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Abstract: This study aimed at investigating the agricultural programmes adopted for promoting food security in Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District by government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) and communities in the chiefdom. The study was conducted in Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District. Luawa is a class (A) chiefdom which shares borders with both the Republic of Guinea, and Liberia. The design of this study is a descriptive one, which was aimed at assessing the agricultural programmes adopted for promoting food security in the Luawa chiefdom. A purposeful sample of eighty (80) farmers was used for this study. This sample was derived from an estimated major farming population of one hundred and twenty (120) farmers identified in the communities within the chiefdom. The study revealed that farmers are aware of, and are involved in all of the agricultural Programmes adopted by government, NGOs and the communities. However, their level of awareness and involvement were limited for the following programmes: Construction of food processing plants; training in post-harvest losses; construction of fish ponds; training in food processing; and training in food preservation. In order to improve on the current level of awareness of and involvement in agricultural programmes awareness campaigns and participatory initiatives should be created among farmers, the government, NGOs and the communities. Furthermore, farmers should endeavour to further adopt all identified agricultural programmes in the Luawa Chiefdom. Trunk and Feeder roads should be constructed or rehabilitated in the chiefdom in order to facilitate this process.

Keywords: Safety net, agro processing, crop diversification, food security

1. Introduction
Communities throughout the world make use of the services and products which nature provides. In the process of doing so, we have influenced and manipulated nature to provide more of the products we need while hunting and gathering food. The changes in the natural environment resulting from human activities were relatively limited, but with the development of settled agriculture, humanity started to change its environment more radically. The forces of globalization in tandem with domestic economic realities and politics and the influence of international institutions such as the World Trade Organization, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Development Bank, (ACDB) are reshaping food security policies and strategies of nations, including Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, the attainment of food security is dependent upon the good will, cooperation, and collaboration of donors, line ministries, farmers, organizations, youth groups, traditional rulers, etc. Hence, the need to relate to existing plans, policies, legislations and strategies supported by all stakeholders in the food production, processing, distribution, marketing and related industries. Sierra Leone Food Security Programmes have strong link with the benefits from synergies with the Nation. Recovery Strategy, Medium Term Strategic Agricultural plan, the poverty Reduction strategy paper and sectoral policies and instruments in the Fisheries (Fisheries Act 1994) Forestry (Forestry Act 1989), Health, (Health for all by 2010), Education ( Education for all by 2010), and Water Nutrition and Sanitation Sectors. All these sectors provide necessary ingredients in the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Most of these stakeholder institutions mentioned above are on the Policy and Technical Committee of the German Funded Right to food Programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS). The declaration of Food Security Proclamation on May 19, 2002, also necessitated the development of a policy statement to address all the problems and constraints and also highlight all the potentials to be explored in preparation for the realization of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security’s Mandate. The Ministry’s Mandate essentially entails the creation of an enabling environment for increased productivity through extension and input support, applied research into high yielding varieties, best practices in farming, the provision of markets information and appropriate price incentives through, value addition and agro-processing. This mandate was fulfilled through the following objectives.

- Increased diversified production and productivity of crops to increase rural incomes and create employment in agriculture and in downstream processing industries
2. Literature Review

Despite the existence of various food security programmes in the country, farmers do not know much about them. This is partly due to the high rate of illiteracy among farmers and lack of proper information dissemination mechanisms. However, in 2002 UNICEF provided assistance to two international NGOs to give nutrition a high profile within a food secured environment. Sensitization of grass root communities is a key strategy towards achieving these objectives of Action Aid and AFRICARE household food security project, targeting 4,500 vulnerable women in Western Area, Bo and Pujehun districts. A nine day nutrition and household food security workshop was held in Freetown to train representatives from ten (10) communities in the Western Area (IAR Newsletter 2003). Community Participation involves members of Communities in Planning and implementing activities, community members can bring about energy, time and even financial resources to development, food security and health related activities when they see their own interest being served. Abreu (2003). One of the central principles behind the concept of sustainable development, especially in obtaining food security is that of participation or the involvement of people in decisions concerning the environment they live in. The concept partly reflects the observation that people who inhabit an environment over time are often the ones most suitable to make decision about its sustainable use. Where assistance or support might be needed, these same people should not be seen as passive recipients of information and outside expertise with nothing to offer in turn (Randot et. al. 2001). Sierra Leone agricultural policies spanning the Pre and Post - Colonial eras have been marred with inconsistencies, inadequate support, influence of donors and the like. Recent policies starting from 2000 tend to be more focused on the food security drive and the sustainability of production, distribution, marketing and the effective utilization of food (Rogers, 2004).

- Programme focus for improving food availability, access, utilization, and risk management include closing the seasonal food gap through improved special youth focus programmes in agriculture, intensification, crop diversification, National Resources, conservation and food safety nets policy pillars as highlighted. (Monde 2003).
- FAO special Programme for food Security strategy
- Youth Focused Programmes
- Food safety Nets Targeted Assistance to small farmers
- Agricultural intensification
- Crop diversification Programmes
- National Resource Conservation
- Communication service strategy, Audio-visual Aids
- Micro-credit facility strategy
- Livestock restocking strategy

Food producers face new challenges as population increases and the land available for inadequate food production. Production continues to decline, narrow government policies, inequitable distribution of wealth, and resources which have led to numerous instances of production, impacts have contributed greatly to this decline. Planning to secure our food should not end when we complete harvesting, rather it should be a continuous process. The question of how best to preserves out little or large harvest in order to alleviate starvation should be taught of by every devoted farmers. Hence, a post-harvest loss is an extremely challenging issue. (FAO 1993). Access to credit by the farmers is another core issue and pre-condition for increasing agriculture, virtual absence of an institutionalized credit such as traders and money lender interest on such loans are often excessive reaching 100% percent and above. Often there is an obligation that the debtor sells his produce to the creditor at harvest time when the prices of agricultural commodities are at their lowest. These factors have the cumulative effect of increasing the incidence of interest, thus, it is a generally held view that farmers who rely on informal sources for their credit needs will become further impoverished (MAFFS 2003). Apart from an overall food insufficiency, a special feature of food availability particularly in rural areas of Sierra Leone is its seasonality. Typically there is widespread food scarcity in farming communities between the months of July and September each year. It particularly affects rice, the main staple food grain, due to its typical production cycle. This seasonal food shortage is referred to as the “hunger season”. The frequently cited explanation for the occurrence of this phenomenon included insufficient food supplied in store due to poor harvest, poor storage facilities and practices, and crop (especially grain) loss due to inefficient processing techniques. It is also recognized that the poor management of available food, especially the lavish use of food for festivities, is a major contributory factor (MAFFS 2003). Nyere (1992) stated that the lack of appropriate technology has caused serious problem in the production of crops. He further stated that local research efforts have been constrained by lack of adequate research personnel and integration of recent findings into existing farming practices. Bad feeder roads leading to markets centers greatly influence agricultural production. Farmers produce especially perishable fruits that get spoilt or perish due to lack of access to marketing centers of feeder roads to the production centers making buyers who manage to reach them take advantage of the existing situation (Idachaba et. al. 2004). Why should the continent depend on foreign food supplies when it can easily produce the food it needs? The problem has been that many African farmers have concentrated an producing food on a subsistence basis, while concentrating for cash income on so-called cash crops, which do not provide much income these days in the international market. African countries must concentrate on producing crops that will feed their people rather than wait for handout from the west (Obassanjio 2003).

3. Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is to investigate the agricultural programmes adopted for promoting food Security in Luawa Chiefdom Kailahun district.

3.1 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study include the following.

1. To assess the level of awareness and involvement of farmers in agricultural programmes implemented in Luawa Chiefdom
2. Identify Programmes adopted by Government, Agencies, NGO’s and the community in promoting the attainment of Food Security in the Chiefdom
3. To identify the problems associated with the implementation of agricultural Programmes in the Chiefdom.

4. Methodology

4.1 Description of study Area

The study was conducted in Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District. Luawa is a ‘class A’ chiefdom which shares borders with upper Bambara in South East, Peje Bongare in the West, Pengia in the North, Moa river bordered with the Republic of Guinea, and Kissi Kama, Kissi, Teng and Kissi Tongi in the East. It shares borders with Guinea and Liberia respectively. The predominant tribes are Kissi and Mende. The main agricultural activities of the people are subsistence farming and cash crop cultivation. Luawa chiefdom is divided into ten (10) sections

4.2 Design of the study

The design of this study is a descriptive study of the agricultural programmes adopted for promoting food security in Luawa chiefdom

4.3 Population and sampling procedure

A purposeful population sample of eighty (80) farmers was defined by the use of some criteria stated below. This sample was derived from an estimated major farming population of one hundred and twenty (120) identified in the communities.

- Determining the most popular well-known top eight (8) farmers in each of the ten (10) settlements as target population subject for investigation
- The sample size determined for this study was eighty (80) farmers. These were selected randomly in order to cover the length and breadth of the chiefdom. First of all, the houses in the various sections were given numbers. These numbers written on pieces of papers were folded and put into black plastic bags for each section in the chiefdom. A child of six (6) years in each section was instructed to draw out at a time. The folded papers were repeatedly drawn till the required sample size was achieved.

4.4 Instrumentation:

The research instrument used was a questionnaire. This was divided into three (3) sections. Section A seeks information to assess the level of, awareness and involvement of farmers in agricultural Programmes; Section B identified programmes adopted by government agencies, NGO’s and community in promoting the attainment of food security, and Section C collected data on problems associated with implementing the programme for the attainment of food security in the study area. The draft instruments were pre – tested and later piloted in two major towns outside the chiefdom, Gbalahun in the Gbela section and Nyandehun in the Upper Kpombali section. This was undertaken to modify the schedule to make sure that relevant information was not omitted in the fields. The information observed to have been left out was added and final corrections made to the questions. The piloting exercise was conducted with the team of interviewers in order to afford them some practice and enable them carry out the entire interview process efficiently. Some training of the team of interviewers preceded the pre – testing and piloting exercises.

4.5 Data Collection and Analysis:

Before starting, the researcher sent in an official letter to the chiefdom allowing the researcher to have unrestricted access to information. Primary data, were collected from the field. All members of the sample population were interviewed. Since most of the farmers were illiterates, the questionnaires were translated from English to Mende and responses recorded in English against corresponding questions. Besides, numbers selected for the exercise were given a high degree of freedom in terms of answering the various questions and their privacy was regarded.

Data were analyzed using the SPSS.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Farmer’s Awareness of, and Involvement in Agricultural Programmes.

A lengthy list of sub-levels of variable is presented in the finding of the farmers' awareness of, and involvement in agricultural programmes. On the issue of awareness of, and involvement in swamp development 61.3% of the respondents suggested that farmers were aware of, and involved in swamp development, while 58.8% of them claimed that the farmers are aware of, and involved in swamp rehabilitation. Also, 53.8% of the respondents claimed that farmers were aware of, and involved in construction of stores. Furthermore, 62.5% of the respondent said that the farmers were aware of, and involved in income generating activities. The data further revealed that 81.3% of the respondents claimed farmers awareness of, and involvement in disease management, while 71.3% of them claimed that farmers are not aware of, and involved in post harvest management practices. The result further revealed that about 71% and 69% of the respondents said that they had limited awareness of, and involvement in post harvest management and budget management respectively. They implication of this statistics on these programmes is that they are not popular. The implication of this result is that there are limited pest and disease management programme activities in the chiefdom. The community may be in need of assistance to fight disease attacks on crops that results in...
reduction of agricultural products. This may be an indicator that there is a need to improve on the awareness of, and involvement of farmers into these programmes. It may also be a pointer that these programmes need to be expanded upon to create awareness of, and involvement of farmers the chiefdom. Introduction of such Programmes in the various communities is the basic requirement that these statistics seem to reflect. Poor planning in terms of farmers input and output in farming programmes and post-harvest losses is an extremely challenging issue in Luawa chiefdom. When farmers are not aware of, and involved in their developmental activities, then such programme will not be sustainable and when programmes are not sustainable, its value will not be realized or appreciated by the beneficiaries.

**TABLE 1: Farmer’s Awareness of, and involvement in Agricultural Programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NA I</th>
<th>MA I</th>
<th>HA I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not Aware and Involved</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderately Aware and Involved</strong></td>
<td><strong>Highly Aware and Involved</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Identification of Agricultural Programmes.

This section provides information on the agricultural Programmes adopted by governmental agencies, NGO’s and Community and how they have involved their beneficiaries in food security programmes. The data revealed that 87% of the respondents denied the adoption of construction of food processing plants by government and community agencies. Statistics further show that 87.3% of the respondents said that disease management were not a popular programme, they were either not adopted by government and community or their implementation was limited in the chiefdom. With regards to the agricultural Programmes, about 96% of the farmers said that swamp development Programmes were adopted by government, NGOs and community, while 74%, of the farmers identified swamp rehabilitation as supportive Programme by all the three (3) agencies. This is an indication that swamp cultivation is common; hence farmers are in support of food security initiatives in Sierra Leone. Findings further revealed that 82.3% of the respondents said that women empowerment groups are adopted Programmes by all the three (3) agencies. Women are empowered, they will be robust in their support for other programmes and this will in turn result to sustainable agricultural productivity. Statistics for the other variables show that seed bank creation, construction of food processing plants, training in Post-harvest losses, construction of fish ponds, training in...
food processing, food preservation, pest management, disease management, post-harvest management were all not popular programmes in Luawa chiefdom. These programmes are either not in existence or limited in their adoption.

**TABLE 2: Identification of Agricultural Programmes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Programmes</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A F %</td>
<td>NA F %</td>
<td>A F %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp Development</td>
<td>75 93.8</td>
<td>05 6.3</td>
<td>76 96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp Rehabilitation</td>
<td>60 75.0</td>
<td>20 25.0</td>
<td>63 78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed bank Creation</td>
<td>12 15.0</td>
<td>68 85.0</td>
<td>64 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women empowerment groups</td>
<td>63 78.8</td>
<td>17 21.3</td>
<td>58 72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock Restocking</td>
<td>53 65.0</td>
<td>28 35.0</td>
<td>53 66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Youth Farmers</td>
<td>70 87.5</td>
<td>10 12.5</td>
<td>67 83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of Food Processing Plants</td>
<td>15 18.8</td>
<td>65 81.3</td>
<td>65 81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training In Post-harvest losses</td>
<td>24 30.0</td>
<td>56 70.0</td>
<td>13 16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in Food Preservation</td>
<td>19 23.8</td>
<td>61 76.3</td>
<td>06 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease Management</td>
<td>03 3.8</td>
<td>75 93.8</td>
<td>02 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of Adults Literacy Education</td>
<td>57 71.3</td>
<td>23 28.8</td>
<td>74 92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in Food Processing</td>
<td>12 15.0</td>
<td>68 85.0</td>
<td>08 10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **A** = Applicable

2) **NA** = Not Applicable

5.3 Problems Affecting Agricultural Programmes

The data revealed that 73.8% of the respondents regarded the failure of government and community extension workers to provide appropriate agricultural information to farmers as a problem affecting agricultural productivity in Luawa chiefdom, while 92.1% of the respondents said that the poor road network was acknowledged as a major problem affecting agricultural productivity and marketing of their agricultural products in Luawa chiefdom. Unavailability of transport as a result of poor road network was rated at 89.2% of the respondents from government, NGOs and the community. The data further revealed that 94.2% of the respondents among the beneficiaries of all the three (3) agencies i.e. government, NGOs and community accepted that the poor storage facilities for agricultural food items is a problem affecting agricultural productivity in Luawa chiefdom. High illiteracy among beneficiaries of all three (3) agencies i.e. Government, NGOs’ and community is a problem affecting agricultural productivity. Unavailability of transport and poor monitoring of agricultural programmes is experience more by the government and community agencies than the NGOs’ The constraints encountered in the implementation of agricultural programme in Sierra Leone are numerous, therefore making sure that every person has enough food for an active and healthy life will require actions on many fronts. Government must do their parts by providing the tools, taining and incentives to help improve nutrition, but the best way of ensuring effective and sustainable action is by involving the community (FAO, 2000). In the case where government adopted agricultural Programmes are not affected by these problems, the impact on agricultural programmes sometimes have minimal or no effect on the beneficiaries.
TABLE 3: Problems Affecting Agricultural Programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems Affecting the Agricultural Programmes</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Failure by Extension workers to provide</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate information to farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Poor monitoring of programmes</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Poor road network</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Unavailability of transport</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 High illiteracy among beneficiaries</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Difficulty in reading by the target groups</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Poor storage facilities for food items</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Misuse of micro credit loans meant for</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Poor loan recovery from farmers</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Lack of improved planting materials</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Untimely distribution of planting materials</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Lack of support to empower women groups</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) A = Applicable
2) NA = Not Applicable

6. Conclusion

From the findings, it is concluded that though farmers are aware of, and involved in all of the agricultural programmes adopted by government, NGOs and the community, their awareness of, and involvement is limited to the following programmes: Construction of food processing plants; training in post-harvest losses; training in food preservation; post-harvest management; and disease management. However, farmers are involved in the following agricultural programmes: Swamp development; Women empowerment groups; Micro-credit loans; Livestock restocking and Seed bank creation. The researcher concluded that agricultural Programmes identified by the respondents are not all implemented by government agencies, NGOs and Community especially: Training in Post-harvest losses; training in food processing; training in food preservation; and Pest and Disease management Agricultural Programmes implemented either by government agencies, NGOs’ or Community based organizations are seriously affected by the problem of in reaching the farmers as a result of poor road network, poor storage facilities of food items; poor monitoring of agricultural programmes; lack of cooperation from farmers and the persistent use of traditional agricultural tools in farming in Luawa chiefdom.

Recommendations

1. In order to improve on the current level of awareness of, and involvement in agricultural Programme, awareness should be created among farmers and participatory method used to involve them in all aspect of agricultural programmes.
2. Government, NGOs’ and Community should endeavour to adopt all indentified agricultural programmes. This will create competition among farmers groups and agencies themselves which then will result to increase food production.
3. A key factor inhibiting agricultural Programmes in Luawa chiefdom is the poor state of road. The researcher recommends that both trunk and feeder roads should therefore be a major concern of government.
4. Community participation on feeder road construction and maintenance should be promoted through the provision of food for work.
5. Provision of suitable storage and improved processing facilities and training of farmers in their utilization will reduce the high level of illiteracy in the chiefdom, while the provision of proper storage and processing facilities will improve the quality of food produced in the chiefdom.

References.


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