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Improving Agricultural Extension Services by Formation of Private Extension Groups for Increased Access to Innovation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Over the years, Nigeria farmers relied on the public Agricultural Extension services through the state Agricultural development programmes (ADP) to access agricultural information and innovation, however, in the past three decades public funding for Agricultural extension dwindled, leading to the drastic reduction in the number of public Extension Agents (EA). A development that has further rubbed off on whatever gains the sector made over the years. In 2013, the National Agricultural Extension Research Liaison Services (NAERLS), and the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) conducted a research, which analysed five years (2008–2013) of ADPs and agricultural field situations, especially extension agents' ratio to farm families across the states. Based on the survey, averagely, the EA per farmers' ratio oscillated between 1:1700, 1:2132, 1:3385, 1:2950 and 1:3011 across the country, within the five-year period. The current ratio is between 1:5000 and 1:10,000 which is far above FAO recommendation of 1:800 farm families of developing nation. These development results to limited adoption of research findings and technologies and other factors all combined to keep agricultural productivity low despite the continuous increase in population. On a yearly basis the Universities and other Institutions of higher learnings turn out graduates in Agriculture but neither job nor seed capital to venture into agriculture is provided to support the youth. In line with this challenges, establishing a private extension services in partnership with the ADPs and NGOs to manage dissemination of innovations will not only increase the adoption of innovations but also create job opportunity. The project idea is aimed at creating a cooperative/network of young extension agents in various communities and local government, trained and mentored by an experienced agent to support in stepping down innovations.

Keywords: Innovation, nigeria, Private Extension Services