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Farmers perception of female extension services in Ghana

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Abstract

The recent food crisis has emphasised the need to support agricultural development. Women play a significant role in agriculture in many parts of Africa as they are the principal producers. In Ghana, it is estimated that female farmers are accountable for over 70 percent of total food production. Women are the most important actors in the food chain which starts from farm production, market and most importantly distribution of food within the household. However, presently, female farmers receive only a fraction of the inputs and support that their male counterparts receive. One of such inputs is extension services. This disadvantage further worsens the bias towards male farmers subsequently preventing efforts being made to offer agricultural services to women. Therefore, supporting female farmers is key to agricultural development, food security and the sustainable improvement of rural livelihoods. In Ghana, the public sector is the key provider of extension services to farmers. It is underfunded and lacks coordination which leads to underserved farming populations. The study was conducted in two communities in the western North of Ghana. The study consisted of a total sample of 80 smallholder farmers, of which 40 are female and 40 male. This study focuses on the presentation of major descriptive findings from the quantitative research. The objective of this study is to investigate why women are disadvantaged in agricultural extension work and to identify the problems regarding ineffectiveness of extension programmes among women as well as recommend measures for improvement. Field data was analysed using various statistical tools including frequencies percentages. The study is expected to ascertain whether agriculture extension services in the communities were adequate and delivered equitably. It is expected that the agriculture extension programmes should address the specific needs, preferences and interest of the men and women farmers for its equitable accessibility.

Keywords: gender equality, extension services, food security