



Sustainable Marketing of Agricultural Information Resources: Benefits and Expectations of Agricultural Libraries in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper reiterates the importance of agricultural development in nation building and the roles of agricultural libraries to ensure so through its services that facilitate effective dissemination of agricultural information resources requisite to all agricultural innovative and sustainable activities. Constant changing technologies, ineffective and poor knowledge base, inadequate funding, duplication of research efforts, deficiencies and dearth of specific information resources were major constraints identified. Marketing principles and its tools when fully harnessed by agricultural libraries can overcome constraints, facilitate the harnessing, rationalize and leave rooms for fine-tuning agricultural information resources for effective prioritization. In conclusion the study reveals that marketing as tool bridges agriculture, its economic activities (production, protection, market and processing) and provide regulatory policies to target audiences. It recommends the promotion of open access resource systems, the libraries should remain fully and exclusive to internalized priorities. Institutional and human capacity building must be supported in managing resource generation and exploitation in productive and sustainable manner.

Keywords: *Agriculture, technology, marketing, information, library*

Introduction

There is no doubt that librarians working environment is fast changing. This means that librarianship can only remain relevant from the point of view of prompt, consistent, available and accessible information and effective service delivery. This has been the state of many other professions today, the resolution to conceptualize policies, implement, re-structure, re-engineer and brand remains paths to findings solutions to these consistent changing environments (Demosey, 2004). The library system is affected by constant changing technologies, new subject areas and pressure to provide the knowledge base requirements in all learning, teaching, research and leisure purposes. The library system therefore needs survival tools. Research has revealed marketing to be the appropriate tool for the library because marketing and its concepts are now so basic and can help librarians to embrace and overcome changes. According to McSean (2005), marketing of information products and services is the deliberate, but cautious effort to market and sell the library through the application of marketing techniques. It is not in any way a substitute for a well run service delivery in the library, but essential for overcoming the



challenges and competition while embracing the changing technologies as it affects service delivery.

It is noteworthy that the best run library or information service will only prosper if efforts and talents are devoted to promotion, packaging, re-packaging, skill acquisition, diversifying subject specialization and trainings in all ramifications. This paper discusses the place of agriculture in development, relevance of agricultural information resources to development, and the call for marketing agricultural information resources. Finally, conclusion and recommendations are presented.

Place of Agriculture in Development

Agricultural development remains the only viable tool to restoring all forms of development to mankind because man and other animals cannot do without food, clothing and shelter which are 95% by-products of agriculture. Agriculture, as a diverse area is also expected to put an end to poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease (Idachaba, 1987, 1996; Okigbo, 1991, 1994; Onucheyo, 1998; Manyong *et al.*, 2005). It is primarily affected by poor dissemination of findings, which are attributable to poor economic integration, dwelling on broad issues not reflecting productivity on existing farmland, failing to realign government policies and trainings, and finally, failure to develop relevant, specific and consistent commodity and input delivery policies (Onucheyo, 1998, and Ammani *et al.*, 2010).

Relevance of Agricultural Information Resources to Development

Numerous authors have attested to the fact that adequate, prompt and relevant information on agricultural development satisfies the ever-decreasing availability of resources for qualitative and effective research towards agriculture which must meet the ever-increasing food and industrial raw material requirement of nations (Idachaba, 1996; Manyong *et al.*, 2005). Saror (1994) posited that addition to the problem of inadequate funding of research, the problem of obvious duplication of efforts has led to waste of resources in such cases. The supply, availability, access, storage and retrieval of information remain necessary for agricultural development. Harnessing different agricultural information resources through the various research mandates has helped, rationalized and reduced duplication, even though there is further room for fine-tuning and prioritization. The call by Idachaba (1996) to revitalize agriculture is very pertinent, but hinges on the ability of agricultural research system to disseminate information.

Okigbo (1989) and Bonte-Friedheim (1990) gave a wide range of research undertaken in different locations, comparing sectors (public and private) and the involvement of international and national agricultural research stations in developed and developing countries (Fig. 1). There is a contrast between all the sectors, whereas in the national agricultural research stations (NARS) of developed countries, the researcher and research undertaken starts from the basic and terminates at demonstration of findings on research and farmers' fields, it is not the case with NARS of developing countries which starts at strategic and terminates in testing. This according to Okigbo (1991) affects the expected research focus of agriculture, resulting in the unsatisfactory levels recorded in agricultural production. This implies that in developing countries no strengthen feedback mechanism and route to facilitate stakeholders to present their

perceptions and suggestions; they cannot also gain knowledge of proven solutions or alternatives to persistent problems.

FIG. 1: Levels of involvement of international, national, developed and developing countries researcher and the kinds of research.

	Researchers and kinds of research					
	Basic	Strategic	Applied	Adapt	Testing	Demonstration
World Scientist						
International Agricultural Research Centres						
University based						
Private						
National Agricultural Research Stations						
Developed countries						
Developing countries						

Source: Adapted from Okigbo (1989) and Bonte-Friedheim (1990).

The priority of the Nigerian agricultural policy which seeks to strengthen and improve agricultural research as the foundation for a productive and sustainable system, improve the research environment, pursue focused priority research topics, develop an agricultural research strategy plan for the country and generally create an effective agricultural research management system is laudable (FMARD, 2001; IFDC, 2001 and Ikpi, 2002). Success therefore, depends on broad-scale adaptive research essential for agricultural diversification and development through maximum utilization of available information resources. Okigbo (1991) argued that there is no way there could be satisfactory level of agricultural production with the ways we are treating the different categories of research that help in generating data necessary for agricultural advancement (Table 1).



TABLE 1: Ideal research focus on agricultural research institutions

Category of Research	International Agricultural Research Centres	National Agricultural Research Centres	University	Special Research Institutes
Basic	*	*	***	*
Strategic	***	**	***	***
Applied	***	***	**	**
Adaptive	*	***	**	**
Maintenance	**	**	*	**
Development	*	***	*	**

*** Major focus; ** Some usually conducted; * Little or none

Source: Okigbo (1991)

The implication of harnessing agricultural information resources through libraries and information centres is that, it can help develop relationships among organizations and assist in fundraising. The latter, according to Balas (2003) is not all about the money, it assist to bring friends, old and new to libraries and always good representation of the library to the community. For instance, Besant and Sharp (2000) see libraries as the major sector involved with ongoing relationships with diverse entities and still offer a natural home for relationship marketing.

Call for Marketing Agricultural Information Resources

According to Andreasen and Kotler (2008) and Andreasen *et al.* (2005), backwardness, irrelevance and insensitivity of most non-profit organization is as a result of failure and lack of definite identity. Cuesta and McGovern (2002) stated the importance of identity and focusing marketing efforts to specific groups can actualize the goals and objectives of organizations by facilitating understanding of challenges, diversities, weakness, prospects and the implementation of meaningful development. For instance, North-western Nigeria is agrarian; therefore, its development depends wholly on marketing information and improved technologies on agriculture. It implies that agricultural institute with mandate of crops and livestock found in this region must do more to inform and disseminate their findings to enhance the living standard of the people who are majority subsistence farmers and with low levels of education. Newkirk *et al* (2003) posited that it is not enough to have online presence, when dealing with farmers who are illiterate.

The agricultural libraries could facilitate the stepping down of technical reports to those with easily comprehensible illustrations and less technicality so that farmers can achieve their desire of high productivity. For instance, the CTA has been able to achieve this with the production of extension bulleting which are not more than 6 pages for farmers of the developing nations. Library can then market these resources to farmers. In related study in Bostwana, Nkanga (2002) reported favourable responses by institutions supporting library marketing of information resources and proposed that support from the parent institutions must be institutionalized. Agricultural libraries as well as others must remain visible to their communities, be in relationships with other communities through identified issues of importance



and supplying solutions to issues of interest. This can woo to the library's side the live wires who make things happen in a community (Block, 2001).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Marketing of agricultural information resources cannot be overemphasized; it can reveal policies detrimental to agricultural development and help proffer solutions. It also promotes the dissemination of researchers and farmers findings by bridging and reflecting all agricultural and economic activities (production, protection, marketing and processing). Agricultural libraries have been reported to overcome constraints of dearth information among scientists, farmers and institutions, therefore they must not relent now to consider seriously the farming audience and tailored service delivery to affect the levels of understanding. The following recommendations therefore become necessary:

1. Agricultural libraries within agricultural research institutes in all the ecological zones of Nigeria should be fully and exclusively assigned the responsibilities to produce periodic reports of the institution performances on assigned mandate and ranking them bibliometrically.
2. Urgent action is needed to support and upload all government sponsor research works on the open-access platforms to overcome literary infringement.
3. Policies on sustainability should be internalized. This means all institutions with mandates by the government must supply all its findings on local content, language and expected to meet the desire of their immediate communities.
4. The need to develop the institutional and human capacity of library staff should be accorded high priority. This on the long-run generate, manage and sustain agricultural information resources within each institutional library. Training, skilling and subject specializations will also facilitate identification, exploitation and management of resources.
5. The orientation of field staff and method of reporting must be reformed to address dearth of information caused by poor data entry, bad record keeping and access which can be detrimental to information contain therein affecting translation, illustration, felt needs, the documentation and appreciation of numerous options under consideration.



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