

Extension Program Needs by Farmers in Tanzania: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The agricultural sector in Tanzania is the backbone of economic and social development of her citizens. More than seventy-five percent of them depend on this sector of the economy for their livelihoods. Until significant efforts are undertaken to make the agricultural sector more forward, Tanzania will lag behind in food security and abject poverty alleviation. Strengthening agriculture extension series is paramount for attainment of genuine economic growth in the country and sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

This descriptive study explored the extent to which Extension Programs meet farmer needs in the Ngorongoro district of Tanzania. The main objectives of this study were to: (1) identify the perceptions of farmers regarding extension program needs; (2) identify the priorities farmers place on selected extension programs; (3) identify types of recommended extension improved practices that have been implemented by district farmers during the past 10 years; (4) identify the factors that affect implementation of Extension program recommended practices that address farmer priorities; and (5) identify selected demographic data and analyze comparisons among variables.

A descriptive survey research design was used in collecting and analyzing the data. A questionnaire was designed and administered using a direct interview. Information was collected from randomly selected 139 respondents from two clusters (one cluster for pure pastoralists and another cluster for agro-pastoralists) from Ngorongoro district, Arusha region in Tanzania. Collected information was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical parameter such as frequencies, percentages, and chi-squares were used to report findings.

The study revealed that about 71.9% of the study population had not received agricultural extension services in the year 2014/14. The number of farmers who did not receive agricultural extension services is lower among pastoralists than the agro-pastoralists, but this difference is not statistically significant. Farmers believe that extension programs have not addressed their needs. Provisions of agricultural extension services were male biased. Farmers believe that agricultural extension services can contribute a lot in an attempt to reduce poverty among farmers. There is no synergy among the main development actors in Ngorongoro district.

It was found that livestock extension programs were most highly valued by Ngorongoro district farmers, followed by extension programs related to crops, environmental conservation. The least valued were programs dealing with non-crop/livestock extension topics. Further, this study shows there is a lack of agricultural extension staff and that available extension staff are not motivated to work with farmers. Farmers are also concerned with the frequency of disasters in the district and unsatisfactory farmer involvement in planning, implementation and evaluation of extension programs.

Most farmers in the Ngorongoro district fall in the categories of 21-35 years and 26-55 years of age. Almost half of the farmers have no formal education while about 10.1% have above primary education. Literate farmers are more positive toward the extension service compared to illiterate farmers. More males received extension services than females in the year 2013/2014 in the study population.

Due to lack of extension personnel in the district, there is a need to strengthen the farmer-to-farmer agricultural extension system. Introduction of 4-H programs in the district is also important because youth will then be prepared to be future farmers.