

An Assessment of People's Participation in Agricultural Policy Formulation and Implementation: A Case Study of Benue State

Demenongu, T. S.*; Omale, I. P. and Ochekwu, O. D.

Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication,

University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria.

*Email: torjape4sucesss@yahoo.com; 07031583159

Abstract – The study was aimed at assessing people's participation in agricultural policy formulation and implementation. The research was directed towards determining the awareness and level of involvement of farmers in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and also to identify the problems of implementing and monitoring these policies. The study was carried out in Makurdi, Benue state. Primary data used for the study were obtained by interviewing 110 farmers who were randomly selected; structured questionnaires were used for interview. The data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to ascertain the level of awareness and level of participation in the policy processes. The study showed that farmers were usually involved in the problem identification stage of policy formulation. The study also showed that majority of the farmers were involved in the implementation of agricultural policy and not very many of them were involved in monitoring of the implemented policies. The hypothesis of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between awareness and implementation of agricultural policies in Makurdi. It was recommended that government should discourage top-down approach of policy formulation; the community should be involved in the policy monitoring process.

Keywords – Assessment, Agricultural Policy, Implementation, Participation, Policy Formulation.

I. INTRODUCTION

A policy is a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. It is also a guideline consisting of principles and rules governing the behavior of persons in an organization. Policies prescribe how people in an organization should act or behave (Asiabaka, 2002). Agricultural policy therefore is a statement of action and a fundamental tool employed in achieving agricultural development (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012). Asiabaka (2002) stated that program, on the other hand is a comprehensive plan that includes objectives to be attained, specifications of resources required and stages of work to be performed. According to Olatunji (2005), a program is a collection of coordinated activities that are mutually directed towards the attainment of a definite goal and it usually comprises several segments or projects which can be separately pursued as a component of the whole. The concept of program implies that a goal is in focus and several activities would be needed and coordinated to attain the goal.

In order to revamp the agricultural sector, the Federal Government had embarked on and implemented several

agricultural policies and programs some of which are defunct or abandoned, and some restructured while others are still in place. These include the farm settlement scheme, National Accelerated Food Production (NAFPP), Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), National Seed Service (NSS) and the host of others. Despite all the aforementioned reform policies and programs, the performance of the sector had not fared better than it was before independence.

Clearly, the persisted failures of agricultural programs in Nigeria have revealed the basic weakness of agricultural policies in Nigeria and the inability of the several administrations in Nigeria to solve the basic and fundamental problems of agricultural development (Amalu, 1998). Many authors (Amalu 1998, Ayoola 2001 and Madukwe 2008) have also laid the failure on the door-steps of governments for the absence of or weak agricultural policies. There is a need to determine the process of policy formulation, implementation and monitoring especially as these involves the masses. It is against this background that this research was designed and considered imperative at this time in the nation's history.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this research was to assess people's participation the performance and the effects of these government agricultural reforms and strategies on the agricultural sector. Specifically the study seeks to:

- 1) determine the level of awareness of the respondents as regards agricultural policy in Benue state
- 2) determine the level of involvement of the masses in agricultural policy formulation;
- 3) determine the level of involvement of the masses in agricultural policy implementation;
- 4) identify how the masses have been involved in monitoring agricultural policy;
- 5) identify the problems and/or factors that militate against the implementation and monitoring of these agricultural policies in the communities.

1.2 Hypothesis of the Study

H₀: There is no significant relationship between farmer's level of awareness about agricultural policy and involvement in the implementation of agricultural policy.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Area

Benue State is located in the mid-east region of Nigeria. It lies between longitude 8⁰ and 9⁰ east and latitude 7⁰ and 8⁰ north. It has an estimated population of about 5,181,642 people (National Population Census, 2006) and cover a total area of about 34,059square kilometres.

Benue state is made up of Tiv, Idoma and Igede as the dominant tribes and inhabitants of the state. Benue is a rich agricultural region and its people are predominantly farmers. Crops such as yam, cassava, potatoes, maize, millet, cowpea, groundnut and soybean are produced in large quantities. Agriculture stands out as a major means of livelihood.

2.2 Sampling technique and Sample Size

Makurdi L.G.A was purposively selected and sampled for the study. This is because Makurdi is the administrative headquarters of Benue State and policy processes begins from Makurdi. A total of 110 questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the study area.

2.3 Data Collection

Primary data was obtained through the use of structured questionnaires administered to groups of farmers, agricultural agencies and stakeholders in the study area and oral interview will be carried out with these farmers and the respective groups. Participatory methodology will be used in the data collection process.

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to research in communities that emphasizes participation and action. It seeks to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection. PAR emphasizes collective enquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history. Within a PAR process, communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers (Reason and Bradbury, 2008)

2.4 Method of Data Analysis

Data for the study was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. Simple descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution were used to analyze each of the objectives. T-test was used to analyze the hypotheses of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Level of Awareness of Agricultural Policy

Results in Table 1 shows that 94.5% of the people were aware of agricultural policies while 5.5% of the people were not aware. This implies that majority of the people living in study area have heard, know or are aware of agricultural policies.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Level of Awareness of Agrilcultural Policy

Index	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness about agricultural policy		
Not aware	6	5.5
Aware	104	94.5
Total	110	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014.

3.2 Level of Involvement in Policy Formulation Process

Table 2 shows the level of involvement of the farmers in policy formulation and also shows their level of involvement in the various stages of the policy formulation process. The table points out that 52.7% of the farmers were not involved in the formulation phase, while 41.7% of the farmers were involved.

The table also shows that the farmers (47.3%) who were involved in the formulation process were only involved in identifying the problem in their locality (problem identification stage), while none of the farmers took part in the other stages of policy formulation which includes formulation of policy objectives, evaluation of performance of current policy and establishing characteristics of new policy set.

This implies that very few farmers are involved in the policy formulation phase of the policy process. Furthermore it implies that farmers in the study area are only involved in problem identification stage of the formulation phase.

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents According to the Level of Involvement in Policy Formulation

Index	Frequency	Percentage
Policy formulation		
Not involved	58	52.7
Involved	52	47.3
Total	110	100
Role played in the formulation phase		
Problem identification	52	47.3
Formulation of policy objectives	0	0
Evaluation of performance of current policy	0	0
Establishing characteristics of new policy set	0	0
Total	52	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014. *multiple responses

3.3 Level of Involvement in Policy Implementation

Table 3 shows that 86.4% of the farmers were involved in the implementation process of policy while 13.6% were not.

It also points out that 75.5% of the farmers took part in adopting the policy being implemented, 51.8% of the farmers took part in policy communication, while 49.1% took part in distribution of inputs.

This high percentage implies that implementation of agricultural policy usually involves farmers. It also shows that a high percentage of the farmer takes part in adopting and telling others about the policy being implemented while a good percentage of them engage in the distribution of the inputs needed or brought for the implementation of the agricultural policy. Recent policies implemented in the area that the farmers took part in include Growth E S Scheme (GESS), FADAMA, National Food Security Program and NEEDS, all of which are policies implemented from year 2000-2014.

Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents According to Level of Involvement in Policy Implementation

Index	Frequency	Percentage
Participation in policy implementation process		
Not involved	15	13.6
Involved	95	86.4
Total	110	100
Role played in policy implementation		
Policy communication	57	51.8
Distribution of inputs	54	49.1
Adoption of implemented policy	83	75.5
Total	194	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014 *multiple response

3.4 Level of Involvement of Farmers in Policy Monitoring Process

Table 4 shows that 74.4% of the farmers were not involved in the monitoring process, while 25.5% of the farmers were involved in monitoring policies in the study area.

This low percentage implies that farmers are usually not involved in the policy monitoring process.

The table also shows the roles played by the farmers who took part in the monitoring process. It showed that 25.3% of the farmers were involved in the supervision of the policy in their respective wards, 16.4% were involved in the control of resources been used in the implementation of the policy, while 16.4% were involved in assessing the farmers condition as regards the implemented policy.

The table also shows the way in which Government monitored agricultural policies. The farmers indicated that % of monitoring was done internally, % externally while % was done physically.

Table 4: Level of Involvement of Respondent in Policy Monitoring

Index	*Frequency	*Percentage
Involvement in policy monitoring		
Not involved	82	74.5
Involved	28	25.5
Total	110	100
Roles played in monitoring process		
Supervision	28	25.5

Table 6: Relationship between Awareness and Implementation of Agricultural Policies

		T	df	Sig.	Mean difference
Awareness of agricultural policy	Equal variances not assumed	32.973	103.000	0.000	.91346

Source: Field Survey

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made. Majority of the farmers were aware of agricultural policies, they had knowledge of

Resources control	18	16.4
Assessing farmers condition	18	16.4
Total	64	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014 *multiple responses

3.5 Problem/Factors Affecting the Implementation and Monitoring of Agricultural Policy

Table 5 summarizes the results of the problem/factors affecting the implementation and monitoring of agricultural policies. It includes corruption (94.5%), short duration of agricultural policy (87.3%), weak agricultural policy (77.3%), inadequate virile staff/extension service (74.5%), inconsistency in the policies (72.7%), lack/inadequate monitoring and evaluation of policy (67.3%), and non-interraction between and among stakeholders (35.5%). This agrees with Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2012) who identified the above as problems affecting agricultural policy implementation and monitoring in the country.

Table 5: Problems/Factors Affecting Policy Implementation and Monitoring

Index	Frequency	Percentage
Problem/factors affecting agricultural policy		
Non-interraction between and among stakeholders	39	35.5
Weak agricultural policy	85	77.3
Inconsistency of policy	80	72.7
Short duration of agricultural policy	96	87.3
Corruption	104	94.5
Inadequate virile technical staff/extension services	82	74.5
Lack/inadequate monitoring and evaluation of policy	74	67.3
Total	560	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014 *multiple responses

3.6 Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant relationship between farmer's level of awareness about agricultural policy and farmer's involvement in the implementation of agricultural policy. The result in table 6 shows that t is significant at 1%. The t-value (0.00) is significant, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between policy awareness and farmer's involvement in the implementation if agricultural policies.

agricultural policy. Not very many farmers took part in policy formulation and monitoring, while a high percentage of the respondent said they took part in implementation of policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research work, the following recommendations were made:

The government should discourage top-down approach of policy formulation; the farmers should be carried along in the formulation process. The community should be involved in policy monitoring process, this will enhance better monitoring of agricultural policy and help increase the impact of these agricultural policies.

Policy continuity should be encouraged. Continuity should be encouraged, policy abandonment should be discouraged, the inconsistencies accompanying policies especially when there is a new policy or a new government should be discouraged.

Finally delay, embezzlement, misappropriation of fund meant for pursuing specific agricultural policy to its expected end should be discouraged. Laws should be made to spell heavy punishment on those who engage in such corrupt act. There should be a value re-orientation to correct the mindset of individuals in this regards.

REFERENCES

- [1] Amalu, U.C. (1998), *Agricultural Research and Extension Delivery systems in SubSaharan Africa*: Calabar:University of Calabar Press
- [2] Asiabaka, C.C. (2002), *Agricultural Extension; A Handbook for Development Practitioners*. Omoku, River State: Molsystem United Services.
- [3] Ayoola, G.B. (2001), *Essays on The Agricultural Economy I: A Book of Readings on Agricultural* Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (1995). Central Bank of Nigeria, Annual Report and Statement of account, Lagos, Nigeria. In Nworgu F. C. (2006). Prospects and Pitfalls of Agricultural Production in Nigeria. Federal College of Animal Health and Production Technology, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Ibadan, Nigeria. *Development Policy and Administration in Nigeria*: Ibadan: TMA Publishers.
- [4] Iwuchukwu, J .C. and Igbokwe, E.M. (2012), Lessons from Agricultural Policies and Programmes in Nigeria; *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*; ISSN 2224-3240 (Paper) ISSN 2224 3259 (Online) Vol 5.
- [5] Madukwe, M.C. (2008), Practices without Policy. The Nigeria Agricultural Extension Service 30th inaugural lecture of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka delivered on April 29,2008, published by the University of Nigeria Senate ceremonials committee. University of Nigeria Press Ltd, Nsukka.
- [6] NBS/CBN (2006). National Bureau of Statistics/Central Bank of Nigeria; Socio-Economic survey on Nigeria, NBS, Abuja.
- [7] NPC (2006). National population census.
- [8] Reason, P and Bradbury, H (2008) (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research : Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Sage, CA, pp 5-10
- [9] Olatunji, S.O. (2005), Monitoring and evaluation of Agricultural Extension programmes. In ; Nwachukwu. I and Onuekwusi G. (eds.) *Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology*. Enugu: Snap press Ltd. 287-306.
- [10] Usman, N.E. (2006). "Agriculture: Vital to Nigerian Economic Development." Paper presented at the forum of Economic Stakeholders on "Growing the Nigeria Economy" 2006. Thisday News Paper, July 25, 2006.