The Accessibility and Problems Associated with the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by Fish Farmers in Rural Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated the accessibility and problems associated with the use of information and communication technologies in rural areas of Ondo State. Total sampling was used to select 92 rural fish farmers from three riverine Local Governments in the state between February and April, 2012. Questionnaire was used in data collection. Data were analyzed by the use of frequency, percentage, mean and Chi-square test. It was found that radio (96.7%), television (84.4%) and mobile phone (95.7%) were most accessible ICT to fish farmers of which radio is the most effective (62.0%). Problems associated with the use of ICT were electric power supply (96.7%), lack of access to ICT (62.0%) and inadequate information on ICT (59.8%). There were significant relationship (P<0.05) between problems associated with the use and accessibility of ICT by fish farmers. It is recommended that the government should allow a wide range of radio broadcast options by giving opportunities for private competition provision of radio content which will allow for development input from relevant agencies.

Keywords: Computer, Mobile Phone, Personal Characteristics, Radio, Television

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian fishing industry comprises of three major sub sectors namely the artisanal, industrial and aquaculture. The awareness on the potential of aquaculture to contribute to domestic fish production has continued to increase in the country. This stems from the need to meet the much needed fish for domestic production and export. Fish species which are commonly cultured include *Tilapia spp*, *Heterobranchus bodosalis*, *Clarias gariepinus*, *Mugie spp*, *Chrysichthys nigrodigitatus*, *Heterotis niloticus*, *Ophiocephalus obscure*, *Cyprinus carpio* and *Megalo spp*. Fish culture is done in enclosures such as tanks. The aquaculture sub sector contributes between 0.5% and 1% to Nigeria’s domestic fish production (Adewuyi et al., 2010).

As in much of Africa, the most commonly cultured species include catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*, the imported *C. lazera* and *Heterobranchus sp*), tilapia and carp. Many fish farms focus on catfish, as they can have a market value of two to three times that of tilapia (Longhurst, 2000). The major constraints to fish farming were identified to be those of environmental impacts of aquaculture operations that is water pollution (Olagunju et al., 2007) inadequate supply of fingerlings, inadequate information and feeds supply (Assiah, 1997).

The fact remains that at various levels of human endeavors good communication is absolutely imperative also information as a factor of production is necessary to increase productivity. Fish farmers thus need information to optimize production. Due to the growing population of fish farmers, different kinds of information are being made available to those interested, particularly on how to start fish farming, management of fish farming and what to do when one is at a cross road. Seminars and workshops are often organized to enlighten and educate people on fish farming management practices (Akinbile & Alabi, 2010).

Michels and Vancrowther (2001) defined ICT as a range of electronic technologies which when converged in a new configuration are flexible, adaptable, enabling and capable of transforming organizations and redefining social relations. Information communication technologies (ICT) are set of activities that facilitate the capturing, storage, processing, transmission and display of information by electronic means (Akinbile & Alabi, 2010). The range of technologies is increasing all the time and there is convergence between the new and old media. The new media are computers, mobile phones and the internet, while the old media include radio, television, telephone and fax among others. Kiplangat (2003) affirms that ICT have become a driving force in development, providing a means of narrowing the information gap between developed and developing countries and among their communities. The accessibility to information which is made readily available by ICT has helped in molding our attitudes towards life as there is more information about certain aspects of life including the agricultural sector (Spore, 2004). Information communication technologies (ICT) are assumed to improve lives by making it easier to communicate and less expensive to find information. ICT are seen as enabling tools that will help developing countries and in particular rural communities catch up with the rest of the world.

Information and communication technologies are also being used in information dissemination on the subject matter. All these are to encourage local participation so as to increase rate of production (Akinbile & Alabi, 2010). However, production increase as a result of ICT usage is obtainable when other factors such as timeliness, availability of other inputs etc remain constant. The various methods of reaching farmers (mass media, group methods, individual method, media combinations and use of audio-visual aids, use of folk media and use of modern information communication technologies (ICT) all have their merits and demerits (Sule et al., 2009).

ICT is an acronym that stands for Information and Communication Technologies, which can be broadly interpreted as technologies that facilitate communication and the processing and transition of information by electronic means.
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