



## Perception on Factors Enhancing Acceptability of Extension Agents on Service Delivery among Rural Fish Farmers in Lagos State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Lagos State to determine extension agents' contact and factors enhancing the acceptability on service delivery among fish farmers. Eighty-eight fish farmers were randomly selected for this study from the list of one hundred and forty-six registered fish farmers of the Lagos State Agricultural Development Programme (LASDP) which represented sixty percent of the sampling frame. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain information on fish farmers contact with extension agents, preferred mode of contact and factors enhancing the acceptability of extension agents. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as tables, frequency distribution and percentages. Results indicated that fish farmers had contact with extension agents (90.9%), mostly fortnightly (98.9%) and preferred farm visit as mode of contact. Patience (95%), age (78%), experience of fish farming (63%), language (52%), residing in the local area (52%) and respectful (52%) were factors enhancing the acceptability of extension agents. It can be concluded that extension agents performed their role of contacting fish farmers and recommended that extension agents should move at the pace of fish farmers for proper understanding and adoption of technologies during service delivery.

**Key words:** Acceptability, contact, Extension agents, fish farmers, service delivery

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### INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, aquaculture has been driven by social and economic objectives such as nutrition improvement in rural areas, generation of supplementary income, diversification of income activities, and the creation of employment (Osigbo *et al.*, 2014). Fish farming has the potential to help expand the resource base for food production and reduce the pressure on conventional sources of fish which are harvested faster than they can be regenerated. For developing countries like Nigeria, where in emphasis is on oil, fish farming can generate significant employment, enhance the socioeconomic status of the farmer as well generate foreign exchange (Oluwasola and Ajayi, 2013). Involvement of aquaculture projects in villages, towns and cities will create employment opportunity and thereby alleviate poverty among the populace. Given the present natural resources and technological advances, aquaculture is going to expand and in a more sustainable way in the future, but would only be possible if the benefits of aquaculture are acknowledged around the world (Ogunremi *et al.*, 2013).

Lagos State Agricultural Development Authority (LASADA), which was in charge of disseminating aquaculture and other agricultural related information to the farmers through its extension department/unit, has introduced many improved fisheries and aquaculture technologies to the fish farmers in Lagos State. Despite this, the promising nature of aquaculture through increased productivity has not been significantly noticed (Olaoye *et al.*, 2016). It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the fish farmers' perception of factors enhancing the acceptability of extension agents on service delivery in the study area. The specific objectives are to identify extension agents' contact with fish farmers and to investigate the fish farmers preferred mode of contact.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State lies between Latitudes 6° 24' and 6° 31' N and Longitudes 3° 16' and 3° 21'. The State is bounded on the East and North by Ogun State, in the

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West by Republic of Benin and in the South by Atlantic Ocean. The state is generally low – lying with the stretch of sea, sand beaches along the Atlantic Coast. Eighty-eight fish farmers were randomly selected for this study from the list of one hundred and forty-six registered fish farmers of the Lagos State Agricultural Development Project (LASDP) which represented sixty percent of the sampling frame. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain information on fish farmers contact with extension agents. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as tables, frequency distribution and percentages (Olaoye, *et al.*, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Extension agents' contact with fish farmers

As shown in Table 1 extension agents' contact with fish farmers was very high, (99.9%). Almost all the fish farmers (98.9%) were familiar with agents responsible for the delivery of extension services in their communities; a key aspect of the required farmer-extension contact (Ogunremi, 2012). It is expected that when fish farmers have contact with extension agents and they are familiar with them it becomes easier to disseminate technologies that will improve fish farmer's production. Also, interaction and feedback approach would be highly encouraged. The highest duration of contact 5-10 years was 52%, the majority of the fish farmers had fortnightly contact with Extension agents (98.9%). However, in the expected frequency of contact, 83% fish farmers expect extension agents to contact them weekly. The reason for this could be that the fish farmers' benefit more from the extension agents, visit and felt the more they are visited the better for them to improve on fish farming practices. In a similar study, (Ogunremi, 2012) reported fortnight as the expected frequency of contact with Oyo State fish farmers, which agrees with the frequency of contact stipulated under REFILS (Ogungbaigbe, 2004).

Table 1: Extension agents contact with fish farmers

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Contact with agents	Yes	80	90.9
	No	8	9.1
	Total	88	100
Familiarity with agents	Yes	87	98.9
	No	1	1.1
Duration of contact	1 – 4 years	42	47.7
	5 – 10 years	46	52.3
Frequency of contact	Weekly	-	-
	Fortnightly	87	98.9
	Monthly	1	1.1
Expected frequency of contact	Weekly	73	83.0
	Fortnightly	15	17.0

Source: Field 2010

### Fish farmer preferred mode of contact

The result indicates that most of the fish farmers preferred farm visit as mode of conduct by extension agents (Table 2). This could be because fish farmers know that the extension agents would be able to advise or disseminate information best to them when they see their farms. In a similar study, Oladosu (2006) reported higher response of farmers to farm and home visit and demonstration. Office visit was 3.4%. Fish farmers hardly visit extension agents in their offices except when faced with serious challenges which needs urgent attention. Reasons why fish farmers did not give preference to farm demonstration and farmer's training course was because they could not attach any significance to them rather thinking it would amount to waste of time. Maina *et al.* (2014) in a similar study reported high preference of fish farmers for visit by extension agents.

Table 2: Fish farmers preferred mode of contact

Preferred mode of contact	*Frequency	Percentage
Home visit	40.0	45.5
Farm visit	61.0	69.3
Office visit	3.0	3.4
Farm demonstration	5.0	5.7
Farmer's training course	0.0	0.0
Group meetings	0.0	0.0
Agricultural show	0.0	0.0

Source: Field 2010. \* Multiple responses

### Perception on factors enhancing agents' acceptability

Table 3 indicates farmers' perceptions of factors that will enhance agents' acceptability if they were to be advised on fish farming. Patience (95%), age (78%), experience of fish farming (63%), language (52%), residing in the local area (52%) and respectful (52%). Patience of extension agents is an important factor, so that fish farmers would be able to acquire the technologies that are available for their use. Thus, it will require patience to be able to teach farmers modern techniques of fish farming for better productivity. Fish farmers have different backgrounds and also differ in the level of understanding, therefore; it will require patience in disseminating research findings and advising fish farmers. Age of extension agents as a factor is important because of the local tradition of the fish farmers. Fish farmers tend to respect and listen to older extension agents and see their age as a mark of experience than young agents who some fish farmers see as too young to either teach or advice on fish farming. Ability of extension agents to speak the local language and/or reside in the local area also improves the acceptability of these agents to the farmers as they are better able to relate to their local dialect or common language. On the issue of extension agents' gender, there were reasons why women who are engaged in fish industry have a preference for either male or female as opined by (Adeokun and Adereti, 2005). Preference for male extension agents was because they would be hard working and would be more consistent than female counterparts since the men do not go on maternity leave. Also, preference for female agents was because female extension agents would understand their problems better than male agents and would have a better method of approach because of their feminine nature. The reason for marital status as the least enhancing factor (1.1%) could be because fish farmers are not after whether the extension agent is married or not, but the ability to exercise patient with them, his or her age which invariably should signify the experience.

Table 3: Perceived Factors Enhancing Agents' acceptability

Enhancing Factors	*Frequency	Percentage
Patient	84	95.5
Age	69	78.4
Experienced	55	62.5
Language	46	52.2
Residing in locality	46	52.2
Respectful	46	52.2
Gender	40	45.5
Technical skill	27	30.7
Educational level	16	18.2
Marital status	1	1.1

Source: Field 2010, \* Multiple responses

**Conclusion and recommendation**

Extension agents performed their role of contacting fish farmers fortnightly however; the fish farmers expected weekly contacts and preferred farm visits. Fish farmers also considered the level of patience, of extension agents as a major factor for acceptability with less consideration for marital status. It is recommended that extension agents should be patient with the fish farmers during service delivery so as to move at their level of understanding and familiarize themselves with the local traditions and languages of these fish farmers to enhance a high level of technology adoption.

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