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Challenges of Oyo State Agricultural Development Program (OYSADEP) For Rural Farmers in Oyo State, Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Agricultural production is central to the overall wellbeing of the populace including Nigerian people. It presents the only viable opportunity to Nigeria's economic development in the face of the recent economic challenges. The Agricultural Development Program (ADPs) is one of the structural platforms established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to support the State Government effort in the development of agricultural projects. After 27 years of its existence, studies to assess the challenges of the agency on rural farmers in the state have not been explored. It is on this note that this study examines the challenges of the Oyo State Agricultural Development Program (OYSADEP) on rural farmers in Oyo State, Southwestern Nigeria. Primary and Secondary data were used in this study. Primary data include personal observation and interviews with officials of the OYSADEP and key informants. The findings of the study show that despite the good intention and policy design of the OYSADEP, the program has not fared well in the state. Some of the challenges that constrained the agency's activities include poor funding, shortage of extension service staff, lack of mobility for proper supervision, lack of working materials, lack of publicity and campaigns and increasing population of farmers. The study recommended that government should increase funding to the agency, employ more extension service staff and increase the capacity of the agency through training of workers.



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Introduction

The recent continuous destruction of oil pipelines and facilities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has greatly affected the country's economy in recent times. The economy of the country which has for several decades relied heavily on oil exploitation for about 90% of its national income have continued to witness dwindling resources and poor revenue. The effects of several decades of neglect of other key sectors such as agriculture, industrialization, solid mineral resources and tourism are playing out clearly in the economy today. This has resulted in the shortage of foreign exchange, inflation, reduced value of the national currency, reduced national income, the inability of the government (both State and Federal) to pay worker's salary promptly, increase in hunger, the high cost of foodstuff, the general rise in poverty and unemployment among others. The present Economic reality in the country shows that the only way out of the present economic recession is going back to agriculture [1]. The Agricultural Development Program (ADPs) is one of the structural platforms established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to support the State Government efforts in the development of agricultural projects. ADPs were established in 1975 [2]. Thus, the ADPs are state organizations for grassroots agricultural development aiming at increasing the income of rural farmers and crop production [2]. The ADPs were designed to improve the traditional systems of production and raise the productivity, income, and quality of life of the small-scale farmers who provide over 90% of the gross domestic food supplies of the country [3]. Following the expiration of the World Bank funding for the project, the activities of the ADPs has dwindled considerably in recent times. The story is much more pathetic for the Oyo State Agricultural Development Program (OYSADEP). Thus, this study examines the challenges OYSADEP on rural farmers in Oyo State, Southwestern Nigeria.

The parastatal of the Ministry of Agriculture, Oyo State Agricultural Development Program (OYSADEP), a rural-based agricultural development outfit was established by Oyo State Edict 8 in 1989. The ADP concept which is basically an agricultural

and rural development in Nigeria with the establishment of Gombe Funtua and Gusau enclave projects by Mid-1982. The Old Oyo joined the League or State having ADP, with the establishment of Oyo North Agricultural Development Project (ONADEP) which spanned from 1982 to 1989. ONADEP was succeeded by OYSADEP which operated in all the 42 LGAS of Old Oyo State [25 LGAS in Oyo State and 17 LGAs in Osun State] from 1st April 1989 to 31st December 1991. Following the creation of Osun State in 1991, OYOSADEP under a new dispensation took off on 1st January 1992. Since Inception in 1982 to date, OYOSADEP as an agricultural extension outfit has made remarkable landmark achievements in the provision of effective agriculture extension services and complementary infrastructure facilities [e.g., Dams, Wells, and rural roads] and improved the income and the standard of living of targeted farming families in Oyo State [4].

The OYSADEP operates from an administrative headquarters complex in Saki, a liason in Total Garden Ibadan, zonal offices are in Oyo, Ogbomoso, Tede and Apata, Ibadan and farm centers in many towns in Oyo State (OYSADEP BLOG, 2015). The main goal of OYSADEP is to contribute to the attainment of food sufficiency and security in the State and the country at large and raise the income and standard of living of 288,000 farm families in the state, particularly rural communities. These goals were intended to be achieved through the following specific objectives: (1) to strengthen agricultural services through a unified extension services and on-Farm Adaptive Research (OFAR); (2) to intensify the provision of inputs and capacity of Cooperative Financing Agencies (CFAs) for rural savings and mobilization; (3) to increase participation of the private sector and small farm holders; (4) the improvement of livestock production and health and (5) to increase the food production in the State.

After 25 years of its existence, studies to assess the impact of the agency in the state have not been explored. Thus, the probability of OYSADEP achieving an increase in foodstuff and income for rural dwellers in the state is yet to be ascertained. Also, the likelihood of farmers having easy access to

extension services and farming inputs such as improved seeds, pesticides, and fertilizer for farming activities in the state has not been investigated. This study intends to fill this knowledge gap by appraising the activities of Oyo State Agricultural Development Program (OYSADEP) and how it has impacted on the lives of rural farmers in the state or otherwise.

Observations and interviews

The required personal observation and interviews were made with over twenty officials of the OYSADEP and ten key informants. The interviews with the OYSADEP officials focus on the achievements of the program and the projects so far executed. Efforts were made to ascertain some of the infrastructures already provided to the rural dwellers in the area and the services provided to the people, especially in the areas of extension services, provision of inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizer, loan and pesticides as well as involvement of the people or grassroots mobilization of the rural farmers. Key informants such as individual farmers with years of experience in the state were interviewed on their experience in farming and relationship with the agency's activities. The data from field observation involved a visual assessment of some of the infrastructures provided by the OYSADEP as well as works executed in parts of the state. Secondary materials that were relevant to the study were reviewed. The results of this study will serve as solutions to the challenges facing the agency on rural farmers in Oyo State, Southwestern Nigeria.

Achievements

The OYSADEP recorded some achievements during the period it enjoyed funding of its program activities. Some of the achievements include:

- i. 4,301 supervisory field visits to village extension agents (VEAs) were made.
- ii. 8,325 field visits to the farmer's farm by VEAs out of 44,160 targeted farms were made.
- iii. Four management training plots on maize and rice out of 12 targets were established.
- iv. Three on-farm adaptive researches (OFAR) out of 6 targets were carried out.

- iv. Technology review and training meetings were held.
- v. 6,475 small plot adaptive techniques (SPAT) on crops were established out of an annual target of 10,500.
- vi. 18,340 contact farmers out of an annual target of 18,400 were reached out to by VEAs.
- vii. About 3,095.85 liters of assorted agrochemicals were sold to the farmers.

Challenges

For some years now, the objectives of the extension subprogram have not been achieved for the following reasons:

Lack of funding of most extension activities

Apart from imprest of ₦1,500,000.00, the OYSADEP has no fund to sustain its routine activities in the state. Despite the Oyo state government claims that agriculture is one of its areas of priority, the state allocated only ₦2.7 billion representing 3.35 percent of the total budget in 2016. The Federal government, on the other hand, allocated 1.6 percent of the ₦12.4 trillion.

Shortage of extension service staff

The staff situation at the agency is very pathetic because many have retired and some died. The staff losses have not been replaced because of the embargo on employment in the State. Some of the extension agents from the OYSADEP were later seconded to Oyo State Agricultural Product Marketing Agency (OYSAPMA) and FADAMA subprogram. In fact, the staff situation is very bad not only for the extension sub-program, but also for the other sub-programs within the agency and the Ministry of Agriculture in the state (Table 1). Table 1 reveals that the agency requires 377 staff to operate, but only had 151 staff at the moment. This gives a shortfall of 226 staff. Extension agent-/farmers ratio in the state is one staff per 4,800 farmers. This is in contrast to the recommended ratio of 1:1,000 farmers.

Lack of mobility for proper supervision

For the training and visit system of extension service to work effectively, there is a need for utility vehicles such as Hilux and pick-up vans for principal officers in the extension sub-program and motorcycles for the

Table 1 Staff distribution in Oyo State Agricultural Development Program (OYSADEP).

S/N	Category of Staff	Required	On ground	Shortage
1.	Director	1	1	-
2.	Chief extension officer	1	1	-
3.	Chief WIA	1	1	-
4.	Chief media officer	1	1	-
5.	Assist chief media officer	1	-	1
6.	SMS (WIA) headquarters	1	1	-
7.	Zonal extension officers	6	6	-
8.	Zonal SMS (WIA)	6	3	3
9.	Block extension agents	30	10	20
10.	Area extension officers	7	7	-
11.	Block extension supervisors	30	17	13
12.	Village extension agents	290	102	188
13.	Camera men	2	1	1
	Total	377	151	226

field staff. Provision of the vehicles will enable the extension workers to follow their schedule to the letter and their impact would be better felt by the farmers and the general public.

Lack of working materials (extension kits) /inputs for demonstrations

These working materials include rain boots, rain coats, measuring tapes and measuring scales for demonstrations and field visits. They also include inputs such as seed, fertilizer, and agrochemicals. Those are essential in the agriculture business, but have not been provided by the government for demonstrations for more than ten years now.

Lack of publicity and campaigns

Over the years, the media outfit of the Oyo State ADP has been neglected. All its equipment inherited from the defunct Old Oyo State days is non-functional. Without mincing words, the Ministry of Agriculture and the OYSADEP have recorded a certain degree of achievements, but these have not been known because of the lack of publicity.

Increase in the number of farmer families

The number of farming families has increased over the years. This increase also calls for more support by the way to increase the extension services and demand for farming inputs such as improved seed, fertilizer, and agrochemicals among others.

Few meteorological stations

States with a lesser population like Bauchi State Agricultural Development (BADP) runs nine meteorological stations and Jigawa State ADP collects meteorological data for 21 stations while

Oyo State ADP has only seven meteorological stations. This affects efficient agricultural development policy design and planning of the state.

Discussion

The Federal Government of Nigeria is presently pursuing the 'Green Alternative Policy' which attempts to reposition agriculture to be the arrowhead of the present administration. This policy has replaced the previous policy of agricultural transformation agenda of past administration. However, the beautiful policy exists only on paper. The farmers in Nigeria bought a bag of fertilizer at ₦15,500 (\$45 USD) and 60 cl herbicide at ₦1600 (\$4.6) per bottle. Most of the farmlands have been working over the years, resulting in impoverished soils in many places in the state. This is further worsened by the increasing prevalence of insect pest that destroys the crops. Thus, farming activity in the state is becoming increasingly difficult without fertilizer and herbicides. The shortage of labor has greatly affected the size of farmland cultivated by the farmers. The agricultural development program has served tremendously in bridging this gap by providing rural infrastructures and farming technologies to the rural farmers. However, the state government recently auctions some of the old agricultural processing equipment at the agency premises with the promise of purchasing new ones soon. The government has been paying lip service to the issue of assisting local farmers and subsidy. No country in the world that do not subsidize agriculture. The cost of farming has been on the increase while

the farmers are becoming increasingly helpless in the face of the economic downturn [5].

The soil type and quality of a place matter a lot in agriculture, but this is not the case in the study area. There is no soil laboratory in the agency, Ministry of Agriculture or State as a whole. This has left the farmers on trial and error in the choice of crop for a particular area. The activities of OYSADEP flourished during the period of the loan facility. This was the time when the agency's program was well funded. The premise of the agency then was a beehive of activity. After the period of the loan facility, the activities of the agency began to decline. The agency was left to manage the meager financial resources provided by the state government as running cost. This also stopped with time. Many staff of the agency transferred their services to other government ministries and departments. Thus, the agency has been inactive in its operations and programs in the past one decade. The farmers in the state are now at the mercy of few intervention programs from the state Ministry of Agriculture that comes up once in a while. This development has greatly affected agricultural productivity in the state.

Recommendations

The following possible solutions and policy measures are recommended:

- i. The government should revive the activities of the agency; there is a need for the State government to increase funding for the program.
- ii. The government should employ more extension service staff to the agency.
- iii. There is need to increase the capacity of the agency through training and retraining of staff on the most recent farming technology in existence.
- iv. The government can do well by supporting the agency with working materials, particularly extension service kits and farm inputs to support the extension work of the agency.

Conclusions

This study has examined the activities of the Oyo State agricultural development program OYSADEP from inception to date and the challenges that have constrained the activities of the agency over the years. The findings of the study show that the ADPs performed successfully in their early years of existence. This informs the replication of the program to all states of the federation. The OYSADEP started very well from the onset, but after the expiration of the World Bank funding program, the activities of the OYSADEP began to decline. This was made worst other challenges which include poor funding, shortage of extension service staff, lack of mobility for proper supervision, lack of working materials, lack of publicity and campaigns and increasing population of farmers.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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