International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research (IJSSAR)
Vol. 4, Issue 1, pp. 778-790, March 2026, ISSN: 3043-4467 (Online), 3043-4459 (Print)
doi:10.5281/zenodo.19415962

Response to Radio Agricultural Programmes on Oil Palm and Coconut Seedlings Plantation among Residents of Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The agricultural sector was the mainstream of Nigerian economy before the discovery of oil in the early 1956 resulting to a shift to dependency on oil. The Anambra state government, in a bid to enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability in the state, recently distributed high-quality oil palm and coconut seedlings to residents across the state. However, the actual impact of the radio messages in disseminating information about this programme remains uncertain.
Objective: The research evaluated residents' response to the state governments' radio messages on the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme in Anambra state Nigeria.
Method: The descriptive survey method was adopted, using a sample population of 400 residents engaged in oil palm and coconut cultivation in Anambra State, to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.
Result: Data collected revealed that Anambra state government's radio messages on oil palm and coconut seedlings have enhanced residents' knowledge, influencing their perceptions and driving the adoption of the sustainable agricultural practices.
Conclusion: The study concludes that the Oil Palm and Coconut Seedlings Agricultural Development Programme have been highly effective in reaching, informing, and motivating Anambra residents. The high frequency of exposure, positive perceptions of relevance, adoption and satisfaction with outcomes and the willingness to continue and recommend the practices indicate that the programme is fostering long-term agricultural development and sustainability in the region. This could be attributed to the frequency of the messages and the practical benefits of the programme.
Unique Contribution: This study shows how radio messages shape Anambra residents' awareness, knowledge and adoption of sustainable farming practices. It offers useful insights for policymakers and agricultural stakeholders in improving advocacy and programme implementation.
Key Recommendations: The study recommends that the Anambra State government sustain annual radio programmes on oil palm and coconut farming, tailoring messages with local languages and participants' testimonials, and establish help centres or hotlines with follow-up radio sessions to provide guidance, feedback and reinforce adoption of the programme.

Keywords: Anambra Residents, Agricultural Programme, Radio Messages, Oil Palm, Coconut Seedlings

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a key role in Nigeria's economy, contributing to the Gross Domestic Product and providing employment for a large portion of the population. The agricultural sector is an important component of Nigerian economy with over 70% of the population engaged in agriculture and agricultural-related activities (Obasoro, 2015). According to Akinyetun (2018), the Nigeria agricultural sector actively employed about two-thirds of the country's total labour force and provided employment for about 90 percent of the rural population. Various studies have shown that with the discovery of crude oil in Nigeria and the subsequent oil boom, less attention was given to agricultural sector which hitherto had been the major foreign exchange earner for the country (Abdulkadir, Adefila, and Yusuf 2018). Anambra State government recently launched the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme, with the aim of significantly boosting agricultural productivity in the state. The Palm and Coconut Seedlings Agricultural Development Programme entails the distribution of high-quality palm and coconut seedlings to residents across the state.

Radio on the other hand has long been recognised as an effective medium for disseminating information in rural areas due to its wide reach and accessibility. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, radio serves as a primary source of information for rural communities, providing them with essential knowledge on various topics, including agriculture (Afolabi & Ogunwale, 2019). The use of radio to broadcast agricultural messages aims to enhance farmers' knowledge, influence their attitudes, and encourage the adoption of improved agricultural practices (Oladokun & Adekoya, 2021). Anambra State government recently launched the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme. The programme's radio messages are part of a broader strategy to revitalise agriculture in the State. These messages were designed to educate residents and not just farmers about availability and the benefits of cultivating palm and coconut seedlings.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The oil palm and coconut seedlings distribution of the Anambra state government for residents of the state aims to enhance farmers' livelihoods through the cultivation of these economically valuable crops. The availability and mode of distribution of these seedlings are broadcast on different radio stations covering the three senatorial zones in the state. Several studies have disclosed the impact of radio in promoting agricultural programmes. Ogunniyi et al. (2017) found that radio programmes significantly improved farmers' knowledge and adoption of innovative farming practices. Emovwodo (2019) examined the role of radio programming on agricultural development schemes in Osun State, Nigeria, and revealed that the role of radio programming in the development of agriculture in Osun State cannot be overemphasized, as the messages conveyed via the radio has helped to enhance awareness, inform, enlighten as well as encourage and mobilize listeners who are not only farmers to embrace agriculture programmes. Despite the potential benefits of this agricultural development programme by the Anambra state government, the actual impact of the radio messages on Anambra residents remains unclear, as not much appears to be known about Anambra residents' exposure, perception and response to

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the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme in the state. The problem of this study, therefore, is to close this gap in knowledge.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions.

1. How frequentl~~y~~ are Anambra residents exposed to radio messages about the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural programme?

2. What are the residents' perceptions of the messages' relevance and credibility?

3. How have the residents responded to the messages on the agricultural programme?

Overview of Agricultural Development Programmes

Akinyetun (2019) asserted that the agricultural sector actively employed about two-thirds of the country's total labour force and provided employment for about 90 percent of the rural population. According to Ogbanga (2018) agricultural development is very important for ensuring food and nutritional security, income and employment generation, and for stimulating industrialization and overall economic development of the country. This implies that agricultural development is engineered through supporting farmers to engage in large scale production. Iman (2020) says It extends beyond the physical conditions of farming into research, technology and political policy. It entails the use of modern facilities to engage in large scale production and also the control of pest using innovative means. Many states in Nigeria has different agricultural programmes and policies to improve the agricultural sector and the economy or state implementation of the federal government agricultural development programmes. The programmes tend to be the grassrot dlivery of such programmes.

This implies that the agricultural sector can address the issue of unemployment, which is perceived as one of the fundamental challenges afflicting the Nigerian economy. Agricultural development in Nigeria has remained a critical sector for economic growth, poverty reduction, and food security. The sector, which employs about 70% of the country's labor force, has been the focus of various government policies aimed at boosting productivity and achieving self-sufficiency in food production (Olaoluwa et al., 2019).

Agricultural Communication

Effective communication on the other hand is widely acknowledged as essential for establishing and maintaining positive social and professional relationships, enabling individuals to exert influence over their environment (Nwafor, 2019). In Anambra state, various communication channels are utilized by the state government to disseminate the current government agricultural information to the residents of the state. The state government used the public broadcast station under its control extensively. The Anambra broadcasting Service, ABS 88.5 FM, Awka and ABS Onitsha 90.7 FM, Awka broadcast these messages as news adjacency and news inserts and subsequently aired it during other broadcast hours. The state government also placed the the

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messages on other private stations in the state, such as Unizik 94.1 FM, Awka, Radio Sapientia 95.3, Onitsha , Ijele 93.2 FM, Oraifite, Authority 91.9 FM, Nnewi.

Aligwe, Nwankwo, and Nwafor (2017) observe that farmers' receptiveness to novel agricultural advancements directly correlates with their likelihood of embracing them. Abdul-Aziz and Ibrahim (2024) stated that the efficacy of a dissemination channel is contingent not only upon the number of farmers who receive information through it, but also on the extent to which said channel positively influences farmers' decisions to adopt a given technology. Consequently, effective communication empowers individuals to exert control over their surroundings, with the primary objective of bringing about transformative changes in the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and desires of the recipients (Nsude and Nwafor 2016). Agricultural communication plays a crucial role in disseminating information, fostering innovation, and improving agricultural practices among farmers (Afolabi and Ogunwale, 2019). Effective communication strategies are essential for ensuring that farmers receive timely and relevant information that can help them make informed decisions (Oladokun & Adekoya, 2021).

In Nigeria, various forms of media, including radio, television, and social media, have been instrumental in shaping farmers' perceptions and practices (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2019). Radio, in particular, has been recognized as a powerful tool for reaching rural farmers due to its wide reach and accessibility (Ogundele & Ayodeji, 2021). Radio plays a crucial role in agricultural development by disseminating vital information to farmers. This includes updates on weather conditions, market prices, pest control methods, and new agricultural techniques. The use of media in agricultural development programmes has been shown to enhance farmers' knowledge and improve their productivity, thus contributing to overall agricultural development (Chukwu & Onyekwere, 2023). For instance, in rural areas of Africa and Asia, radio programmes have been effective in broadcasting information about crop management, pest control, and weather forecasts (Akinwale et al., 2020). Moreover, radio's wider coverage and low cost make it particularly effective in regions and rural areas where there are still cases of lack of electricity and internet.

Anambra State Government’s Oil Palm and Coconut Seedlings Agricultural Development Programmme

The Anambra state government’s oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme in Anambra State is an initiative by the state governor, Prof Charles Soludo aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and economic sustainability in the state. The programme, first launched in june 16th 2022 at the flag off the 2022 wet season farming in Anambra State focuses on distributing millions of oil palm and coconut seedlings to farmers across the state. The distribution was also carried out again in 2023 and 2024. This initiative was part of the state government’s broader strategy to revive and strengthen the state's agricultural sector, drawing inspiration from the agricultural policies of the late Dr. Michael Okpara, the first Republic Premier of the Eastern region.

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ABS FM Editorial Commentary (2024) disclosed that between 2022 and 2023, the Anambra state government distributed over 1.1 million palm and coconut seedlings to approximately 100,000 households. The programme's goal is to distribute a total of 10 million seedlings to boost the state's agricultural output and create a sustainable environment. According to various media reports, the state government anticipates generating over N160 billion annually from the palm oil and coconut sectors once the seedlings mature and become productive within two to three years.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed Diffusion of Innovation Theory to investigate Anambra residents' exposure, perception and responses to the programme. Diffusion Theory was originally developed by Everett Rogers in his seminal work, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962). Rogers' theory provides a comprehensive model for understanding how innovations are adopted over time, distinguishing between different types of adopters, including innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 2003). The theory posits that the adoption of innovations follows an S-curve, where adoption starts slowly, accelerates, and then levels off as the innovation becomes mainstream.

Diffusion Theory also plays a role in agricultural development, where it explains the spread of new farming practices. For instance, research has explored how innovations such as drought-resistant crops or sustainable farming techniques diffuse among farmers in developing regions. Factors such as community influence and accessibility to information are critical in determining the adoption rates (Nair, Sharma, and Patel, 2021). This theory analyses Anambra Anambra state residents' exposure, perception, and response to the state government's radio messages on the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme. The theory identifies five key stages in the adoption process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.

Exposure to the radio messages can shape the residents' perception of the innovation by providing them with relevant information about its potential benefits and requirements. The persuasive nature of the messages influences their attitudes and willingness to consider adoption. Residents'' decisions regarding whether to engage in the programme are influenced by how they perceive the potential advantages and disadvantages, as presented in the radio messages.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Several studies have examined the exposure of farmers and other people to radio messages on Agricultural programmes. A study by Chinda, Ali and Ali (2019) examined the role of agricultural radio programmes in the adoption of agricultural production technologies among farmers in Girei Local Government of Adamawa State. Through a random selection of 113 farmers in ten villages the data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that many of the respondents were aware of agricultural programs aired on radio in the area, especially agricultural programmes aired on Gotel FM and the Adamawa State Broadcasting Corporation which significantly influenced the adoption of agricultural production technologies aired on radio in the area. While their study was on selected agricultural

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programmes, the present study dealt on agricultural radio messages about oil palm and coconut seedlings.

Similarly, Afolabi and Ogunwale (2019) carried out research on the role of radio in agricultural development in Nigeria: the case of farmers in Ekiti state, reported that radio is the most accessible medium for farmers in the state, with many farmers tuning in to agricultural broadcasts to gain information. This study did not specify any agricultural programme, but rather usage of agricultural information by famers, unlike the present study which discusses the Anambra state oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural programme.

Emovwodo (2019) studied the role of radio programming on agricultural development schemes in Osun State, Nigeria, with Osun State Broiler Outgrower Production Scheme (OBOPS) And Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Programme (OREAP) with a review of an indigenous agricultural programme, *Aroko Bodunde*, broadcast on the Osun State Broadcasting Corporation, Orisun FM, 89.5, Ile-Ife, a community radio station. His findings revealed that the role of radio programming in the development of agriculture in Osun State cannot be overemphasized, as the messages conveyed via the radio wave has helped to instify awareness, inform, enlighten as well as encourage and mobilize listeners to embrace agriculture programmes. While the study was similar as they both different agricultural programme, the current study expanded by looking at the particular message which is oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural programme initiated by the Anambra state government and the state residents' response in terms of exposure and participation.

METHOD

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The area of the study was Anambra state which is one of the states in the South East part of Nigeria. It comprises three senatorial zones, namely: Anambra Central, Anambra South and Anambra North. The study population is all the residents of Anambra State. The population comprised of a total of 5,839,768 persons as of 2026. Through Taro Yamane's Formula, a sample size of 400 was used. The study employed simple random sampling procedure. This gave every adult resident in the selected local government areas equal opportunity to be chosen for the study. Hence, Anambra Central: Awka-North and Njikoka; Anambra North: Anambra East and Ogbaru; Anambra-South: Orumba-South and Orumba-North. The primary research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather data on the extent of farmers' exposure to the radio messages, their perception of the messages' relevance and credibility, and their responses in terms of adopting the recommended agricultural practices. The data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using frequencies, simple percentages and charts to summarize the data and describe the general trends in resident's exposure, perception, and responses to the state government's oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme.

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RESULTS

Table 1: Exposure to Radio Messages

Variables/Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of Oil Palm and Coconut Seedlings Agricultural Development Programme Listenership		
Daily:	193	51%
A few times a week:	141	37%
Once a week:	26	7%
A few times a month:	18	5%
Never:	0	0%
Total	378	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

A significant majority of Anambra residents represented by 51% plus 37% (88%) listen to the oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme often. This high level of consistent exposure suggests that the radio messages are effectively reaching the target audience on a regular basis. This implies that the frequent exposure increases the likelihood that the messages will be retained and acted upon by the residents.

Table 2: Perception of Messages Radio Messages

Variables/Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Clearity of the radio messages about the Palm and Coconut Seedlings Programme		
Very clear:	222	59%
Clear:	129	34%
Undecided:	21	6%
Not clear:	6	1%
Total	378	100
Relevance of these radio messages to agricultural needs		
Very relevant:	220	58%
Relevant:	123	33%
Neutral:	28	7%
Irrelevant:	7	2%
Very irrelevant:	0	0%
Total	378	100
Language usage in message delivery		
Local language (Igbo):	201	53%
English:	108	29%
Both:	69	18%
Total	378	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

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Most residents of Anambra state find the radio messages 'clear' and perceive them as 'relevant' to their farming needs. Also, the use of both local languages and English in message delivery caters to a diverse audience. The clarity and relevance of the messages enhance their effectiveness making them more likely to understand and trust the information provided, thereby increasing the programme's overall impact.

Table 3: Response and Adoption of Practices

Variables/Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Adopted practices		
Planting of coconut seedlings:	168	44%
Planting of palm seedlings:	122	32%
Both:	75	21%
None	13	3%
Total	378	100
Satisfaction with the practices adopted		
Very satisfied:	194	53%
Satisfied:	111	30%
Undecided:	52	14%
Dissatisfied:	4	1%
Very dissatisfied:	4	1%
Total	365	100
Likelihood of continuation of adopted practices		
Very likely:	190	52%
Likely:	81	22%
Undecided:	94	26%
Unlikely:	0	0%
Very unlikely:	0	0%
Total	365	100
Likelihood of recommending these practices to people		
Very likely:	177	49%
Likely:	80	21%
Neutral:	96	26%
Unlikely:	6	2%
Very unlikely:	6	2%
Total	365	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

A high percentage of the respondents reported adopting new practices based on the radio messages, with a majority planting coconut seedlings than oil palm. Satisfaction with the adopted

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practices is also high, with 83% of the residents being either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied.' The high adoption rates and satisfaction levels indicate that the radio messages are not only reaching them but are also compelling them to take action which is essential for achieving the state government's long-term agricultural development goals in Anambra State. The likelihood of the those who took part in the programme recommending these practices points to the sustainability and potential for broader dissemination of the programme's benefits.

DISCUSSION

The frequency of exposure to radio messages is crucial for assessing the reach and effectiveness of the communication strategy used by the state government. From the survey results, there was a high level of exposure among the residents. Daily and frequent exposure is vital for several reasons: Repeated exposure helps reinforce the messages making it more likely that they will retain the information and understand the benefits of the programme. According to behavior change theories, repeated messaging increases the likelihood of behavior change as it keeps the information top of mind and creates a sense of importance and urgency. Given that a large majority (88%) of the state residents hear the messages daily or several times a week, the programme's communication strategy is effective in reaching its target audience. This widespread reach ensures that the majority of them are informed about the opportunities and benefits provided by the agricultural development programme. This study like that of Afolabi and Ogunwale (2019) on the role of radio in agricultural development in Nigeria: the case of farmers in Ekiti state reported that radio is the most accessible medium for farmers in the state, with many farmers tuning in to agricultural broadcasts to gain information. In as much as their study ascertained level of radio exposure in agricultural development, it did not look at behavioural change of the respondents which the current study investigated and discovered a high frequency of exposure to these agricultural radio messages.

Perception of relevance and credibility significantly impacts whether the Anambra state residents will consider and adopt the new practices promoted in the messages. With 91% of the residents finding the information relevant or very relevant, the messages are well-aligned with their needs and interests. This alignment suggests that the content addresses real issues and provides practical solutions that they can relate to and benefit from. The clarity of the messages is another strong point, with 93% finding them clear or very clear. High satisfaction with the language used (82%) indicates that the messages are delivered in a manner that is easily understood by the residents of Anambra state. The use of both local languages and English caters to a diverse audience, enhancing accessibility and comprehension. Similarly, the study by Chukwu and Ezeh (2020) on farmers' perception of agricultural information dissemination through radio in South-East Nigeria found that farmers generally perceive radio messages on agriculture as relevant and credible sources of information. However, their study also highlighted the importance of using local languages and ensuring that the content is easy to understand to enhance comprehension and perception. This implies that their study found out that most of the agricultural programmes studied were in English, unlike the present study which showed that the messages were strategically crafted with majority being aired in indigenous language (Igbo).

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The response to the messages in terms of adopting the new agricultural practices is a direct indicator of the programme's effectiveness. The high adoption rate (97%) and the satisfaction with the outcomes (83%) indicate a positive response to the programme's radio messages. The high adoption rates suggest that the messages are not only being heard but are also compelling enough to motivate action. The residents' satisfaction with the outcomes of their adopted practices indicates that the programme delivers tangible benefits. The likelihood of recommending the practices to others (71%) suggests that early adopters are becoming advocates, potentially leading to a wider spread of the innovation through social networks and peer influence. The high likelihood of continuing to use the practices (74%) points to sustainable behavior change, which is essential for the long-term success of the programme. This study has extended that of Chinda, Ali and Ali (2019) who examined the role of agricultural radio programmes in the adoption of agricultural production technologies among farmers in Girei Local Government of Adamawa State. Through a random selection of 113 farmers in ten villages the data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Their results showed that many of the respondents were aware of agricultural programs aired on radio in the area, especially agricultural programmes aired on Gotel FM and the Adamawa State Broadcasting Corporation which significantly influenced the adoption of agricultural production technologies aired on radio in the area. In as much as their study was on the role of radio agricultural programmes, it did not specify any agricultural programme like the current study which is about the Anambra state governments' oil palm and coconut seedlings agricultural development programme.

The study found that frequent exposure, clear and relevant content and the use of local language made radio messages highly effective in influencing farmers' awareness and adoption of new practices. Unlike earlier studies that focused mainly on exposure or perception, this current study shows that well designed, locally tailored radio programmes can drive behavioural change, extend and deliver tsngible benefits, thereby advancing knowledge on communication's role in agricultural development.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Anambra state government's radio messages on the Oil Palm and Coconut Seedlings Agricultural Development Programme have been highly effective in reaching, informing, and motivating Anambra residents. The high frequency of exposure, positive perceptions of relevance and credibility, and significant adoption of new practices highlight the success of the communication strategy. The satisfaction with outcomes and the willingness to continue and recommend the practices indicate that the programme is fostering long-term agricultural development and sustainability in the region. Continued efforts to maintain and enhance this communication strategy will likely result in even greater impact and wider adoption among the residents of Anambra state.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Anambra state government should:

1. sustain radio messages on oil palm and coconut agricultural programme, by making it an annual event during the launch of yearly farming season.
2. customise the content of the radio messages. This includes more usage of local languages, incorporating testimonials from fellow farmers who have benefited from the programme, and providing practical examples that resonate with their daily farming activities.
3. set up help centers or hotlines where residents can ask questions and get advice on how to follow the recommendations, because regular follow-up through radio programmes that allow people to share their experiences, ask questions and receive feedback can reinforce the messages and encourage sustained adoption of the programme.

Ethical Clearance
Informed consent was sought from all participants, and their confidentiality was ensured throughout the study. The purpose of the study was also explained to them in English and Igbo and they were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

Acknowledgements
We acknowledge and appreciate all the participants for their cooperation during this study.

Sources of Funding
The study was not funded

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that from the beginning of the research to the end, there was no conflict of interest whatsoever.

Authors' contributions
Daniel C. Okoye conceived the study idea, wrote the introduction and handled the design, Linus Ogbuoshi and Stephen Nwanchor Elem collected and analysed the data. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Availability of data and materials
The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

Citation

Okoye, D. C., Ogbuoshi, L. I. and Elem, S. N. (2025). Response to radio agricultural programmes on oil palm and coconut seedlings plantation among residents of Anambra state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*, 4 (2), 778-79. doi:10.5281/zenodo.19415962

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