

# **Proliferation and Commercialisation of Broadcast Media in South Western Nigeria: Implications for Agriculture and Rural Development**

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**Abstract:** *Broadcast media plays an important role in Agriculture by providing access to relevant information that can contribute significantly to agricultural development, improved productivity and enhanced livelihoods in rural areas. This paper examines the impact of proliferation and commercialisation of broadcast media in Southwestern Nigeria which is one of the six geo-political zones in the country. It highlights the importance of radio and television in the dissemination of agricultural technology and other useful information for rural development to the teeming farm families across the zone in order to complement the ineffective extension services. However, the paper observed that despite the increasing number of radio stations in Southwestern zone, their commercial intent often prioritizes profit over public service, posing a challenge to effectively addressing the needs and concerns of the rural communities and promoting rural development. Hence, it is recommended that the Federal Government through Nigerian Broadcasting Commission should legislate on free airtime for all agricultural and rural development programmes on radio and television in the country. The newly created Southwest Development Commission should also collaborate with Agricultural Development Programmes in the zone to run free farm broadcast programmes in the zone. Also, seasoned agricultural communicators should be employed to serve as the gate keepers for agricultural programmes in the broadcast stations.*

**Keywords:** Broadcast, commercialisation, proliferation, rural, communicator.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The human population relies on agricultural products for survival and nutritional benefits. Agriculture plays a critical role in the economy. It has been described as the mainstay of economic growth in Africa. It is the single largest contributor to the well-being of the rural poor in Nigeria,

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK sustaining 90% and 70% of the rural and total labour force, respectively (Amusat, 2021). Despite the importance of Agriculture to the nation's economy, it contributes only 38% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). In Nigeria, Agriculture is expected to play the following roles:

- Provide food for the people with the aim of attaining self-sufficiency in food production and enhancing food security.
- Provide the raw materials for the industries. This is an expected factor in the expansion of the industrial based generation of employment and income for the country.
- Provide the much needed fund for the development of the country through the exportation of the agricultural produce, such as cocoa, kolanut, palm oil and arable crops, such as maize, cowpea and soybean.
- Provide employment for majority of rural dwellers not only by working directly on the farms, but also through the establishment of agro-processing industries to export semi-processed materials.
- Transform the rural communities – Farm settlements were established in many parts of the country. Due to the importance of this sector, agriculture was placed on the concurrent list in the country's policy formulation (federal, state and local), the private sector, as well as non-commercial organisations have specific roles to play to ensure the attainment of the above targets.

The Nigerian government over the years has launched several initiatives to boost agriculture and food security with the hope of commitment to rural development. Some of the programmes include; Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS), Anchor- Borrowers Programme (ABP), Youth Empowerment in Agriculture (YEAP), Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises (LIFE) programme, National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC), Commercial Agriculture Credit Scheme (CACS) among others. Additionally, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations is working with the Nigerian government to support sustainable agricultural development and food security. Some of the areas they are focusing include; sustainable and inclusive Agric-Food Systems, Investing Resilience of Food and Agriculture – Based Livelihood Systems and Healthy Nutritious Diets. All these are placed towards the improvement and enhancement of rural life with the concept that if rural life is improved, agricultural development will also be on the increase and the much-tainted food security will not be a mirage. The performance of Nigeria's rural development and the extension services which generally referred to as the kingpin in the entire mechanism of agricultural development strategy have not been particularly satisfactory. More so, the poor funding and epileptic performance of the Agricultural Development Programme as a result of the withdrawal of World Bank counterpart funding of the extension service in Nigeria has reduced the effectiveness of extension service (Ahmed *et al*, 2025).

According to Jovanovich 2023, interpersonal communication occurs when there is an interaction between one person and another. Thus, when an extension agent visits a farmer, he communicates interpersonally. The recognition of the inadequacies of interpersonal communication strategy which involves the use of extension agents has lent credence to the emergence of broadcast media support (Mass Communication) in development process. Mass Communication is the relay of information through a channel, to large, heterogeneous population at the same time. For example,

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK in agriculture, home economics and rural development, the problem of limited number of change agents or development facilitators serving millions of development beneficiaries justify the need for media support. While FAO recommends one extension agent to 800 farmers; the ratio in Nigeria gives an average of 1:1968 (Davis *et al.*, 2019). The use of broadcast media is therefore inevitable if any progress is to be achieved in the nearest future. Therefore, the study examines the proliferation of broadcast media, the commercialized value and its implications for Agriculture and Rural Development in Southwestern Nigeria.

### **Objectives:**

This paper examines the proliferation of broadcast media, the commercialized value and its implications for Agriculture and Rural Development in Southwestern Nigeria. The paper specifically reviewed the history of broadcasting in Nigeria, discussed the contribution of farm broadcast programme to agriculture and rural development, make case for free airtime, encourage the use of broadcast media alongside extension agents. The paper also advocate for the use of experts (professional agricultural communicators) in the presentation of agricultural programmes on radio and television. Common information needs of rural dwellers were identified and implications of proliferation of broadcast media in the study area were also discussed.

### **History of Broadcasting in Nigeria**

Before we dwell in to the history of broadcast industry in Nigeria; let us attempt to know what broadcast journalism is? Broadcast journalism has to do with the transmission of information through the radio waves from a radio or television station, to the audience in far and near places, through their receivers which help in decoding such information (Emmanuel and Onabajo 2022). Radio broadcasting was introduced to Nigeria by the then British colonial authorities in 1932. The task then was to relay the overseas service of the BBC through the wired systems with loud speakers called Radio Diffusion Systems (RDS). The radio diffusion system became the Nigerian Broadcasting System (NBS) in April 1st, 1957 which was later converted to Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation by the act of parliament. In 1978, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation was re-organised to become the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Television broadcasting started with the initiative of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the first premier of western region who launched television broadcasting on 31st, October, 1959 in Ibadan.

With a small 500 watts transmitter mounted on Mapo hill in Ibadan and another at Abafon, western region government commenced operations in partnership with British Media Redifussion Limited. The western Nigeria Radio Vision Service limited was also created. The east and the north soon copied the initiative of the west with the establishment of the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service and the Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria in 1960 and 1962, respectively. In 1976, television stations in the country started beaming colour programmes. By 1978, the federal government owned television stations were made to beam network programmes. In 1992, a new vista was opened in the annals of Nigerian broadcasting history. The president and commander in chief then, General Ibraheem Babangida by decree No38 of 1992 approved the right of ownership of broadcast media.

### **Concept of Rural Broadcasting**

Rural broadcasting is one of the indispensable ways of reaching rural areas with development messages. The media as the purveyor of information are saddled with the responsibility of communicating development needs of the realities in order to attract government and development agents' attention and intervention. The development problems encountered in rural villages are usually under reported by Nigerian media, the focus is always on urban areas. This negates principle of equality. People who produce the bulk of the food and enhance the nation's economic growth ought to be given urgent and adequate attention in the dissemination of information. Rural broadcasting also known as community broadcasting can be regarded as the dissemination of development – oriented information to cater for the interest of members of the rural community. Rural broadcasting is not a recent concept in Nigeria, and it is a phenomenon that is prevalent in the developing or emerging world. The concept takes cognizance of the larger percentage of the rural population when compared with the urban resident.

Richard, (2020) contends that about 70% of Nigerians reside in the rural areas, indirectly hinting that the concept of development can only be looked at from the perspective of rural development. Rural education is a subset of rural development and rural broadcasting can only but have one major focus which is that of transmitting developmental information to educate the citizenry with overall intention of developing their wellbeing, through introduction of innovative ideas that will stimulate them to action. Rural development projects, employing rural broadcasting should be made relevant to the needs of the societies. The use of local leaders has been discovered to be very effective in development programmes. Obasi/ (2025) opined that local leaders should not be jettisoned in any rural development efforts because of their capability to aid or block the communication process. The nation's rural communities have been identified as not the only source of the country's food basket, but also the source of raw materials supply for the industrial sector (Amusat *et al*, 2020). Hence, different agricultural programmes aimed at improving agricultural production and rural development was embarked upon.

### **Commercialisation of Broadcast Media and Its Proliferation: Implication for Rural Broadcasting**

Broadcasting plays a crucial role in promoting rural development by providing information, education and entertainment to rural communities. It can have significant impacts on various aspects of rural life, leading to economic, social and cultural advancements. Broadcasting contributes to rural development promotion in many ways. Recently, in different states that constitute southwestern Nigeria, radio and television stations are springing up on daily basis with the intent to make profit without giving consideration for any enlightenment or rural programmes. Broadcasting, especially radio and television, can reach remote areas and deliver essential news, weather updates, agricultural practices, health and hygiene information, government schemes, market prices, and other vital information that can improve their daily lives and decision-making. The introduction of the State-wide World Bank Funded Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) marked a watershed in the use of radio and television for agricultural extension delivery

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK in Nigeria. With the external support, all the ADPs nationwide were able to establish well equipped Development Support Unit, which had video, television and radio recording facilities.

Most of the broadcast houses provided free air time for the radio and television farm broadcasts of their respective ADPs. The ADPs also took the advantage of the free air time of the Federal radio located in their States. Virtually, all the ADPs produced and aired radio and television programmes on agriculture. With the commercialization, the frequency of both the television and the radio programmes of the ADPs dropped appreciably. As contained in the 2013 Report of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, a survey by National Agricultural Extension Research Liaison Services, Ahmadu Bello University and Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2012 showed that only 26 (70.3%) of the 36 States' ADPs produced and aired radio programmes, while only 48.6% produced and aired television programmes of which 57.7% were in local languages. These figures are even much lower today because of the exorbitant charges for air time.

The word 'commercial broadcasting' implies that media organisations are set up for the purpose of making money and generating funds to meet the financial requirements of the media organisation. On July 7, 1992 the Federal Government through its Federal Ministry of Information and Culture gave the official nod for full commercialization of NTA and FRCN. What this means within the stipulation of the law empowering it is that, government will continue in its endeavour to provide funds to meet the capital requirements of these stations, while the stations are expected to find alternative sources of revenue for their day-to-day needs. After this guideline was rolled out to the Federal Government owned media in Nigeria, the States owned media were also mandated to follow suit. Since a commercialized radio or television stations depend largely on the volume of advertisements or the amount that can be garnered from the sales of air time, the cost of their services skyrocketed and went beyond the reach of agricultural agencies. The resultant effect is the reduction in the number of farm broadcast programmes on radio and television channels which the masses especially the rural populace relied on for their day-to-day information.

Without gainsaying, broadcast media have become an important means of agricultural information dissemination in Nigeria. The first radio programme in farming which was titled "Agbemase" (I will go into farming) was first broadcast in Nigeria by the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS) in 1963. Since then, a lot of other agricultural agencies have been packaging different agricultural programmes on radio and television. The survey jointly carried out by NAERLS and PCU in 2021 has revealed that with the commercialisation of broadcasting in Nigeria, the media houses may not be too willing to give free air time and government which is the largest employer of Village Extension Agents may also not be able to sustain huge investments in farm broadcasts programming. Presently, most of the ADPs and other agricultural agencies are not liquid enough to run agricultural programmes either on the State or Federal Government owned stations. Hence, the need for National Broadcasting Commission to legislate on free air time for agricultural and rural development programmes on radio and television in Nigeria. The newly created Southwest Development Commission should also look into the possibility of collaborating with Agricultural



Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK  
Development Programmes (ADPs) in the zone to run free agricultural and different developmental programmes in all the state-owned radio and television stations.

### **Common Information Needs of Rural Dwellers**

Advocates of rural education strategies often point out that the crucial need of rural people is for more practical information that will help them improve the productivity of their land, enhance the quality of their diet and allow them to reduce the incidents of disease by adopting better health practices in the home. Though, such information has been customary being provided by extension agents but with little impact in the rural communities. According to Odionye (2020), the performance of Nigeria's rural development and public extension services have not been particularly satisfactory. Audience of rural education programme varies in age, occupation, motivation and educational experiences and can be categorized according to their common information needs (Siyabonga *et al.*, 2023). They are;

- (a) Farmers seeking advice on how to improve yields of their crops and the general quality of village life.
- (b) Mothers seeking information on how to safeguard the health of their children and advice on how to plan the size of their children.
- (c) Teachers, extension agents and other professionals working in the field and in need of continuing guidance and support.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The paper examines the impact of broadcast media commercialization on agricultural production and rural development in Nigeria. The paper placed premium on the use of radio and television as complement to the poor extension service in the country and categorized rural dwellers based on their common information needs. Since agricultural and rural development are necessary ingredients for the take-off of all other sectors of the nation's economy, it is recommended that government at all levels should encourage production of quality farm broadcast programmes and guarantee free flow of information to the rural areas. This can be achieved through;

- Democratisation of the media: The rural people need to be involved in the packaging of the programmes meant for them.
- Classification of agricultural and other rural programmes as enlightenment programmes by Nigerian Broadcasting Commission. Such programmes through legislation should be made to enjoy free air time from the media industry.
- Employment of seasoned agricultural communicators as gatekeepers for agricultural programmes on radio and television stations.

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