



## Reporting Countrified Folks for Environmentally Aware Livelihood Options in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Globally, environmental awareness campaigns occupy the foreground of deliberations at different fora including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, United Nations Environmental Programme, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Greenpeace etc. Concerns addressed are human activities that negatively impact climate with attendant unproductive consequences on geographic ecosystems. It has been observed that efforts are fixated on the activities of international oil companies, other industries and industrial agriculture. There is an obvious lack of consideration at the national or local levels for the unscrupled disruption of the local environment for livelihood and the cumulative adverse effects on the environment that cannot be readily measured. The paper aims at engendering pertinent changes where necessary and improving on existing productive methods, for the good of society through the instrumentality of rural news reporting. Based on the Norms Activation Theory and deploying the participant observation and desk research methodologies, this paper calls attention to the overlooked activities of rural agriculturist that impinge on the capacity of rural ecosystems to be sustainable. The role of agricultural reporting is therefore spotlighted as the only veritable means of exposing the positive and negative means of rural livelihood options for deserving action by government and other development providers. The work finally spells out measures agricultural reporting could be optimally deployed to achieve the stated aim.

### Original Research Article

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## Introduction

It is a given that information rules the roost in society and to this extent our world is commonly referred to as “information society where the usage of information is key to survival”. The creation and distribution of information has become a significant activity to man on account of its transcendent role in society. Though the concept of “information society” is used in relation to the pervading influence of ICT, the volume of available information, the extensiveness of distribution and its utility in every realm evidences its indispensability to everyone now. Today, every section of society however remote lives by it. Information defines our era, enables decision making and above all influences how we interact with the world (Zedah, Veisi & Zedah, 2013). Organization attain competitive advantage over competitors based on degrees of information compliance. Such organizations are exposed to opportunities not readily accessible to non-compliant others.

Like business organizations, humans cannot but rely on information to gainfully interact with their environment just as they do with one another. Information is it that enables them to take rewarding decision about the use they put their environment to. An ill-informed society makes indiscriminate or unscrupled use of resources in the environment today and faces adverse consequences subsequently. In the interest of survival let alone sustainable development humans are expected to define how they interact with their environment so it could always provide the natural support for human survival and livelihood.

Livelihood encompasses a people’s capabilities, assets, income and all activities required to secure the necessities of life. A livelihood therefore is a means of making a living and a people’s livelihood derives from their way of life concerning how they secure the basic necessities of food, water, shelter and clothing (Fahad, Faisal and Naushad, 2020). These are products of the natural environmental. By and large, livelihood concerns override every other

activity of rural dwellers but there is need to secure a balance between the pursuit of livelihood and the demands of the idea of sustainable development.

To achieve that, livelihood perspective considered around the four themes of knowledge, politics, scale and dynamics to understand its centrality to development (Fahad, Faisal and Naushad, 2020). In the context of this discourse, dynamics refer to how livelihoods change due to change in assets, internal needs and external factors that impact availability or use of resources. (Sarah, 2016). Politics as a theme in livelihood connects with government policies concerning resource management, land ownership and use, taxation, subsidies etc. that affect the economic viability of the citizens. Such policies affect people's ability to secure sustainable living (Karl, 2002). Regarding livelihood in rural areas government intervention is largely an external factor that contends with their cultural norms. On the other hand, scale refers to the different levels at which livelihood experiences, events and processes are analyzed and understood. Proper understanding of livelihood process at the different scales enhances decision making to address notable peculiar necessities or demands at different levels (Scoones, n.d). the scales or levels of analysis include the macro, meso, and macro levels representing the individual/household, community/local and the national/global levels respectively (Binkadakatti, Angadi and Dolli, 2013). These levels are interconnected given that within a nation they are under one government. Knowledge as a theme in livelihood discourse involves traditional knowledge which play key roles in environmental sustainability and resource management. An individuals or people's ability to achieve what they want from the environment is contingent upon knowledge. Through knowledge skills are acquired and principles of productive interaction with the environment are realized. Knowledge could be acquired through information while actionable information as made available by those in the media whose bounding it is to make available information in different forms for people to orient themselves with the realities of life.

Rural livelihood sources are deemed sustainable only when they can cope with and recover stresses and shocks, maintain and enhance capacities and assets today while at the same time reckoning with the possibilities and opportunities for posterity (Fahad, Fausal and Naushad, 2020). To rural communities, agriculture is the predominant occupation that supports livelihood. Key to agriculture are farming and fishing. The traditional means of agriculture still prevail in the rural areas. They are recessive and energy sapping while also impacting the environment negatively compared to modern methods of doing the same.

Knowledge to drive improved agricultural could be made available through information. Once rural dwellers are availed with such information there is the possibility that they would rethink, retool and re-engage and draw productivity from other areas of experience to enrich and modernize livelihood. They can by this means, successfully tackle contemporary challenges that dwarf their efforts at sustainable livelihood.

### Theoretical foundation

Environmental theories/models seek to unveil the intricate connection between man and his environment raising and providing answers to questions of ethics and sustainability in the interactions between the duo (Adelaide Law School, nd.). Their primary aim to safeguard the planet for sustainability could be achieved only when stakeholders are informed, educated and encouraged to apply the embedded principles through goal-oriented information interchange.

This study is anchored on the Norms Activation Theory (NAT) developed by Swartz in 1977 (Onwezen, Antonides, and Bartels, 2013). The model is of the view that in environmental awareness advocacy, people are more likely to act pro-environmentally when they feel it is the moral or right thing to do. It claims that pro-environmental actions follow from activation of personal norms reflecting feelings of moral obligation to perform or refrain from actions (Steg and Nordlund, 2018). The model further suggests that personal norms are activated when people are aware of the environmental problems caused by their behavior (problem awareness) and when they feel responsible for the problems caused by their behavior and do not attribute such problems to the actions of others (ascription of responsibilities) (Steg and Nordlund, 2018). It holds that personal norms are strengthened when people believe their actions will help to reduce the existing problem (outcome efficiency) and when people feel able to reduce environmental problems (self-sufficiency) (Steg and Nordlund, 2018).

These suggestions underscore the need to expose people to their unsustainable interactions with the environment to create awareness and convince them to claim responsibility of their actions. In so doing, they can take relevant remedial actions as well as refraining from such actions. Studies have established a connection between media factors and pro-environmental behavior in relation to the NAT components of awareness of consequences and ascription of responsibility and their role in activation of Pro-environmental Behaviour (PEB) (Liao, 2025). They accentuate the result of other studies that environmental news in traditional media significantly raise awareness and comprehension of environmental problems within diverse

communities (Karimi, Liobikiene, Saadi and Sepahvand, 2021).

The interconnection between the postulations of the NAT and communication/news media in addressing rural people's unsustainable interactions with the environment is essential to the current study. This owes to the view that once people are informed and made to understand the ills attendant to some traditional agricultural norms, they become susceptible to reformation or change. Such changes can only be initiated, sustained and advanced through information exchange between the development needy and development providers.

## **Methodology**

Participant observation as well as desk research methodology was adopted in this study. Participant observation refers to the practical experience obtained from personal involvement in agricultural activities in the Bayelsa countryside. Desk research involves a survey of existing literature pertinent to the study, in the compilation of facts that make up the study. Such literature encompass books and journals in the physical and virtual libraries.

## **Literature Review**

### **Attributes of Bayelsa Rural Communities**

Bayelsa is a littoral state in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This region is described as a region of physical hardship which is unlikely ever to be highly developed (Niger Delta budget monitoring group) it is a lowland state characterized by flood plains and predominant relief features of cliffs and lagoons. The state has a low-lying relief given that it is between the upper and lower Delta plains of the Niger Delta. It is riverine and estuarine in landscape.

Like rural areas in other parts of Nigeria we have dispersed settlements along the creeks but the upper Delta plane has nucleated settlement that are at best called communities. The dispersed settlements are made up of a set of houses planted in isolation, interspersed by farms and bushes and interconnected by roads and bush paths. The nucleated settlements have a core of houses from which farms pasture lands gardens etc. extend outward. Down the creeks are settlement that could be described as hamlets. They are in most cases identified by the primary occupation of the people occupying them. Thus we have fishing and farming settlements where land is relatively available the people is such hamlets can do both farming and fishing. Beyond the hamlets are camps. They are settlements of people on temporary basis according to seasons and well defined purposes. The entire landscape is surrounded by water and inter-settlement movement is majorly by water transportation. These settlements span the boundaries of the entire state as it borders Delta State

to the West, Rivers State in the North and East and the Atlantic Ocean in the South.

Flooding is a seasonal recurrence in Bayelsa State. Apart from the natural flood that occurs across Nigeria, Bayelsa State remains undated with flood water longer than many other states in the nation. This happens because flood water from the Northern parts of the country collects or assembles in the state and drains into the ocean that borders it in the south later.

Rainfall occurs virtually throughout the year with heavy downpours in the months of July and September. Relative dry season is experienced between the months of November and April. The state has four ecological zones comprising the coastal barrier island forest, mangrove forest, fresh water swamp and the lowland rain forest. These different vegetation types are associated with the various soil units in the areas the state. They support a variety of plants and animals that make up the various ecosystems across the rural areas of the state (Niger Delta Budget monitoring group, nd, Tuaware, 2006).

### **Livelihood Endeavours in Bayelsa Rural Areas**

Livelihood is a means of making a living. It encompasses people's capabilities assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. Apart from shelter, the primary preoccupation of a rural dweller is to secure food for subsistence. Beyond that commercial farming and fishing activities also take place. The livelihood activities are squarely centered on natural resources derivable from the environment. They are non-mechanized traditional agricultural activities comprising farming and fishing endeavours. Forestry related activities also take place in these rural areas. To this extent, rural people's livelihood patterns and their environmental effects are discussed as follows:

#### **Peasant Fishing**

These are fishing practices carried out by individuals or communities primarily for consumption and livelihood often utilizing traditional or low output techniques and limited technology, with little surplus for trade (Cooke, 2024). Fishery in rural areas basically relates tapping of aquatic resources to earn a living. It is not restricted to sourcing and processing of fish to the cold blooded vertebrate living in water. In this context, fishing refers to hunting for fish and other aquatic animals in water. The procedures by which any creature that is part of the aquatic fauna which rural people are able to procure for livelihood form this discuss. Fishing takes place in the streams, rivers, lakes, man-made reservoirs, creeks, brackish waters and coastal waters up to 12 nautical miles from shore (Egesi, 2016) Capture fisheries as these procedures are collectively called is labour intensive but provides the

quantity of fish rural dwellers need for both subsistence and liquid cash. Some who have taken fishing as a profession of sorts have been able to make a mark for themselves in society. However, it also has some deleterious effect on the environment because of unscrupled exploitation and lack of adequate knowledge of adverse externalities on the environment that impinge on the overarching need for sustainability in human endeavours.

In Bayelsa state fishing gear used by rural dwellers are mainly passive methods of capture. Gear used include: hook and line, cast net, gill nets, traps and entangled nets (Oyadongha Samuel, 2004). Some more of these gear are Egedegu (surrounding net) and Obiriki (throwing net). Fish traps like Gbii, Okou, Otta, Bommu, Ayo, Gura, Egen etc are equally in use (Dienye and Olopade, 2017). In most cases these fishing gear are named after their function or the way they work but just as we have the above as fishing gear we also have fishing methods. Fishing gear are the tools while fishing method is how these tools are used. Again, use of certain matter that have chemical component fall into the classification of fishing method such substances may be called compounds. Other methods include angling where the hand-held rod, line and hook is the tool and ayo used to scoop fish that are of smaller sizes in their numbers.

Categorizing these gear into active and passive groups Dienye and Olapade (2017) show that passive gear are stationary traps that the fish and other aquatic animals stray or are lured into. Some of them mentioned above (egen, gbii okou, otta) are in this group. The active ones are those that are pulled along by the fisher man on his fishing craft or set out to drift along the stream according to the current. Such gear include Sara-daye, Egedegu, Atalaye while the obiriki (throwing net) is structured in a manner that when skillfully thrown, it encircles particular portions or places of the stream where it is hoped to make a catch. Spears (Agusugbeinye) and lift nets are yet other fishing gear in use (Dienye and Olapade, 2017). With such methods and gear the rural dwellers are able to etch a living and in other cases make a fortune of the rural aquatic ecosystems.

### **Fallouts of Rural Fishing Methods**

Fishing in the rural areas is identified with several unproductive issues that are practically taken foregranted. However minimal they seem, the cumulative aftermaths have harmful effect on sustainable livelihood. Fishing practices identified with this backward situation comprise:

**Use of Non-Selective Fishing Gear** – This type of fishing gear are equipment that capture a wide range of marine life indiscriminately. Target and non-target species are caught by such gears. The non-target catch is called bycatch. They

are undesirable sizes of target species and other marine life incidentally caught. In most cases, if for instances the smaller size of a target species cannot be used as a bait, it is discarded as waste. Sometimes, it is discarded in their rotten state that could be poisonous to marine life if discarded in the stream or hazardous to terrestrial life if discarded in the waste bin.

**Ghost Fishing** - This is a situation where a fish trap or stationary fishing gear drift away from its position and cannot be found by the owner yet continues to function as expected wherever it is. In other cases, the fisher may deem such fishing gear no longer useful and abandons it. All the catches it makes are never harvested but rots away and this continues until it gradually damages to the point of incapacitation. In other words, the gear makes useful catch but returns same as poison to the environment.

**Blast Fishing**- In the rural areas dynamites are used in the streams to kill an inestimable quantity of fish at a single blast. The fisherman and a handful of others selectively pick those of the sizes considered edible that are afloat after the blast, and leave others to rot away in the environment

**Poison Fishing** - poison fishing refers to the use chemical compounds in fishing. Such chemicals include gamalin 20, and Emgbosu. Gamalin 20 also known as Lindale causes respiratory distress, erratic swimming, loss of equilibrium etc. on fish that takes water contaminated with lethal or sub-lethal concentration of gamalin. (Ezomonye and Ogbomida, 2011). In the state of unconsciousness, the fish are at the mercy of the fishermen who scoops them into his canoe or other fishing craft. Emgbosu otherwise called Brazilia Pods or UXL Pods is the fruit of the raffia palm. When it ripens, a solution is made of it with water and used like gammalin 20 for fishing. It has similar effect on aquatic life as gammalin 20. Both have capacity to kill good quantity of fish much of which remains abandoned after the fisher has made his selection. (UN Atlas of the Oceans, 2002-1016, Ojo, Akingbola, Gbamosi, Samuel, Olabaniji, Aboderin and Mustapha, 2025).

Though subsistence is derived from these and other methods of peasant fishing in rural areas the negative externalities are destructive to life and the environment. They are unsustainable hence have to be controlled. Much more of aquatic life is wasted than utilized for subsistence for instance, benthic animals and marine mammal are killed inadvertently. While endangered species face extinction others become endangered. The non-selective fishing gears trap and kills just any fish on its way just as the blasts or use of explosives and chemical compounds in fishing. In ponds and some lakes such leftover fish have capacity to unleash toxic matter to the ecosystem or habitat. Aside that the deliberate destruction of plants or

parts of aquatic vegetation to meet immediate fishing needs destroys habitat and discourages spawning habits. The overriding aftermath of all of this is the impact on food security in that these practices deplete aquatic fauna that make an ecosystem what it should be. Again, exposure of human beings to dioxins and pesticides via contaminated fish consumption subjects the human body to neurological damage, developmental delays in children and risk of cancer (Abera and Admias, 2024). This calls for proper attention to the fishing methods of rural dwellers.

### **Peasant Farming and Fallouts of Rural Farming Methods**

In core rural areas long-standing agricultural methods and implements are still used for crop farming. The farmers rely mostly on human labour and available crude implements usually handled manually. There is application of local knowledge on available natural resources. In most cases satisfying prevailing needs predominate calls for sustainable agricultural practices recommended by governments, NGOs and other public spirited organizations. Though the farming procedures derive from time-tested interactions with the environment, use is made of certain chemicals to boost farm produce. The ignorance of or deliberate disregard for possible reverse of these chemicals constitute environmental challenges that need to be addressed.

Most farmed crops in Bayelsa State include plantain, yam, maize, sweet potato and cocoa yam. Indigenes also harvest the fruits of bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis* and African palm fruit (*Elaeis guineensis*). In all instances use is made of hoes, cutlasses, axes manufactured by the blacksmith from neighbouring states planting of and harvesting of crops. The farming activities encompass planting, weeding, fertilization, pest control, mulching, thinning and staking all of which are manually done (Musah, 2019). Traditional agricultural practices include shifting cultivation, mixed cropping, crop rotation, agroforestry, fallow system, slash-and-burn and tree felling (Dudafa and Titus, 2024).

Slash-and-burn agriculture refers to the act of clearing and felling of bushes and tries and burning them up to make the land cultivable, it is identified with small scale farming in Bayelsa State. The common perception is that it makes the land more fertile as the ashes and remains decompose into the soil. In some other situations, the grasses are cut and allowed to mulch so as to suppress the growth of weed. When yam is farmed, the slash-and-burn action is followed by cutting stakes from the bush to provide support for the tendrils. Such stakes are young trees that are still developing. Pest control measures have traditional and chemical approaches. Traditional methods involve the use of neem seed oil and ash, while chemical approach involve the use of pesticides (Dudafa and Titus, 2024). Both neem

seed oil and manufactured pesticides are sprayed on the crops to deter insects or pests.

Fertilization method commonly used is broadcasting and placement which is a traditional technique in rural areas. Fertigation is also practiced in that the fertilizing compound is dissolved in water inside a container and sprinkled manually across the crops. Organic and inorganic fertilizer are used by rural farmers. Inorganic fertilizer are not commonly used like their organic counterparts.

Adversities of rural farming methods on the environment are numerous but taken foregranted. This arise from the fact that such practices are traditional and become inextricable parts of daily life. For instance, rural farmers have a strong emotional attachment to their crops and no one can tell them that cutting young plants to stake their tendrils is deleterious to the same environment that provides life support. Felling of trees to make way for aeration and photosynthesis of their crops is a necessity and a normal thing to do. Even so, however small in scale as that action takes place, it impacts potential supply of wood by causing deforestation. It also result in depletion of economic trees etc.

The slash-and-burn agricultural practice relates to cutting bushes or plants to prepare the farm and for tilling. Such cut down bushes are then burned to ashes. It is identified with increased carbon emission exposure of top-soil to erosion and deforestation. Improper agricultural waste management also has its reverses on the environment. In rural areas, such wastes are dumped, neglected or burned. Improper farm refuse disposal releases harmful substances to the farm land that disrupt nutrient cycles making the soil unfavourable to plant growth. It results in decreased yield and inordinate dependence on external inputs because of degraded soil structure.

Fertilizer application also has health and environmental implication. Organic manure application is identified with inconsistent nutrient levels. If not properly applied they introduced pathogens and weed seeds that compete for resources with crops and create an environment more susceptible to pest infestation of crops. Paucity of organic fertilizer such as animal manure result in increased pressure on land and potentials for land degradation. It further causes increased health risks and workload while reducing yield. Land cultivation systems such as shifting cultivation is noted for deforestation especially when trees are felled indiscriminately at every shift (Aderinoye, Adbduluahab & Salami, 2017, Margo, 2024, Denomme & Beyer, nd.).

In sum, rural agricultural practices severally and collectively are identified with loss of biodiversity,

decreased crop yield, damage to ecosystem and land, water and air pollution as well as soil degradation.

### **Environmental/Agricultural Reporting in Rural Areas**

Environmental reporting in this work is not as encompassing as the concept is used in other contexts. It is limited to reportage of rural people's interplay with their habitat for subsistence.

Environment in this work represents the natural habitation in which people coexist with plants and animals or the natural habitat in which man lives with other creatures and carries out his daily activities. Environmental reporting in rural areas reflects reportage of rural people's interactions with their natural surroundings to utilize available natural resources to earn a living, and highlight the attendant negative externalities with intent on preserving the environment for use today and the future. Since rural people's interactions with their environment do not go beyond agricultural activities, reporting the environment may as well be seen as reportage of rural people's agricultural activities to inform government and its agencies as well as NGOs of the agricultural or livelihood options in the rural areas. It highlights the drawbacks characterizing this interactions and opportunities for advancement. This brand of journalism informs and educates the rural people of the benefits of updating their livelihood methods and shedding retrogressive livelihood styles for sustainability of their environment. To this extent some authorities refer to this realm of reporting as agricultural reporting (Msugther, 2025) it is an integral part of rural news.

The areas of commonality between rural and urban news notwithstanding, this type of news is written and reported with rural perspective or emphasis. Its focus is on the particular methods, processes and procedures by which rural dwellers utilize their natural environment for a living and the attendant issues. It calls for specialized treatment hence special skills on the part of the reporter to make its essence noticeable to all stakeholders (Elem and Nsude, nd.)

Rural agricultural news is development oriented. It creates awareness in two fronts. On one hand it provides information to rural people, about new, better, easier and more rewarding agricultural methods. On the other hand it provides government with information on agricultural practices that need to be discarded and others that could be refined upon to meet latest trends. In practical terms, rural agricultural reporting exposes government to the agro-environmental challenges of rural people and provides it with opportunities to align ----- development policies with such challenges in the interest of national development.

### **Nature of Rural Agricultural News**

Rural agricultural news is nothing more than reports on the agricultural activities of rural people. It encompasses the practices and experiences of rural living centered around agriculture. In other words, rural agriculture. News is characterized by information and land cultivation, fishing and livestock management in the rural areas that matters to both government and the rural people. It equally contains government policies, directives, opportunities and provisions local agriculturists have to be availed of.

Reporting such news entails gathering sieving and organizing these practices and experiences in a topical manner and presented to the people and government for the purpose of informing and educating both parties on the sustainable paths to take. Its main objective is to encourage positive change in the obsoleted routine by exposing these practices and experiences to development providers. It aims to redress the tradition-directed posture of rural agriculturists for the overall good of society. This requires the engagement of trained hands in news and information management to detect what should be reported and how.

The news elements are same as those applicable to the conventional news reportage that is, the who, what, where, when, why and how (5Ws & H). However, the units of reportage may not be as encompassing. Basically the reporter is expected to highlight.

- Poor agricultural yield
- Indiscriminate bush burning
- Poor agricultural waste management
- Wrong application of fertilizer
- Unusual death of marine or terrestrial life
- Crude oil spills
- Farm land, streams, ponds air etc. contamination
- Abundant harvests
- Deforestation/logging
- Overuse of agrochemical
- Natural environmental changes
- Environmental changes rurally triggered
- Updated agricultural practices
- Oil explorational activities
- Government and interventionist bodies
- Cost of local agricultural produce
- Pests and pest control
- Flooding and drought

These and many more have to be reported bearing in mind such news values as

- Consequence
- Oddity
- Human interest
- Currency timeliness and
- Proximity

The applicable news presentation styles are the inverted pyramid and the chronological styles. Beyond this two, the literary news writing style is also suggested (Nwosu, 2018). Using these three writing styles, the inverted pyramid style should be applied while reporting incidents and the chronological style to report processes. Rural stories frequently deal with events which are less immediate. Such events evolve over time and require the reporter to provide more background so the reader could be fully aware of the context (Daramola, 2014). The literary writing style is known for objective recreation of experiences. It deploys the techniques of depth reporting and literary writing to paint a picture of reality in the news. Narration, point of view, imageries are used to make the rural news story more understandable. (Nwosu, 1988). The human interest approach in news writing is also deemed applicable to rural news reportage. Here, the reporter highlights the culture and livelihood pattern are accorded prominence with the objective of calling the attention of the authorities to their obligations to the rural people, to give them a sense of belonging (Kings, 2018). These writing and reporting methods must have capacity to interest rural agriculturalist in different measures of ensuring food security and safety of lives. Above all, it should be able to encourage satisfactory livelihood options doing no or less damage to the potential of the environment to sustain life now and later.

### **Roles and Challenges of Rural Agricultural Reporting**

Rural agricultural reporting connects with the concept of development communication and the purposes for environmental sustainability interventions. Such interventions are planned actions designed to shift systems or practices towards more sustainable outcomes, minimize negative environmental impacts and promote long-term ecological health (Kountourisi and Remoinday, 2016). They are characterized by information about life styles and cultural products that give targets of such reports a sense of the values, beliefs, traditions and norms that hinder or promote environmentally conscious actions (Kountourisi and Renoundou, 2016). Added to the above is Msughte's (2025) roles of agricultural reporting to society including:

- Contribution to revival and improvement of the agricultural sector, empowering the people with agricultural information capable of spurring them into relevant agro-based activities only
- Provision of pertinent explanation of complex issues that would confound the uninformed rural agriculturist, using different journalistic formats.
- Provision of a platform for agriculturists, public, government and other stakeholders to air their views on how to move the agricultural sector forward.

- Provision of information on quality of agricultural produce giving stakeholders an idea of how to improve the procedures.
- Provision of information on environmental changes with potentials impact on the farming season.
- Provision of information on latest pest control measures and their application.
- Updates rural farmers on government's new policies and opportunities for rural farmers.
- It avails rural people of information on new and environmentally friendly farming and fishing techniques.
- Creation of awareness of availability of improved crop species and fingerlings.
- Reporting rural farmers' handicaps and breakthroughs so government and NGOs could take guided actions.

Inspite of these roles/benefits of rural agricultural reporting there are a lot of drawbacks that affect the reporter's efforts to get it right. Once the following setbacks are put under control, society will fully enjoy the benefits of this brand of journalism. Some of them are that the way of life of rural people is such that they are suspicious of anything, anybody, process etc. that is not in alignment with their culture. Thus, they are protective of what they know or have. This makes information gathering cumbersome given that the reporter has to convince him of his unharful intents before the rural agriculturalist tells him for instance, why his catch is better or his farm yields more than usual. More of the challenges on the way of the agricultural reporter include:

- Cultural sensitivity: Anyone outside their environment that comes around on a fact finding mission is first mistaken for a government representative and part of those who abandoned them to penury. He is not acceptable and is treated with reciprocal slight.
- On-the-scene reporting is almost impossible because of the remoteness of the setting of some newsworthy events. The news has to come through sources who are not sworn to the principle of objectivity in news gathering. Distortions in the facts cannot be ruled out.
- The technical terms that make sense in the language of the people do not have befitting synonyms in English language. The reporter has to be descriptive or use related terms in English

language thereby questioning exactitude in translation.

- The reporter is handicapped when complacency on the part of the rural agriculturalist restrains him from relating what have become his challenges in relation to prevailing desirable methods.
- Getting reliable and regular sources is another challenge because they expect gratification or payment suspecting that the reporter himself is commissioned or well-paid to come to their uninviting habitation to report their daily activities.
- Lack of appropriate orientation on the workings of the contraptions inhibit effective analysis of issues related to them.

### Sources of Rural Agricultural News

News as usual is obtained from sources. They are individuals, documents or scenes and records from which newsworthy information is procured, organized and presented as news. They bear the facts about an event, issue, incident, occurrence etc. which the reporter must avail himself of, to be able to report credibility. Just as attributions authenticate metropolitan news, the rural agricultural news reporter must get his information from sources which he must refer to in the news lest he becomes the sources of his news by default and in contradiction to professional journalism principles. Some of the relevant sources of rural agricultural news are:

- Personal observation
- Farmers and farm settlements
- Fisherman and fishing camps
- Ministry of agriculture
- The local market
- Community leaders
- Agricultural extension officers
- Guilds – plantain seller, periwinkle fetchers, garri sellers etc.

These and more are source of agricultural news to the reporter.

### Conclusion/ Recommendations

Journalism's core role is to inform the public about issues, events, ideas, people and actions as well as inactions in society that are of interest to people. It is largely, the enlightenment hub for the masses. Through journalism information is made available to people that need adaptation to more productive lifestyles and shed unproductive ways of life to enhance development. To this end, agricultural reporting is crucial to rural communities'

development. To report these communities aright, it is recommended that reporters covering the rural agricultural beat be given specialized training on specific ways of life of rural people so they would perform their duties with adequate understanding. The reporters on their own should build strong engagement with rural community people to earn their trust so information gathering would be seamless. They should endeavor to adapt to the people's ways significantly, so they do not appear aloof and distant thereby suffering access restriction in their reportorial efforts. To be able to move around, the reporter should be able to learn the use of crafts relevant to his job and the understanding of various processes. Ultimately, local people should be engaged for rural agricultural reporting so the appropriate representation of facts and interpretation of technical terms could be offered in the reportage.

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