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## **Assessment of Radio Benue Programmes in Promoting Food Security in Benue State**

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### **Abstract**

The study looked at how Radio Benue Programmes have promoted food security in Benue State. The methodology adopted for the study was survey with questionnaire as the research instrument. Results showed that Radio Benue programmes promoted food security in Benue State. The programmes educated the farmers on mechanized farming

techniques, weed/pest control, improved crop storage techniques, and fertilizer/land conservation methods. The study therefore recommended that Radio Benue should introduce new more programmes on food security, with a phone-in programme where members of the audience can also participate for clarifications. The study also recommended that government should provide good storage facilities for farmers to preserve their produce, making fertilizer available to farmers at lower rates and at the right time, hiring tractors to farmers at affordable prices and giving loans to farmers at low interest rates from banks.

**Key Words:** Farmers, Food Security, Land Conservation, Mechanized Farming, Promotion, Radio Programme.

## **Introduction**

Various people tune to radio programmes for different reasons which basically are to be educated, be informed or to be entertained. As such, programmes should possess qualities that satisfy audience needs. Programming, according to Okunna (2002:134) is the strategic selection of programme materials appropriate or suitable to a particular segment of predefined target audience. Programming involves a long-term calculated, planned policy, expressed in pre-determined executable action, which if appropriately implemented and executed, could win maximum success for the station at the satisfaction of the audience.

Also in programming and scheduling of a station's product, much attention is given to the interest and convenience of the consumer, who constitute the programme's audience. Radio stations including Radio Benue produce different types of programmes for the audiences' consumption such as news, entertainment, information and education. These programmes could be musical, political, sports, religious, news, current affairs, health, family, agriculture or other related issues. The consumption of these programmes is basically because of the confidence built in the programmes by the stations.

Radio Benue, was set up to serve the Benue State media audience to disseminate information aimed at informing, educating and entertaining the people of the state, such services are to encourage good administration, effective promotion and commitment to the interest of the Benue people including the agricultural sector. These Programmes projected enable the audience to be trans-located from their physical position in space to areas different from their immediate environment. The broadcast programmes mobilize the rural community, to complement government's efforts in rural development, through

news and current affairs-presentations. Programmes have socialization qualities. They orient members of the society, to conform to established norms, as applicable to their milieu. Cultural attitudes and beliefs are easily transferred, from one generation to the other, through content, language, and characterization in programmes.

Benue State is more of an agrarian state that has earned the name of Food Basket of the Nation. The state has been endowed with many cash crops and minerals far above other states and capable of feeding the nation to a great extent. Thus the attention should be given to agricultural programmes. Agricultural programmes provide farmers with vital information that will improve the quality of their produce and help solve common problems on farming activities. This will be supportive to the agricultural policy of the Federal Government on agriculture as a shift away from the petroleum sector.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is a nation of many minerals and cash crops however, since independence in 1961; Nigeria has been dependent on oil for her revenue for development at the expense of other minerals. The Federal Government, the State Governments and the Local Governments as the basic tiers of government in the federation depend on the federal allocation revenue for infrastructural development, ecological maintenance, foreign reserve, human empowerment, and governance. Thus, the state governments do less to diversify their revenue base for development and investment. The implication is the huge burden placed on the sector and the revenue that accrues therein. The report of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation –NNPC (2016) industry has shown that the price of crude oil has fallen at the international market drastically which has greatly affected the revenue base of the federal government.

Considering the negative impact of the fall in oil prices the Federal Government has deliberately developed the agricultural plan as a paradigm shift way from the oil sector. The objective of the plan is to support any tier of government, individual or organization to revolutionaries the agricultural sector as revenue based. Many state governments have cashed into the programme with the support from the Federal Government. One of the programmes that both the states and individuals benefits from is the Anchor Borrower Programme. The Benue State Government has been part of the agricultural revolutionary plan and needs the full support from the mass media to succeed. Swinnen (2013,p.4) said that the “mass media plays a crucial role in distribution of information and in shaping

public policy.” This is where Radio Benue becomes quite relevant for awareness creation about the government policy on agricultural development. The question is, do Radio Benue Programmes promote food security programme and to what extent do the programmes guarantee food security in the state? This is what the research seeks to ascertain.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study has the following objectives:

- i. To find out if Radio Benue Programmes contribute to the promotion of food security in Benue State.
- ii. To determine the programmes Radio Benue use in promoting food security in Benue State.
- iii. To ascertain the extent to which Radio Benue Programmes promote food security in Benue State

### **Review of Concepts**

#### **Radio Programme**

Programming is a strategic selection of programme materials that are appropriate and suitable to a particular segment of pre-defined target audience. It involves a long term, planned policy, expressed in pre-determined and executable action. When appropriately implemented and executed, individual programme operations win maximum success for the station. Programming as a feature of broadcasting has basic factors which include research, planning, materials, execution and evaluation. Fepper (1995,p.128) states that “the future belongs to the station to the extent that the station that produces and controls programming will be successful”. Eastman (1993,p.146) states that, in order to increase rating and attain success, broadcast stations must employ strategies such as “compatibility, habit audience flow control, programme resource conservation and breathe of appeal”.

O’Donnell, Case, Hosegood, (1989)see programming as a placement of elements within the broadcast day, andit holds the key to a station’s success. The act of programming is a sequential activity that presumes the organization of materials into a coherent programme service suitable to the target audience. Underscoring this fact, Fepper (1995:128) opines

that “that the future belongs to the station to the extent that the station that produces and controls programming well will be successful”. On the other hand, if the reverse occurs and programming is done haphazardly, it will lead to loss of audience and the simultaneous loss in revenue generation that can be the death of the station. Bittner (1984) concurs when he argues that programming plays a dual role between the broadcaster who views it as a means of income, and the public who see it as a means of public service and entertainment. Effective programming is synonymous with a successful broadcast station.

Programme schedule also determines the success of a radio station. The essence is to present programmes to be enjoyed by the audience. Stations, therefore, determine which programme to present at any specific times, in order to meet the obligations to their audience. This strategy of determining programmes, for specific time of the operation period, is known as programming. Scheduling refers to the allocation of specific time to each programme, in a specific order of presentation, as approved by a station, station, for transmission to its audience. Owuamalam (2007). The essence is to ensure that each approved programme has a specific slot, at which time; the station’s audience can expect to listen to it. Scheduling enables stations to build confidence in the audience.

Programme scheduling present products in a specific order and at specific time, to the audience. It shows the considerations they make in the choice of time, to air any programme in the station. It also gives an insight into the objectives, which stations seek to achieve, through the presentation of their programmes, to any identifiable target audience. In programming adequate balance, in the presentation of a station’s programmes helps the stations to meet the aspirations of the various interest groups, as audience. It is also designed to appropriately fill with programmes, which can provide variety to the interest of the audience.

From Owuammalam (2007) scheduling enables stations to avoid the mistakes of repetition and unnecessary duplication. The schedule specifies the programmes, approved for each time of broadcast. It directs audience interest and attention to specific desired programmes. It helps to save times and the frustration from disappointment, when consuming broadcast products, from an uninformed perspective.

The considerations made by the station in programming and scheduling are time allocation and audience consideration. Programmes and scheduling are time oriented, in terms of duration of programmes and the order in which stations are presented. They are a function of the location of anticipated target audience, in terms of their physical position at any given time and what the people are doing, at such stated times.

## **Food Security**

Many organizations have different language presentations of what food security is. For FAO (2017,p.10). Food security exists when “all people at all times have access to safe nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.” Disabled World (2004,p.2) see food security as the “availability of food and one’s access to it. A household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation.” The New Encyclopedia (2012) sees food security as “a measure of availability of food and individuals’ accessibility to it.” In a similar language, United Nations (2013) define food security as a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The main goal of food security is for individuals to be able to obtain adequate food needed at all times, and to be able to utilize the food to meet the body’s needs. The World Bank (2001,p.12) identified three pillars underpinning food security; “food availability, food accessibility, and food utilization”. This infers that food security is not just the production of food but the availability and quality of the food at all times for humanity.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **The Role of the Media in Food Security**

The mediaplays a very important role in development. According to Barnet (2014,p.31)

The media plays a vital role in creating awareness and influencing policies within the country and their role goes beyond conventional reporting to bring partners who take a lead in communicating information that promote inclusive agricultural productivity growth, better nutritional outcomes and strengthened livelihood.

The media plays a great part inthe success of many facets of the society andwithout effective communication, deliberately planned, organized and directed in a manner and form popular relevant to the existing environment, very little in development terms is likely to be achieved. This is why Ugboajah (1996) agrees with Babatope (1987,p.5) that “the media that focuses on the rural community would help immeasurably in identifying the actual needs of the rural areas”. According to Ugboajah (1996) for meaningful development in rural areas to take place, the mass media should not be merely concerned with providing information on development activities; beside creating opportunities for the people to know about the technical nature of new ideas and how they work and with

what effect. The mass media of communication should play the role of creating an atmosphere for understanding how the new ideas fit into the real social situation in which the people operate.

The use of the media could speed the process of development in all sectors of the society through targeted information, motivation and training. According to Ebo (1999) information from the media can create a climate necessary for the change favourable to modernization and the need to give the mass media a prominent place in a bid to communicate agricultural development messages. Udofia (1991,p.203) sees the media as agents of change in rural areas . For Udofia (1991,p.216) “one of the most effective media employed by development officers is the radio. This is because it is relatively cheap and accessible to many rural people.” Akeredolu-Ale (1993,p.192) “observes that Radio is faster and grassroots oriented”. Many homes in Nigeria have radio as a means of obtaining messages about certain issues and information. Programme planners in radio stations produce almost 24 hours news about local and international events: political happenings, official reports and numerous advertisements of various interests, all geared towards grassroots information dissemination. In a similar view, Ebo, (1999,p.100) says that:

Radio is the most popular mass media in the rural areas. The villages depend on it as the bearer or news and instructor. It is particularly very useful in mobilization and mass education because it capitalizes on Africa’s great oral tradition and does not require literacy in assimilation

The views expressed by these scholars jointly emphasize the role of radio in rural development at large and agriculture in particular. They have also established that there can be no meaningful development without the use of radio because members of the society depend much on it as a bearer, development and as an instructor they listen to with attention.

### **Global Food Security: An Imperative**

Food is a global human necessity and equally a human right thus a need to be adequately protected. All nations of the world have the responsibility to provide quality and adequate amount of food to her growing population at all times. USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USAD-INFA) (2014) has said that United State of America is leading international efforts to address the need that people around the world have reliable source of quality food. According to USDA – INFA (2014, P.3); Access to quality, nutritious food is fundamental to human existence. Secure access to food can produce wide ranging positive impact, including: Economic growth and job

creation, Poverty reduction, Trade opportunities, increased global security and stability, improved health and healthcare.

To ensure food security for the Indians, the nation has an act, National Food Security Act, 2013 (also known as Right to Food Act). It is an Act of Parliament of India. The Act aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two third's 1.25 billion people of India. According to NFSA (2015,p.16) "The introduction of this Act in 2013, marks a major paradigm shift from a welfare based to a rights based approach to address food insecurity." This measure is taken in recognition of the large population of the State of India to avoid leaving the population hungry.

The Constitution of South Africa in Section 27, obliges the nation to provide legislation and other supporting measures to ensure that all citizens of South Africa are enabled to meet their food needs. Report of the FAO (2017) has shown that the South African Government has not yet adopted an integrated and comprehensive food security act.

As stated from Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Ghana Country Plan, (2017), was co-written by all United States Government agencies involved in food security and nutrition work after extensive consultation with stakeholders from government ministries, private companies and Non Governmental Organizations, in Washington DC. The document is the Ghana Country Food Plan and serves as an overarching framework for integrated food security and nutrition programming. The plan describes the key drivers of food security, nutrition and poverty.

In the WHO report (2004) to guarantee food security, Nigeria has National Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition. The overall goal of the plan was to improve the nutritional status of all Nigerians with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable groups. These vulnerable groups are the children, women and the elderly. Among many other specific goals are, (1) the establishing of a viable system for guiding and coordinating food and nutrition activities undertaken in the various sectors and at various levels of the society from the community to the national level, (2) promoting habits and activities that will reduce the level of malnutrition and improve the nutritional status of the population, (3) promoting good indigenous food cultures and dietary habits among Nigerian people for healthy living and development.

In the Bulletin of the WHO (2017) food insecurity has been identified as a global crisis resulting into global economic meltdown. According to the 2014 report of the FAO on the state of food insecurity in the world, more than 814 million people in developing countries are undernourished and of these figure, 204 million live in sub-Saharan Africa.



### **Theoretical Framework**

This work is anchored on Social Responsibility Theory. According to Ijwoand Omula (2014) the Social Responsibility theory owes its origin to an American Initiative; the Commission on Freedom of the Press. The basic assumption of the theory was that the press must always work to be responsible to society. According to Dominick (2009, p.127) “the press has a right to criticize government and other institutions, but it also has a responsibility to preserve democracy by properly informing the public and by responding to society’s need and interest.” This is the work of Uzuegbunam (2015,p1) is relevant when he said; “In Nigeria, where democracy is in its embryonic stage, a socially responsible media knows that public information is necessary not only for citizens to make rational decisions but that it is needed also to spur economic and social development.”

Significantly, the social responsibility theory could enhance broadcasting at the grassroots in a democratic arrangement, as it would promote the value systems of the rural people and also integrate them into governance for development. The relevance of this theory to the study is that Radio Benue must be socially responsible to promote food security in the state. This is because mass media owe a responsibility of informing, educating as well as creating awareness. Radio Benue owes it as a duty to inform the people on what food security is all about and ways of improving food production. Therefore most of the programmes on Radio Benue must aim at improving food security in the state.

### **Methodology**

Survey research is adopted in this study with questionnaire used as the data collection instrument. The population of the study is 1,069,500 derived from the three senatorial zones of Benue State. However because of the large population of the various zones the researcher selected one local government from each of the zones. The local governments selected were Katsina Ala with a population of 304,400 from Zone A, Makurdi with 405,500 from Zone B and Otukpo Local Government with 359,600 from Zone C. This projected figure for the 2016 population was gotten from the Benue State Population Statistics Chart, Map and Location. The choice of these local governments was because they are the headquarters of the various political zones. A total of 400 respondents were selected from the population as the study’s sample size, statistically determined using Taro Yamane’s sample size determination formula. Data collected were presented in table, expressed in simple percentages and analyzed using inferential and deductive approaches.

### **Data Presentation**

A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 400 Radio Benue listeners within Makurdi Metropolis, Katsina Ala and Otukpo towns. The distribution and retrieval was 100% successful as there was no casualty in the number distributed. The presentation is therefore based on the 400 copies of questionnaire.

**Table 1: Types of Agricultural Programmes on Radio Benue**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Farming World	41	10
Tom Sule	76	19
All over the above	283	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017.**

The question sought to identify the agricultural programmes promoted on Radio Benue station. The responses from 283 (71%) respondents showed that; Farming World and Tom Sule, were the programmes projected on Radio Benue station for the promotion of food security in Benue State.

**Table 2: Regularity of listening to Radio Benue Programmes**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Once a week	51	13
Thrice a week	234	58
Once a weeks	28	7
Sometimes	87	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017.**

The above question was to know how regular farmers listen to Radio Benue farming programmes. The data on table 2 with 234 (58%) respondents indicated that farmers listen to Radio Benue farming programmes three times a week. This shows that a good percentage of the audience listen to Radio Benue programmes regularly. This level of attention will certainly yield positive result in assessing Radio Benue programmes to achieve the required objective.

**Table 3: Your Favourite Agricultural Programme on Radio Benue**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Tom Sule	76	19
Farming World	41	10
All of the above	283	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017.**

The question on table 3 was to identify the favourite agricultural programmes of the audience. The data of 77% with 283 respondents indicated that the audience were interested in all the programmes promoted on the Radio Benue station.

**Table 4: Agricultural Programmes on Radio Benue**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Educative	226	57
Inspiring	65	16
All of the above	109	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017**

On Table 4, the study sought to find out whether the Radio Programmes educate the listeners at all. The data above with 226 (57%) respondents showed that agricultural programmes on Radio Benue are educative, while 109 (27%) respondents said agricultural programmes on Radio Benue are both educative and inspiring. This implies that, agricultural programmes on Radio Benue are educative and can be used in promoting food security in Benue State.

**Table 5: Ways in which Radio Benue Programmes have Contributed to Food Security in Benue State.**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Education on mechanized farming techniques	28	7
Education on weed/pest control	43	11
Education on crop storage techniques	24	6
Education on fertilizer/land conservation methods	43	11

All of the above	262	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017**

The question was to identify the specific areas in which Radio programmes have contributed in food security in the State. The data on table 5 indicated that out of 400 respondents, 262 (65%) agree that Radio Benue programmes have educated them on all the mentioned options. These include; education on mechanized farming techniques, education on weed/pest control, education on improved crop storage techniques, and education on fertilizer/land conservation methods. This implies that Radio Benue through her programmes on agriculture have been contributing significantly to food security in Benue State.

**Table 6: Effectiveness of Radio Benue Programmes in Promoting Food Security in Benue State.**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very effective	30	7
Effective	263	66
Not effective	107	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017**

The question above was to see if the Radio Programmes could be effective in promoting food security in Benue State. The data on table 6 shows the effectiveness of Radio Benue programmes in promoting food security in Benue state. Out of 400 respondents, 263 (66%) said that Radio Programmes effectively promote food security in Benue State. However, 107 (27%) respondents showed that the Radio programmes were not effective in promoting food security in Benue State. This percentage is quite significant not to be ignored if a study was to see how effective the Radio programmes were.

**Table 7: Ways of Enhancing Awareness on Food Security by Radio Benue Programmes**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
By introducing new programmes on food security	140	35
By broadcasting food security programmes at least four times a week	72	18

By introducing phone-in programmes on food security where audience can participate	188	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Source: Field Survey, 2017</b>		

The above question was to identify ways of enhancing the awareness of Radio programmes to promote food security in Benue State. The data on table 7 with a percentage of (47%) representing 188 respondents have indicated that phone in programme on Radio Benue will enhance the awareness of the Radio programmes on Radio Benue for the promotion of food security in the State. This of course will enable the farmers to participate and call for explanation about their farming problems. The data on the table 5 also showed that out of 400 respondents 140 (35%) respondents said, in order to enhance awareness on food security, Radio Benue should introduce new programmes on food security. This percentage of respondents is significant enough not to be ignored. The introduction of new programmes on the radio may contribute on the promotion of food security in the state.

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	183	46
Moderate	127	32
Low	90	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Source: Field Survey, 2017</b>		

The data on table 8 was to ascertain the level of food production in Benue State based on the projected Radio programmes for the promotion of food security; the data showed that the level of food production in Benue State is high with a 46% representing 183 respondents.

**Table 9: Government support to farmers for food security**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
By making fertilizer available to farmers at lower rate and at the right time	60	15
By hiring tractors to farmers at the affordable price	53	13
By giving loans to farmers by banks	56	14
All of the above	231	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2017**

The above question sought to identify ways in which government could assist the farmers as a way of promoting food security in the state. The data on the table 9 showed a 58% responses suggesting that government should do all of the suggestions mentioned above on the table. The suggestions and ways put forward that could improve food production in the state include, making fertilizer available to farmers at lower rates and at the right time, hiring tractors to farmers at affordable prices and giving loans to farmers at low interest rates from banks.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study makes assessment of Radio Benue programmes in promoting food security in Benue State. The analysis from the tabulated data showed that Radio Benue programmes have promoted food security in Benue State. The findings were deduced from the responses of the sampled population from the analyzed data supported by the concepts and literature review backed up by the theory used. Result has shown that Radio Programmes on Food Security in Benue State are regular and have earned the confidence from listeners. This showed the station as been responsive to the provision of the Social Responsibility theory in creating, promoting and supporting the issue of food security plan by the government of the federation.

The study has also shown that Radio Benue programmes have effectively promoted food security in the state. The result is reflective on Table 6 with 66% responses from respondents. These programmes are a collective way of contributing to the availability of food to the population of Nigeria. The availability of food will exclude Nigeria from being part of the 814 million under nourished people as reported by the WHO.

Result also has shown that Radio Benue have educated her farming audience on Mechanized farming techniques, Weed/pest control, improved crop storage techniques,

and fertilizer/land conservation methods. This proves what Barnet (2014) said that the media plays a vital role in creating awareness and influencing policies within the country. This contributes to sustainable agriculture programmes in the State

The result again have shown that the level of food production in Benue State based on radio programmes is high with 46% responses as shown Table 8. This indicates that the objective of food security is achievable any where in the world. This study therefore agrees with Barnet (2014) when he observed that the media information promotes inclusive agricultural productivity growth, better nutritional outcomes and strengthen livelihood.

In identifying many ways of enhancing the awareness and promotion of food security in the state the results on table 7 with 47% responses from respondents have shown that new programmes like phone-in programme on Food Security need to be introduced where the audience can participate on the programme and get more information from professionals.

Results have also shown that the farmers need assistance from government for inputs. These inputs include; fertilizer at lower rates and at the right time, tractors for hiring to farmers at affordable prices and giving loans to farmers at low interest rates from banks.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

Radio has generally been recognized and accepted as an effective medium of mass communication due to its pervasiveness in terms of reach, appeal and impact. It is based on this fact that the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) through the Nigerian Broadcasting codes has prescribed set objectives for all broadcast stations in the country, aimed at national development. Reporting on agriculture is one of the key objectives prescribed by the codes.

The results have shown that Radio programmes on agriculture have promoted food security in the state. The programme has also educated farmers and created awareness on mechanized farming techniques, weeds/pest control, and fertilizer/land conservation methods. This is achieved from the very effective presentation of the programmes.

The study therefore recommends that;

- i. The results above have shown that Radio Benue programmes on food security in the State have achieved its main objective of promoting and creating awareness on ways of achieving food security. It is therefore most appropriate for the government to

support the programme in all ways possible. Radio Benue as a station should put in more efforts to sustain the agricultural based and people oriented programmes.

- ii. Radio Benue station of necessity should introduce the phone- in- programme to enable the listening farmers participate for clarifications of issues bothering on farms.
- iii. The study also recommended that government should make fertilizer available to farmers at lower rates and at the right time, hiring tractors to farmers at affordable prices and giving loans to farmers at low interest rates from banks.
- iv. The study recommends too that government should provide storage facilities for farmers. This is to avoid post harvest waste as it is commonly experienced in the state.



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