

## Impact of Field Day on Oil Palm Farmers Knowledge

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**ABSTRACT** This study evaluated the field day planning, execution and knowledge gained by farmers who attended the field day organized for oil palm farmers in Edo State. From a total of 132 participants, a sample of 64 farmers, representing about 50% of the invited farmers from different states was randomly selected for evaluating the planning and execution of the field day out of which 34 farmers (about 25% of invited farmers) was also randomly selected for the measurement of the field day impact based on gain in knowledge. Data were collected for the evaluation of planning, characteristics of booth leaders and farmers and the field day impact on the participating farmers. The t-test (paired observation formula) was used to determine any significant difference between the pre and post exposure knowledge scores of the participating farmers. The results showed that most of the farmers at the field day were middle age, between 30-50 years with about 82% of them being literate. Less than half of these farmers (40%) possessed an average of 4-19 hectares of farm size. Distances the farmers covered to the field day venue ranged from zero to 1000 kilometres. Certain aspects of the organization of the field day rated as satisfactory include the selection of the participants, time of the year the field day came up and transportation. However, food and publicity aspects were rated unsatisfactory. This study also showed that there was significant difference in the knowledge scores on oil palm cultivation of farmers before and after participation in the field day.

### INTRODUCTION

Field day is one of the group methods used in extension teaching. Different terminologies such as Field Day, Farmer's Day, Agricultural show and Farmers' Festival and Open Farm have been used to describe a situation whereby a group of farmers gather together to observe a show organized by fellow farmers. Other teaching methods available ranged from general meetings, farm walks, demonstrations (Richardson 2003), to rural youths and homemakers' clubs and groups' projects (Van den Ban and Hawkins 1996). Generally, field day is a kind of meeting whereby farmers, agri-business people and agricultural scientists and all stakeholders in agriculture discuss and interact fully with each other about agricultural practices. Field days usually last one to three days depending on the number of participants and distance of the farmers invited. For example, the Field Day organized by NIFOR, Benin City, lasted for three days. The first day was for the opening ceremony and conducted tour of the distinguished guests and farmers around the exhibition sites and the research institute experimental plots. Few speeches were delivered by special guests and the entire people were entertained with various cultural dances and displays during the opening ceremony. Since it

lasted more than one day, the conducted tours continued on the subsequent days.

The importance of the field day is an opportunity for farmers to learn by seeing the performance of recommended practices adopted by other successful farmers. Farmers also discuss the pros and cons of the field day informally with their fellow farmers, extension workers and the subject matter specialists. This also helps to convince, even the most skeptical type of farmers that cannot read or write. The importance of demonstration, especially in largely illiterate communities cannot be overemphasized. For example, the significance of field day was highlighted by Rolling and Pretty (1997) said that the custom of celebrating a farmers' field day is primarily to provide the needed forum for useful discussions with fellow businessmen in agricultural industry, particularly the traditional farmers on the strategies for increasing food production in the country. Field days can also be held on farms belonging to farmers who have successfully adopted recommended practices which could be adopted by other farmers.

The objective of the study is to evaluate the planning, and execution of the field day and to determine its impact on the knowledge of the participating oil palm farmers.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 132 farmers were invited to participate in the field day from the following 17 states: Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, Edo, Delta, Cross-River, Akwa-Ibom, Adamawa, Kwara, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Plateau, Nasarawa and Rivers. These are predominantly oil palm, raphia palm and date palm growing areas in Nigeria. A sample of 64 farmers, representing about 50% of the participating farmers from all the invited states was randomly selected for evaluating the planning and execution of the field day out of which 34 (approximately 28%) rated the field day impact. While the 34 farmers participated in the pre-exposure test, only 25 were available to take the post-exposure test. The remaining 9 who could not wait to take the post-exposure test were discarded to allow the use of paired sample comparison formula.

An interview schedule was prepared for the evaluation of the organizational aspect, while a knowledge test was used to evaluate the impact of the field day on the participating farmers. The pre and post exposure test technique was used to measure the gain in knowledge.

Data collected for the evaluation of planning, characteristics of booth leaders and farmers include: age, educational level, farm size, number of palm trees owned and distance of field day venue from farmers' homes were collected from the farmers, information channels on field day and motivation for attendance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### (a) Selected Personal Characteristics of the Participating Farmers

Data on the personal characteristics of the participating farmers at the field day such as farmers' age, educational level, farm size, number of palm trees owned and distance of venue from the farmers' homes are presented in Table 1. It is generally believed that the most productive phase of human life is in the middle age because of the vigour and versatility with which decisions are being taken. In this study, the age of the participating farmers ranged from 24 - 60 years with a modal class 40-49 years. From this result, it could be generalized that the participating farmers are middle aged which is between 30-50 years and accounted for about 70.7% of the whole sample,

**Table 1: Selected characteristics of the participating farmers at the Field Day (n=65)**

| <i>Characteristics</i>                                        | <i>No.</i> | <i>Percentage of farmers</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Age</i>                                                    |            |                              |
| 24 – 29                                                       | 4          | 6.2                          |
| 30 – 39                                                       | 19         | 29.2                         |
| 40 – 49                                                       | 27         | 41.5                         |
| 50 – 59                                                       | 13         | 20.0                         |
| over 59                                                       | 2          | 3.1                          |
| <i>Years of Schooling</i>                                     |            |                              |
| Less than 1 year                                              | 12         | 18.5                         |
| 1 – 5                                                         | 4          | 6.1                          |
| over 5                                                        | 49         | 75.4                         |
| <i>Farm Size (ha)</i>                                         |            |                              |
| 1 – 3                                                         | 19         | 29.2                         |
| 4 – 9                                                         | 12         | 18.5                         |
| 10 – 19                                                       | 14         | 21.5                         |
| 20 – 49                                                       | 10         | 15.4                         |
| over 49                                                       | 10         | 15.4                         |
| <i>Palm Trees Owned</i>                                       |            |                              |
| <i>No. palm trees owned</i>                                   | 3          | 4.6                          |
| 1 – 99                                                        | 5          | 7.7                          |
| 100 – 499                                                     | 19         | 29.2                         |
| 500 – 999                                                     | 13         | 20                           |
| over 999                                                      | 22         | 33.9                         |
| No reply                                                      | 3          | 4.6                          |
| <i>Distance of Farmers' Homes to the Field Day Venue (km)</i> |            |                              |
| Less than 10                                                  | 5          | 7.7                          |
| 10 – 99                                                       | 10         | 15.4                         |
| 100 – 499                                                     | 33         | 50.8                         |
| over 499                                                      | 9          | 13.8                         |
| No reply                                                      | 8          | 12.3                         |

indicating that they are vigorous and versatile.

Education is believed to be an instrument of enhancing people's general understanding in life and this will determine how quick a person can assimilate new knowledge. The results of this study, shown in Table 1 indicated that most of the farmers are literate. Only 18.5% did not receive any formal education, while 81.5% went to school for a minimum of one year. This result indicated that most of the farmers would easily understand the teaching.

Previous studies (Fawole and Fasina 2005; Olowu et. al. 1990) showed that large farm sizes and labour required are significantly related to farmers' utilization of improved farm practices applicable to their farms. The corollary to this may be that the farmers farm sizes, coupled with the quest for the application of improved farm practices will influence their acquisition of new knowledge. For this study, the farm sizes of the farmers ranged from one to over 49 hectares as shown in Table 1. Less than a third (29.2%) was small farmers (1 – 3ha) while about 40% were above average (4 – 19ha) and 30.8% were large farmers (above 19ha).

This study showed that majority of the participating farmers owned palm trees. Only 4.6% of the participants did not own any palm tree, while 4.6% gave no response as regards this. In general, 90.8% of the participants owned some palm trees out of which 35.9% of this owned over 499 palm trees each. This result showed that the participants are likely to be eager to learn from the field day because they are actively involved in the main crop handled at the field day.

As indicated in Table 1, the distance of farmers' homes from the field day venue ranged from less than 10km to over 499km. Only 23.1% traveled from less than 100km. About half (50.8%) came from between 100km and 499km, while 13.8% came from over 499km. The relevance of this result is that for one to have traveled several kilometers to seek for some knowledge, showed that such a person really wanted to learn.

Table 2 presents the results on the organization of the field day. More than three quarters of the farmers (78.5%) rated the selection of the farmers, the time of the year the field day came up (82.9%), transport provision (76.9%), conducted tour (86.2%), duration of the field day (83.1%) as satisfied, but publicity and entertainment aspects (40.0%, 36.9%) respectively were rated unsatisfactorily organized. The probable reason for the latter observations is that farmers are not adequately exposed to mass media used by the field day organizers. Secondly, it is very difficult to satisfy a large group of people with regards to feeding, hence the low rating.

**Table 2: Farmers' assessment of field day organization (n=65)**

| <i>Aspects of the field day</i>    | <i>Percentage of farmers who felt</i> |                    |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                    | <i>Satisfied</i>                      | <i>Unsatisfied</i> |
| Selection of participating farmers | 78.5                                  | 21.5               |
| Publicity                          | 40.0                                  | 60.0               |
| Time of the year it came up        | 82.9                                  | 10.8               |
| Transport provision                | 76.9                                  | 23.1               |
| Food, refreshment and snacks       | 36.9                                  | 63.1               |
| Conducted tour                     | 86.2                                  | 13.8               |
| Duration of the field day          | 83.1                                  | 16.9               |

From Table 3, almost all the farmers indicated that the booth leaders spoke loud enough (92.2%) and were moderate in speed (90.8%), while speaking. The data also showed that 89.2% regarded the ability of the booth leaders to explain agricultural practices adequately in their booths. This might be due to the possession of communication skills by the booth leaders.

**Table 3: Farmers' opinion on certain characteristics of booth leaders**

| <i>Characteristics of booth leaders</i>   | <i>Percentage of farmers</i> |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Loudness                               |                              |
| (a) Adequate                              | 92.2                         |
| (b) Inadequate                            | 7.8                          |
| 2. Talking Speed                          |                              |
| (a) Moderate                              | 90.8                         |
| (b) Too fast                              | 9.2                          |
| 3. Ability to Explain Exhibited Materials |                              |
| (a) Adequate                              | 89.2                         |
| (b) Inadequate                            | 10.8                         |

Table 4 presents the result of the t-test (paired observation formula) used to determine significant difference in farmers' knowledge on oil palm production practices before and after the field day. The summary of the analysis is presented in Table 4. The results showed that the knowledge of the participants increased as a result of participation in the field day. The knowledge measured after the field day was significantly higher than before the field day.

**Table 4: Pre and post field day knowledge scores of oil palm farmers**

| <i>Particulars</i> | <i>Before field day scores</i> | <i>After field day scores</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| No of farmers      | 25                             | 25                            |
| Mean of the scores | 14.12                          | 19.8                          |
| Standard deviation | 6.66                           | 5.55                          |
| Standard error     | 1.33                           | 1.10                          |
| t-value            | 4.74                           |                               |
| p                  | 0.001                          |                               |
| degree of freedom  | 24                             |                               |

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that most of the farmers at the field day were middle age, between 30 – 50 years, with about 82% of them being literate. Also, 40% of these farmers possessed an average of 4 – 19 hectares of farms. Distances covered by the farmers to the field day venue ranged from less than 10 to over 499km.

Certain aspects of the organization of the field day rated satisfactory include the selection of the participants, time of the year in which the field day came up and transportation. However, entertainment and publicity aspects were rated unsatisfactory. This study also showed that the knowledge scores of the participating farmers increased significantly as a result of their

attendance at the field day. Based on these findings, farmers should be encouraged to always attend field days as this had been found to contribute significantly to the farmers gain in knowledge. Government agencies should be encouraged to subsidize the costs for the hosting institutions as it has been established that it is an effective extension teaching method.

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