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FARMERS' PERCEPTION ON CONTACT FREQUENCY, ADEQUACY, RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF AGRICULTURE SUPPORT SERVICES (ASS) IN OSHIKOTO REGION IN NAMIBIA.

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ABSTRACT

In Oshikoto region of Namibia, agricultural services are associated with several challenges such as, lack of enough resources, unresponsiveness to farmers' needs, ineffectiveness and unreliability. In addition, the roles played by different stakeholders are not well understood. Despite these challenges there are many Agricultural Support Services (ASS) providers in the Oshikoto region. It is against that background that this paper explores farmers' perception with regard to the services provided by ASS in the Oshikoto region. The paper uses a case study approach on communal and commercial farmers in Oshikoto region. Results from the study shows that service providers who were perceived to be adequate, relevant, and able to give quality services, have only catered for a few farmers whereby communal farmers receive less of these services compared to commercial farmers. Over half of the farmers had no contact with an ASS provider for over a year. Private Extension Providers, NGOs, and Agricultural Mentors were among the ASS providers that were perceived to offer adequate, relevance and quality services compared to the rest. Findings from the study will help to improve current and future working relationship between ASS and farmers. In addition, the findings can assist in the developing of an Agricultural Extension Policy in Namibia that involves all stakeholders and address the needs of farmers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s and 1970s advisory services mainly played a key role in increasing agricultural productivity (Swanson, 2008; Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010; Pye-Smith, 2012). In the 1980s and 1990s different countries restructured and adjusted their programmes due to a decline of funds for extension services which negatively affected the farmers (Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010; Pye- Smith, 2012). Most of the agricultural extension activities were mostly centralised and to a larger extent detached from the rural communities (Swanson & Samy, 2002). The centralised system was mostly a top down approach, bureaucratic, inefficient and unresponsive to farmers' needs (Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010; Savioff & Lindarte, 2002).

The Namibian agricultural extension service is no exception from the rest of the developing countries. Before Namibia's independence in 1990, ASS (including extension) were mostly centralised, top down structure with considerable subsidy inputs, including ploughing services to the community, farming inputs such as seeds, and infrastructure maintenance (Kabinda, 2012). Administration programmes were usually developed in Windhoek at the national level and then cascaded down to the regions.

After independence the government led agricultural extension services slowly started moving away from the Transfer of Technology (ToT) to Training and Visit approach followed by the Farming System Research and Extension (FSRE) approach. Most of the subsidies that had

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been provided by the government before independence were halted. In view of the fact that very few extension officers and extension technicians, were trained to go out and train the farmers in the new technologies. In 1997, the Namibian government, in partnership with donor agencies, introduced the Farming System Research and Extension (FSRE) approach in the northern regions of the country (Matayaire, 2005; Kumba, 2003). Despite the FSRE that was introduced in 1997 as a participatory measure, one could argue that it was not really successful as the activities that had been introduced before independence were merely reintroduced in 2007. These activities included ploughing services and subsidies (such as seeds and fertilisers) which were reintroduced in the communal areas (Shiimi, 2013). In the past, various activities were carried out by the MAWF alone. Currently, different organisations such as NGOs, Public Research and Education Institutions, Semi-Public and Parastatals, Private Sector Firms, Farmer Base Organisations and Cooperatives (IFPRI, 2012) are providing agricultural support services to farmers. These organisations are working in isolation to improve the livelihood of farmers as they plan and implement their activities (programmes are not harmonised). As a result, various resources have been wasted owing to the duplication of activities (Rivera & Alex, 2004). According to Werner & Odendaal (2010) and Engel (2006), there is lack of communication and coordination between certain ministries in Namibia. (Rivera & Qamar, 2003; Rivera & Alex, 2004; IFPRI, 2012) observed lack or weak cooperation between government, NGOs and service providers which results in duplication and inefficient use of resources. Research, extension and training are spread across different divisions and institutions within the ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry creating a poor coordination among them. Interestingly little empirical information is available on the farmers perception on how different organisations are performing for sustainable agricultural development in regard to extension services in Namibia. The purpose of this paper is therefore, to offer an understanding on the frequency, adequacy, relevance and quality of (ASS) provided by different service providers in Namibia. This paper presents the overall quantitative perceptions and attitudes of farmers toward ASS providers.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study was undertaken in 2014 in Oshikoto region, one of the 13 regions of Namibia with a good representation of commercial, communal and small scale farmers. The survey research design was used in this study where questionnaires were administered randomly to 200 farmers drawn from small scale, communal and commercial. Although the investigation had several objectives, in this paper, only the quantitative results of the farmer's perceptions and attitudes towards ASS will be presented and discussed. The data collected from the study was verified to ensure precise presentation. The analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The possible influence of gender and age on farmers' perception on contact frequency, adequacy, relevance and quality of ASS and the interrelationship between them will be discussed.

3.1 Gender and age

Table 1 below presents the age percentage distribution of respondents according to gender who participated in the study in Oshikoto region.

Table1: Percentage age distribution of respondents according to gender

Age		Male (N = 95)	Female (N = 105)		Total 200	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
21-40	17	17.9	24	22.9	41	20.5
41-60	46	48.4	48	45.7	94	47.0
Above61	32	33.7	33	31.4	65	32.5
Total	95	100	105	100	200	100

Mean= 53.9 Standard deviation=15.5 Min=23 Max=102

The gender distribution showed almost a balanced or equal representation of men and women. The slightly higher proportion of women could be because men might be bread winners and migrate to urban areas for jobs or work in different towns to take care of their families. In terms of age, out of total 200 respondents almost half (47%) were between the ages 41-60 years, this may therefore be the most productive group. It is also interesting to note that the youngest person was 23 age and the oldest was 102 years (mean 54 years; SD 15.5).

3.2 The frequencies of contact with ASS as perceived by farmers' respondents

The perception of farmers on contacts (frequencies) they had with ASS providers in Oshikoto region is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Perception of farmers on the frequencies they had contacted ASS in Oshikoto region

Agriculture Support Services (ASS)	1-4 week		>1-6 months		A year ago		No response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Directorate of Extension	43	21.5	94	47	25	12.5	38	19
Directorate of Veterinary	44	22	64	32	41	20.5	51	25.5
Farmers Association	25	12.5	47	23.5	18	9	110	55
Private Extension Providers	22	11	14	7	0	0	164	82
NGO	16	8	36	18	15	7.5	133	66.5
Agricultural Bank/Mentors	13	6.5	26	13	21	10.5	140	70
Input Supply/ Traders	13	6.5	48	24	17	8.5	122	61
Okashana Research Station	7	3.5	24	12	22	11	147	73.5
Education Institution	4	2	14	7	4	2	178	89

Table 2 shows that of the nine (9) active ASS providers in Oshikoto region the majority of the farmers ranging from 55% to 89% indicated that they had not been in contact with seven (7) ASS providers within a year. The seven indicated in descending order were Educational Institutions (89%), Private Extension Providers (82%), Okashana Research Station (73.5%), Agricultural Bank Mentors (70%), NGO (66.5%), Input Supply (61%) and Farmers Association (55%). The farmers were mostly in frequent contact with Directorate of Extension, and Veterinary Services with 21.5% (43) and 22% (44) respectively. The results above could be attributed to the fact that the Directorates of Extension and Veterinary Services have offices and officials in most of the Oshikoto constituency unlike other ASS providers.

3.3 The ranking on contact (frequencies), adequacy, relevancy and quality of ASS as perceived by farmers

The perception of farmers ranking on contact (frequencies), adequacy, relevancy and quality of ASS in Oshikoto region is presented discussed in Table 3.

Table 3: Perception of farmers ranking of contact (frequencies), adequacy, relevancy and quality of ASS in Oshikoto region

Agriculture Support Services	Contact (frequency)		Adequacy		Relevance		Quality	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Directorate of Extension	81	1	67.9	4	73.5	5	73.5	4
Directorate of Veterinary	74.5	2	66.4	5	77.9	4	67.8	5
Farmers Association	45	3	58.9	7	67.8	6	63.6	7
Input Supply/ Traders	39	4	44.9	8	50	8	34.6	8
NGO	33.5	5	82.1	2	95.5	2	86.6	2
Agricultural Bank/Mentors	30	6	75	3	90	3	78.3	3
Okashana Research Station	26.5	7	39.6	9	43.4	9	39.6	9
Private Extension Providers	18	8	91.7	1	97.3	1	97.2	1
Education Institution	11	9	59.1	6	63.6	7	63.6	6

Table 3 shows that the Directorate of Extension and Veterinary services contacted most of the farmers at 81% and 74.5% respectively. In third place was the Farmers Association with 45%. Although these ASS providers contacted most of the farmers compared to the other ASS providers, farmers' rating of their services was low to average. Farmers' perception on adequacy, relevance, and quality alternating indicated the raking of between four (4) and seven (7). The latter is consistence with the findings of Swanson (2008) who argued that many government institutions are in contact with many farmers due to the fact that public services are well distributed in all regions and, thus, are able to reach most of the farmers. The opposite is however true when it comes to Private Extension Providers, NGO and Agricultural Mentors providers who contacted fewer farmers yet their services were ranked among the top three (3). These results validated findings of other scholars such as Neuchâtel Group (2007) who argues that the activities of NGOs are well defined and their resources are well managed, while the Private Service Providers on the other hand are accountable to the farmers as they depend on the farmers for their income. It is however surprisingly to note that Input Supply and Okashana Research Station and Educational Institution were lower ranked in terms of both being in contact with farmers or with their service delivery. These results could be attributed to the fact that research is complicated and sometimes research institutions find it difficult to simplify the technology to serve farmers needs and interests. According to Asopa & Beye (1997) some problems researchers investigate are sometimes not in accordance with farmer's needs. The lower ranking of Higher Education could be attributed to the fact that they might be too technical for the farmers to understand.

3.4 Farmer perception by gender on how frequent they were contacted by ASS

Table 4 below presents the perception of farmer by gender on how frequently they were contacted by ASS in Oshikoto region.

Table 4: Respondents perception on how frequent they were visited by ASS services by gender in Oshikoto region

Agricultural Support Services (ASS)	Frequencies	Gender Male		Female		Total	X^2 Value	p
		n	%	n	%	N		
Directorate of Extension	1-4 weeks	28	65.12	15	34.88	43	7.60	0.0224
	>1-6 months	40	42.55	54	57.45	94		
	7- 12 months	9	36	16	64	25		
	Total	77	47.53	85	52.47	162		
Directorate Of Veterinary	1-4 weeks	24	54.55	20	45.45	44	2.31	0.3144
	>1-6 months	26	40.63	38	59.38	64		
	7- 12 months	21	51.22	20	48.78	41		
	Total	71	47.65	78	52.35	149		
Farmers Association	1-4 weeks	12	48	13	52	42	21.66	0.4342
	>1-6 months	24	51.06	23	48.94	47		
	7- 12 months	6	33.33	12	66.67	18		
	Total	42	46.67	48	53.33	90		
Input Supply	1-4 weeks	10	76.92	3	23.08	13	2.64	0.0407
	>1-6 months	18	37.5	30	62.50	48		
	7- 12 months	8	47.06	9	52.94	17		
	Total	36	46.15	42	53.85	78		
Okashana Research station	1-4 weeks	4	57.14	3	42.86	7	2.16	0.3387
	>1-6 months	12	50	12	50	24		
	7- 12 months	7	31.82	15	68.18	22		
	Total	23	43.4	30	56.6	53		
Agricultural Mentors	1-4 weeks	8	61.54	5	38.46	13	2.62	0.2697
	>1-6 months	11	42.31	15	57.69	26		
	7- 12 months	7	33.33	14	66.67	21		
	Total	26	43.33	34	56.67	60		
Private Extension Providers	1-4 weeks	16	72.73	6	27.27	22	10.01	0.932
	>1-6 months	10	71.43	4	28.58	14		
	7- 12 months	0	0	0	0	0		
	Total	26	72.22	10	27.78	36		
Higher Education	1-4 weeks	3	75	1	25	4	3.14	0.2077
	>1-6 months	5	35.71	9	64.29	14		
	7- 12 months	3	75	1	25	4		
	Total	11	50	11	50	22		
NGO	1-4 weeks	7	43.75	9	56.25	16	0.99	0.6109
	>1-6 months	13	36.11	23	63.89	36		
	7- 12 months	4	26.67	11	73.33	15		
	Total	24	35.82	43	64.18	67		

Significant where $p \leq 0.05$ DF 2

Table 4 shows no significant differences between male and female in seven (7) of active ASS providers except for the Directorate of Extension and Input Supply Providers were the significant differences of (X^2=7.60; p= 0.0224 and X^2=2.64; 0.0407) was recorded. This indicates that more female than male respondents being contacted. One of the reasons among others could be because males migrate to other regions in search of employment than females who remain to take care of the household's activities. It is worth noting that more farmers where contacted by ASS between 1 to 6 months except for Private Extension Providers where more farmers were contacted between 1-2 weeks.

3.5 Farmer's perception on adequacy of ASS in Oshikoto region

Figure 1 below presents the perception of farmers in percentages on the adequacy of ASS providers in Oshikoto region.

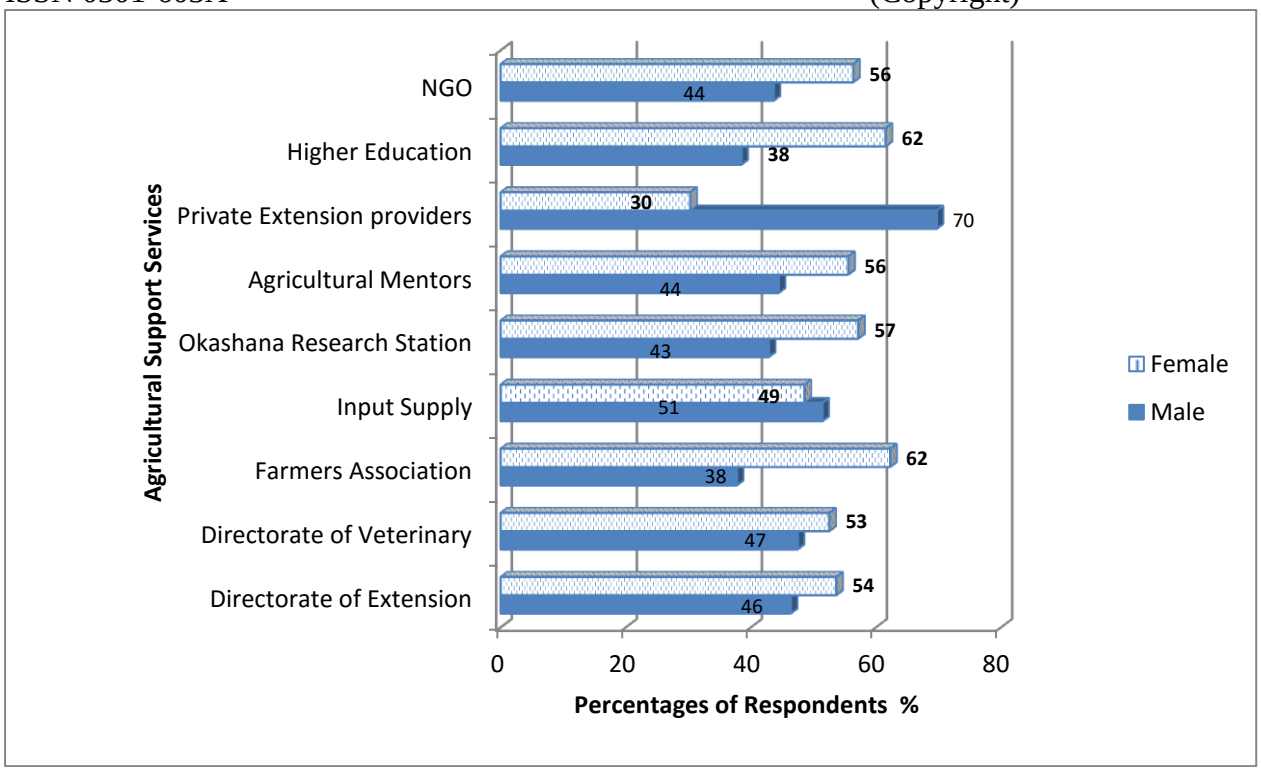

Figure1: Percentage distribution of respondents' perception on the adequacy of ASS in Oshikoto region

As it can be seen in Figure 1 most of the females respondents were more than (50%) adequately satisfied in (6) ASS providers compared to males. The males (70%) were only adequately satisfied with Private Extension Providers and slightly above average with (51%) Input Supply than females. There was however a significant difference for two ASS providers the Farmer Association and NGO being (X^2=4.13; p=0.0421 and X^2=8.16; p=0.0043) respectively. This indicates that more female respondents were adequately satisfied with the services provided by Farmers Association and NGO than males.

3.6 Farmer's perception by gender on the relevancy of ASS in Oshikoto region

Figure 2 below present Percentages of farmers' perception on relevancy of ASS in Oshikoto region by gender.

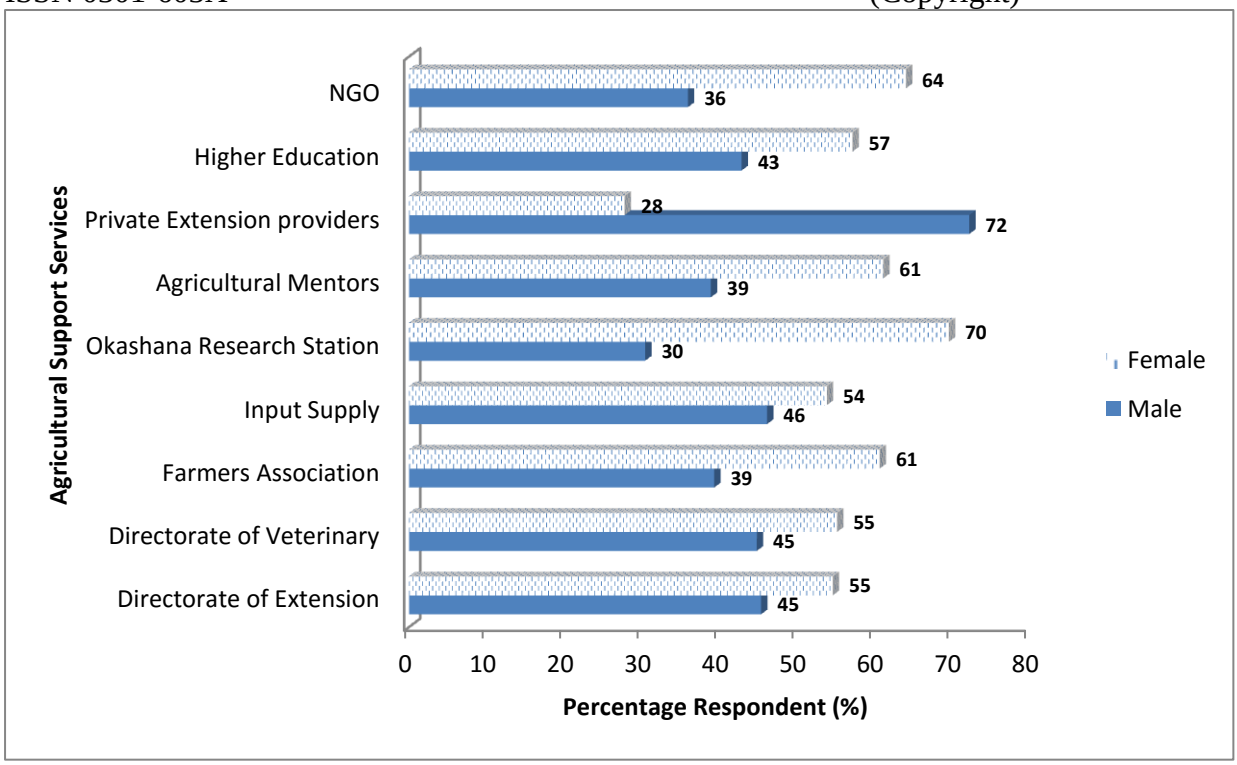

Figure 2: Perception of farmers on relevancy ASS providers to farmers by gender

Figure 2 shows that females were more adequately satisfied with the relevance of services in (7) ASS providers compared to males. The males however were only adequately satisfied with the relevance of services provided by Private Extension Providers (70%) compared to females. There was however a significant difference for two ASS providers the Farmer Association and Agricultural Mentors (X^2=4.08; p=0.0434 and X^2=4.34; p=0.0371) respectively. Indicate that more female respondents were satisfied with relevance of the services provided by Farmers Association and Agricultural Mentors.

3.7 Farmer's perception by gender on quality of ASS in Oshikoto region

Figure 3 below present perception of gender percentages of farmers on quality of ASS in Oshikoto region.

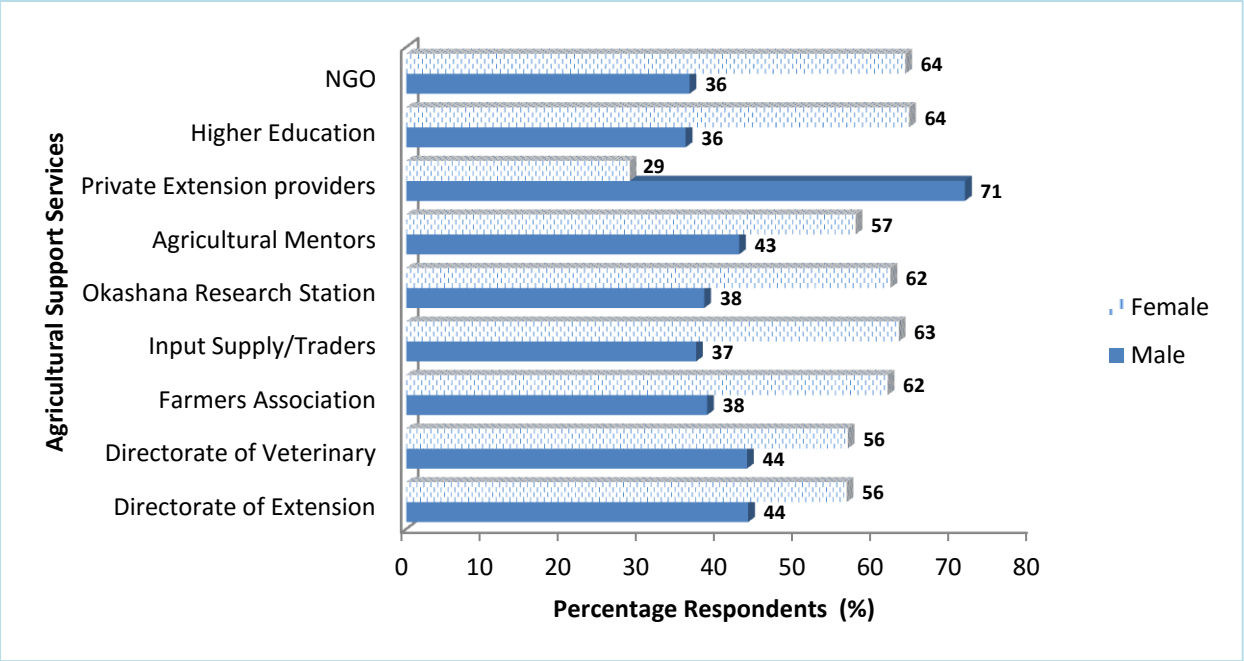

Figure 3: Perception of farmers on quality of ASS to farmers in Oshikoto region by gender

Figure 3 shows a similar trend like Figure 2 whereby the female respondents were happier with the quality of services provided by the different ASS providers than their male counterparts. It is however worrisome to note that Higher Education, Farmers Association, Input Supply Traders and NGO received a very lower percentages (35.71%, 38.46% 37.04% and 36.21%) by males respectively. One of the solutions would be to involve male farmers more in the planning with ASS providers for their needs and interest to be taken into considerations. Although the male respondents showed a disconnection with most of the ASS providers, there was statistically no significant difference between the male and the females.

3.8 Farmers contacted by ASS providers according to age categories in Oshikoto region

Table 5 below presents the age percentage of farmers who were contacted by ASS providers in Oshikoto region.

Table 5: The frequency of contact with ASS as perceived by farmers age categories in Oshikoto region

ASS	Age group	1 to 2 weeks		1 to 6 months		A year ago		Total		X^2 Value	P
		n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%		
Directorate of Extension	<=40	7	16.28	21	22.34	5	20	33	20.37		
	>40	36	83.72	73	77.66	20	80	129	79.63	0.67	0.7151
	Total	43	100	94	100	25	100	162	100		
Veterinary Services	<=40	7	15.91	10	15.63	12	29.27	29	19.46		
	>40	37	84.09	54	84.38	29	710.73	120	80.54	3.47	0.1763
	Total	44	100	64	100	41	100	149	100		
Farmers Association	<=40	7	28	7	14.89	1	5.56	15	16.67		
	>40	18	72	40	85.11	17	94.44	75	83.33	4.01	0.1341
	Total	25	100	47	100	18	100	90	100		
Input supply	<=40	3	23.08	9	18.75	6	35.29	18	23.08		
	>40	10	76.92	39	81.25	11	64.71	60	76.92	1.94	0.3799
	Total	13	100	48	100	17	21.79	78	100		
Okashana Research station	<=40	2	28.57	4	16.67	2	9.09	8	15.0		
	>40	5	71.43	20	83.33	20	90.91	45	85	1.66	0.4367
	Total	7	100	24	100	22	100	53	100		
Agricultural Mentors	<=40	4	30.77	4	15.38	6	28.57	14	23.33		
	>40	9	69.23	22	84.62	15	71.43	46	76.67	1.64	0.4399
	Total	13	100	26	100	21	100	60	100		
Private Extension Providers	<=40	6	27.27	5	35.71	0	0	11	30.56		
	>40	16	72.73	9	64.29	0	0	25	69.44	0.29	0.5919
	Total	22	100	14	100	0	0	36	100		
Higher education institution	<=40	1	25	5	35.71	0	0	6	27.27		
	>40	3	75	9	64.29	4	100	16	72.73	2.01	0.3654
	Total	4	100	14	100	4	100	22	100		
NGO	<=40	6	37.5	7	19.44	1	6.67	14	20.9		
	>40	10	62.50	29	80.56	14	93.33	53	79.1	4.55	0.1027
	Total	16	100	36	100	15	100	67	100		

Significant where $p \leq 0.05$

Table 5 shows no significant difference between the ASS providers in the age groups. It is worth mentioning however that more contacts with farmers were done between age group of >40 with all ASS service providers. According to Bennell, Paul, & Hartl (2010) older farmers are more committed to farming than younger ones who tend to travel nationally in search of employment. Most of the farmers were contacted between 1 to 6 months.

3.9 Farmers according to age categories perception on adequacy of ASS providers in Oshikoto region

Table 6 below presents perception of age categories of farmers on adequacy of ASS in Oshikoto region.

Table 6: The adequacy of ASS as perceived by farmers age categories in Oshikoto region

Agricultural Support Services	Age Categories	Adequate		Inadequate		Total		X^2	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	Value	p
Directorate of Extension	<=40	19	17.27	14	26.92	33	20.37	2.03	0.1545
	>40	91	82.73	38	73.08	129	79.63		
	Total	110	100	52	100	162	100		
Directorate of veterinary	<=40	20	20.20	9	18	29	19.46	0.10	0.7485
	>40	79	79.80	41	82	120	80.54		
	Total	99	100	50	100	149	100		
Farmers Association	<=40	10	18.87	5	13.51	15	16.67	0.45	0.5024
	>40	43	81.13	32	86.49	75	83.33		
	Total	53	100	37	100	90	100		
Input Supply	<=40	9	25.71	9	20.93	18	23.08	0.25	0.6179
	>40	26	74.29	34	79.07	60	76.92		
	Total	35	100	43	100	78	100		
Okashana Research Station	<=40	5	23.81	3	9.38	8	15.09	2.06	0.1511
	>40	16	76.19	29	90.6	45	84.91		
	Total	21	100	32	100	53	100		
Agricultural Mentors	<=40	11	24.44	3	20	14	23.33	0.12	0.7245
	>40	34	75.56	12	80	46	76.67		
	Total	45	100	15	100	60	100		
Private Extension providers	<=40	10	30.30	1	33.33	11	30.56	0.01	0.9131
	>40	23	69.70	2	66.67	25	69.44		
	Total	33	100	3	100	36	100		
Higher Education	<=40	5	38.46	1	11.11	6	27.27	2.01	0.1567
	>40	8	61.54	8	88.88	16	72.73		
	Total	13	100	9	100	22	100		
NGO	<=40	13	23.64	1	8.33	14	20.9	1.40	0.2375
	>40	42	76.36	11	91.67	53	79.1		
	Total	55	100	12	100	67	100		

Significant where $P \leq 0.05$

Table 6 above clearly shows that the category >40 were more satisfied with most of the ASS providers except with Farmer Association, Okashana Research Station and Higher Education. There were 43 farmers 9 (20.93%) in the < 40 category and 34 (79.07%) perceived the services of Input supply to inadequate while more than half of the farmers in >40 category about 90.6% indicated inadequacy of Okashana Research Station too. Of (9) farmers in >40 category 88.8% also indicated dissatisfaction with the services provided by Higher Education. The farmers were however satisfied with the services provided by Private Extension Providers, NGO and Agricultural Mentors in all the age categories. There was however no significant difference in the two category groups regarding the adequacy of the ASS providers.

3.10 The perception of farmers in age categories on relevance of ASS providers in Oshikoto region

Table 7 below presents perception of age categories of farmers on relevance of ASS in Oshikoto

Table 7: The relevance of ASS providers according to the age categories of respondents in Oshikoto region

Agricultural Support Services	Age Categories	Relevant		Irrelevant		Total		X^2	
		n	%	n	%	N	%	Value	p
Directorate of Extension	<=40	20	16.81	13	30.23	33	20.37	3.51	0.06
	>40	99	83.19	30	69.77	129	79.63		
	Total	119	100	43	100	162	100		
Directorate of veterinary	<=40	23	19.83	6	18.18	29	19.46	0.04	0.8331
	>40	93	80.17	27	81.82	120	80.54		
	Total	116	100	33	100	149	100		
Farmers Association	<=40	14	22.95	1	3.45	15	16.67	0.45	0.5024
	>40	47	77.05	28	96.55	75	83.33		
	Total	61	100	29	100	90	100		
Input Supply	<=40	9	23.08	9	23.08	18	23.08	5.38	0.0203
	>40	30	76.92	30	76.92	60	76.92		
	Total	39	100	39	100	78	100		
Okashana Research Station	<=40	5	21.74	3	10	8	15.09	1.40	0.2367
	>40	18	78.26	27	90	45	84.91		
	Total	23	100	30	100	53	100		
Agricultural Mentors	<=40	11	20.37	3	50	14	23.33	2.65	0.1035
	>40	43	79.63	3	50	46	76.67		
	Total	54	100	6	100	60	100		
Private Extension providers	<=40	11	30.56	1	100	11	30.56	2.14	0.1434
	>40	25	69.44	0	0	25	69.44		
	Total	36	100	1	100	36	100		
Higher Education	<=40	3	21.43	3	37.50	6	27.27	0.66	0.4155
	>40	11	78.57	5	62.50	16	72.73		
	Total	14	100	8	100	22	100		
NGO	<=40	14	21.88	0	0	14	20.9	0.83	0.3624
	>40	50	78.13	3	100	53	79.1		
	Total	64	100	3	100	67	100		

Significant where $P \leq 0.05$

As it can be seen in Table 7 most of the farmers in various categories indicated a satisfaction with most of the ASS providers as being relevant except with Okashana Research Station where the age category of >40 (90%) were of the opinion that services by Research Station were not relevant at all. Half of the age categories of farmers indicated that Input Supply offered irrelevant services as well. Private Extension Providers, NGO and Agricultural mentor's services were very relevant to farmers in all age categories.

3.11 The perception of age categories of farmers on quality of ASS providers in Oshikoto region

Table 8 below presents perception of age categories of farmers on quality of ASS in Oshikoto

Table 8: Perception of farmers' age categories and quality *of* ASS in Oshikoto region

Agricultural Support Services	Age Categories	Good Quality		Poor Quality		Total		X^2	
		n	%	n	%	N	%	Value	p
Directorate of Extension	<=40	23	19.33	10	23.26	33	20.37	0.30	0.5836
	>40	96	80.67	33	76.74	129	79.63		
	Total	119	100	43	100	162	100		
Directorate of veterinary	<=40	18	17.82	11	22.92	29	19.46	0.54	0.4629
	>40	83	82.18	37	82.18	120	80.54		
	Total	101	100	48	100	149	100		
Farmers Association	<=40	11	21.15	4	10.53	15	16.67	1.79	0.1815
	>40	41	78.85	34	89.47	75	83.33		
	Total	52	100	38	100	90	100		
Input Supply/Traders	<=40	7	25.93	11	21.57	18	23.08	0.19	0.66
	>40	20	74.07	40	78.43	60	76.92		
	Total	27	100	51	100	78	100		
Okashana Research Station	<=40	5	23.81	3	9.38	8	15.09	2.06	0.1511
	>40	16	76.19	29	90.62	45	84.91		
	Total	21	100	32	100	53	100		
Agricultural Mentors	<=40	12	25.53	2	15.38	14	23.33	0.59	0.4439
	>40	35	74.47	11	84.62	46	76.67		
	Total	47	100	13	100	60	100		
Private Extension providers	<=40	10	28.57	1	100	11	30.56	2.34	0.13
	>40	25	71.43	0	0	25	69.44		
	Total	35	100	1	100	36	100		
Higher Education	<=40	5	35.71	1	12.50	6	27.27	1.38	0.2396
	>40	9	64.29	7	87.50	16	72.73		
	Total	14	100	8	100	22	100		
NGO	<=40	12	20.69	2	22.22	14	20.9	0.01	0.9162
	>40	46	79.31	7	77.78	53	79.1		
	Total	58	100	9	100	67	100		

Significant where $P \leq 0.05$

Table 8 above shows that there was no significant difference between the age categories regarding the quality of the ASS providers. But both of the age groups were discontent with quality of services provided by Input Supply. According to Swanson (2008) many input supply companies deliver free advice when selling their inputs or when marketing their products. However, in most cases, they do not have adequate training in agriculture Swanson (2008) also alluded that most technical advice given by input supply tends to be more product-driven than farmer-driven and sales determine the modus operandi of the companies. Half of the farmers mostly in the >40 age group (89.47%) perceived the quality of farmers association as poor. The farmers' association needs to be encouraged as group voice could be heard more than individual voices. Farmer organisations may also play an important role in negotiating with service providers as well as in evaluating the services received (Neuchâtel Group, 2007).

Figure 4 below presents the mean perception of farmers on the current and potential of ASS in Oshikoto region.

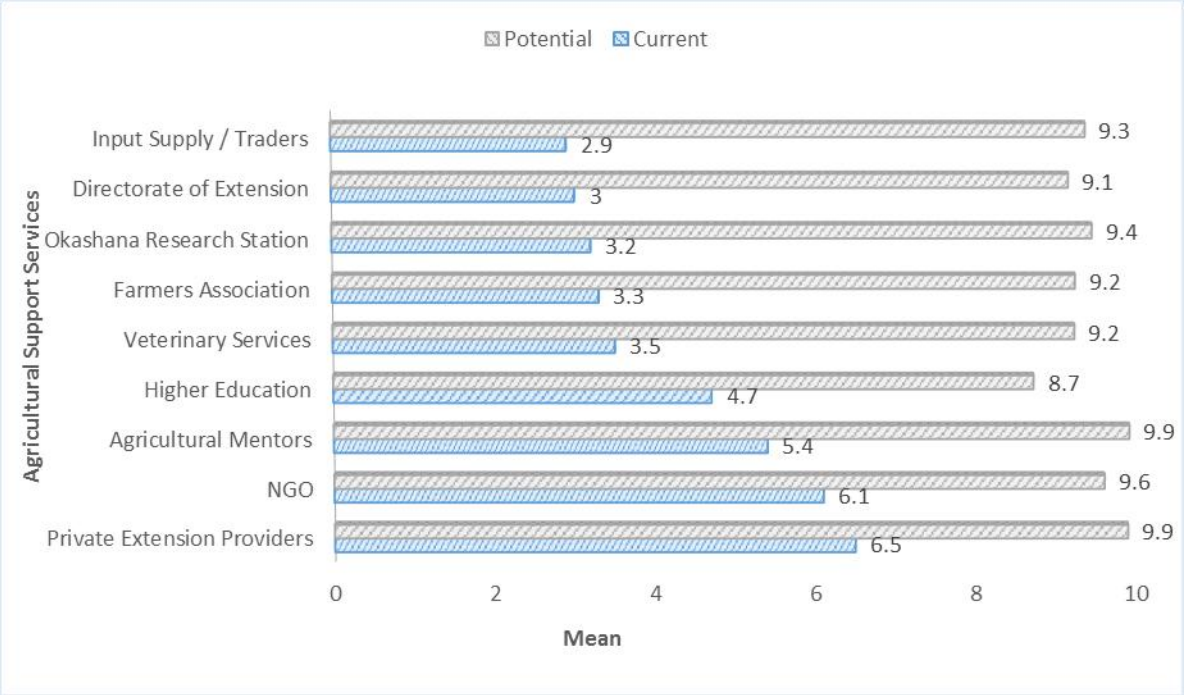

Figure 4: Farmer perception of the current and potential mean of ASS in Oshikoto region

According to Figure 4 the Private Extension Providers received the highest current mean of 6.5. In second place was Agricultural Mentors with mean of 6.1 and in third place was NGO with a mean of 5.4. It seems the respondents were not satisfied with the seven (7) providers of the ASS. The Higher Education was in the fourth place with a mean of 4.7, in the fifth place was Directorate Veterinary Services with the mean of 3.5, in the sixth place was Farmers Association with the mean of 3.3, in the seventh place Okashana Research Station with the mean of 3.2 and the eight place Directorate of Extension with the mean of 3.0. In the last place was Input Supply and with the mean of 2.9.

The respondents clearly indicated that ASS need to improve their agricultural services to a higher potential as the ASS were given the potential means level ranging from 8.7 to 9.9.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper outlines an overview of farmers' perception on the frequencies, adequacy, relevance and quality of ASS in Oshikoto region in Namibia. In many countries, extension services are being diversified to take care of the different needs of farmers, in order to achieve food security. According to Swanson (2006) farmers needs have changed from food security to an increase income, and employment. However, Government extension providers will not be able to address those needs on their own. Private Extension service Providers, NGOs and agricultural mentors are only in contact with a hand full of farmers yet their services are perceived to be relevant, adequate and qualitative. Some higher institutions of learning are also ranked at the middle. This indicates that their information might be too technical to farmers to understand. In the more diverse environment the public sector should collaborate with all the extension platforms by identifying the gaps in service delivery and by ensuring that those gaps are addressed. NGOs with their experience should expand from implementing specific activities and support to collaborating with other extension service providers in building social capital and collaborating with the public extension sector by

implementing joint programmes. Private extension providers exist only where there is a favourable market for their services and, thus, they are absent in many remote rural areas unless the services are subsidised by the Government to cater for more farmers (Neuchâtel Group, 2007).

5. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A decentralised platform could be created consisting of all local committee, representative of small and medium-scale farmers and members from ASS providers where information can be shared as well as interaction and effective collaborator with different farmers and ASS can take place.
2. Farmers Association and groups should be strengthen and linked to different ASS in order to provide assistance to farmers when the farmers are faced with problems (Neuchâtel Group, 2007).
3. ASS providers should involve farmers when come to relevant technology in defining and solving problems. Participatory approaches such as Farmers Field School Approach (FFS) could be introduced as to educate and empower farmers through the process of learning and teaching, as well as disseminate information and technology among the farmers (Davis, 2006).
4. An Agricultural Extension policy in taking account of all ASS providers can be developed to create an enabling environment, guide in the interests of direction, coordination and quality of services (Rivera & Qamar, 2003). The policy could also regulate how extension services should operate for farmers to receive optimum benefit from all the ASS providers.

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