

Assessment of the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract : The agricultural sector contributes a great deal to the sustenance of Nigeria's food security and economy, with an attendant impact on rural development. In spite of the relatively high number of farmers in the country, self-sufficiency in food production is still a challenge. Farmers are faced with myriad problems which hinder their production efficiency, one of which is their access to agricultural inputs required for optimum production. To meet the challenges faced by farmers, the government at the federal level has come up with many agricultural policies, one of which is the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA). The Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) is one of the critical components of ATA, which is aimed at ensuring the effective distribution of agricultural inputs delivered directly to farmers, and at a regulated cost. After about 8 years of launching this policy, it will be necessary to carry out an assessment of GESS and determine the impact it has made on rural farmers with respect to their access to farm inputs. This study was carried out to assess the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) in Adamawa State, Nigeria. Crop farmers who registered under the GESS in Adamawa State, Nigeria, formed the population for the study. Primary data for the study were obtained through a survey, and the use of a structured questionnaire. A sample size of 167 respondents was selected using multi-stage, purposive, and random sampling techniques. The validity and reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire) were obtained through pilot testing and test-retest method, respectively. The objectives of the study were to determine the difference in the level of access to agricultural inputs before and after GESS, determine the difference in cost of agricultural inputs before and after GESS, and to determine the challenges faced by rural farmers in accessing agricultural inputs through GESS. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the collected data. Specifically, Mann-Whitney, student t-test, and factor analysis were used to test the stated hypotheses. Research findings revealed there was a significant difference in the level of access to farm inputs after the introduction of GESS ($Z=14.216$). Also, there was a significant difference in the cost of agro-inputs after the introduction of GESS ($\Pr |T| > |t| = 0.0000$). The challenges faced by respondents in accessing agro-inputs through GESS were administrative and technical in nature. Based on the findings of the research, it was recommended that efforts be made by the government to sustain the GESS, as it has significantly improved the level of farmers' access to agricultural inputs and has reduced the cost of agro-inputs, while administrative challenges faced by the respondents in accessing inputs be addressed by the government, and extension agents assist the farmers to overcome the technical challenges they face in accessing inputs.

Keywords : agricultural policy, agro-inputs, assessment, growth enhancement support scheme, rural farmers

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