

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF MASS MEDIA IN ACCESSING RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT NEWS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined factors influencing the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development news in Cross River State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study; assessed the socio-economic characteristics of respondents, determined the types of Mass media used for accessing rural and agricultural development issues, ascertained the reasons for use of mass media in agricultural information management, and outlined Factors influencing the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development news in the study area. The population of the study were cassava farmers. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents. A researcher structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive statistics. Results indicated that; the distribution of respondents by sex shows that 55.7% of cassava farmers were male, while 44.3% were female. Education (Mean = 3.85), and access to input sources (Mean = 3.74) were most reason for mass media use. The study concluded that use of mass media in accessing is central to improving farmers' access to timely, relevant, and actionable information in Cross River State, and recommended that media content should prioritize timely information on improved technologies, market prices, and weather forecasts.*

**Keywords:** *Factors, Mass Media, Agricultural Development, Cassava Farmers.*

### **Introduction**

Mass media plays a vital role in shaping agricultural development by serving as a bridge between scientific innovations and rural farmers. Through channels such as radio, television, newspapers, and increasingly ICT platforms, farmers gain access to information that can enhance productivity and sustainability (Akhter et al., 2021). In Nigeria, where agriculture remains the backbone of the economy and a livelihood for millions, timely and accurate dissemination of agricultural information is critical for development planning and rural transformation (Nwibo et al., 2022). However, the extent to which mass media is effectively used in accessing agricultural and rural development issues in states such as Cross River requires empirical investigation. Socio-economic characteristics of farmers, such as age, income, educational background, and farming experience, are known to significantly influence their access to and utilization of mass media (Odor et al., 2022). Farmers with higher literacy levels or stable income are more likely to interpret and adopt innovations reported through media platforms, compared to those with limited education or economic constraints (Nwaobiala & Anyanwu, 2018). Therefore, assessing socio-economic conditions of respondents in Cross River is necessary to understand the heterogeneity of media use among rural dwellers. The choice of mass media platforms for agricultural accessing differs across communities. For instance, studies have shown that rural farmers in Nigeria predominantly rely on radio due to its affordability, availability in local languages, and accessibility in rural areas (Ekanem & Ekerete, 2018). Conversely, television and print media remain more relevant among semi-urban farmers, while mobile-based ICT platforms are emerging as significant tools for information dissemination (Omoregie & Aziken, 2022). Identifying the dominant mass media platforms used in Cross River can thus guide policy

direction and media investment. The type of information disseminated by mass media in rural communities also determines its adoption. Farmers often prioritize information on improved agricultural technologies, market prices, weather forecasts, and input availability (Oladoyin et al., 2022). For example, cassava farmers in southern Nigeria have benefitted from media-driven awareness on processing technologies, pest control methods, and access to credit facilities (Apata, 2019). Therefore, understanding the nature of agricultural and rural development news being reported in Cross River is critical for enhancing its relevance and impact.

Agricultural information management is a systematic process of collecting, packaging, and disseminating knowledge for effective farm decision-making. Mass media plays a strategic role in this management process by enabling farmers to access timely innovations and government policies (Albert & Joseph, 2020). However, challenges such as poor rural coverage, lack of technical expertise in media houses, and inadequate farmer-media linkages continue to undermine the effective use of media for agricultural information management in Nigeria (Akhter et al., 2021). Several socio-economic and institutional factors influence the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural issues. For example, lack of adequate funding for rural-based media stations, political interference in content production, and limited training of journalists on agricultural reporting affect how effectively information is communicated (Nwibo et al., 2022). Similarly, the degree of farmers' trust in mass media institutions determines their willingness to adopt information disseminated (Odor et al., 2022). Hence, understanding these influencing factors is necessary for strengthening agricultural communication systems. Cross River State presents a unique context for examining these issues due to its diverse agricultural base and rural population. The state is characterized by cassava, yam, and maize production, alongside fishing and oil palm cultivation (Angba & Iton, 2020). Despite these resources, rural communities still struggle with low productivity, poor access to modern technologies, and weak extension systems. Mass media could potentially fill this gap, but its use and effectiveness remain underexplored in the state.

Globally, the integration of mass media in agricultural reporting has proven successful in improving adoption rates of improved technologies and fostering rural development (Akhter et al., 2021). In Nigeria, however, studies indicate a mixed outcome, with some farmers reportedly accessing positive benefits while others face barriers such as cost of access, irregular power supply, and language barriers (Aya & Eremi 2016; Eremi et al., 2021). Investigating the local dynamics of these challenges in Cross River will provide insights for targeted interventions. The growing importance of ICTs and digital platforms in agricultural communication cannot be ignored. Recent studies suggest that younger farmers are increasingly adopting social media, SMS platforms, and mobile applications for accessing agricultural news (Odor et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the penetration of such ICT tools in rural Cross River is still limited compared to traditional radio and television platforms. Thus, it becomes necessary to explore the intersection between traditional mass media and emerging digital platforms in the state's agricultural information landscape (Eremi et al., 2023).

Agriculture remains the mainstay of rural livelihoods in Cross River State, with cassava, yam, maize, and oil palm being the predominant crops (Angba & Iton, 2020). However, despite the sector's importance, farmers in the state still face persistent challenges such as low productivity, limited access to improved technologies, and weak extension services. Mass media is expected to play a critical role in bridging this gap by providing timely agricultural information, creating awareness of government programs, and fostering adoption of improved practices (Nwibo et al., 2022). Yet, there is little evidence on how effectively mass media channels in Cross River are being utilized to report rural and agricultural development issues. Although studies in other Nigerian states have demonstrated that mass

media significantly enhances farmers' access to agricultural innovations, the effectiveness of different media types varies depending on farmers' socio-economic characteristics and contextual realities (Akhter et al., 2021; Ekanem & Ekerete, 2018). For instance, radio is often cited as the most accessible medium due to its affordability and use of local languages, while television, newspapers, and ICT-based platforms remain underutilized, especially in rural settings (Omoregie & Aziken, 2022; Odor et al., 2022). However, these studies have not adequately addressed the specific types of rural and agricultural news disseminated, nor the factors influencing media use for accessing agricultural information in Cross River State. The gap, therefore, lies in the limited understanding of how mass media is being applied to report agricultural and rural development issues within Cross River, considering the socio-economic characteristics of farmers and the evolving role of ICTs. While research exists on media utilization in other regions (Nwaobiala & Anyanwu, 2018; Apata, 2019), there is insufficient empirical evidence specific to Cross River on the types of information disseminated, the dominant media platforms used, and the factors influencing their effectiveness. Addressing this gap will not only strengthen agricultural information management in the state but also improve farmers' adoption of innovations, thereby contributing to sustainable rural development. The main objective of this study was to examine the factors influencing the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development news in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study sought to:

1. assess the socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the study area.
2. determine the types of Mass media used for accessing rural and agricultural development issues in the study area.
3. ascertain the reasons for use of mass media in agricultural information management in the study area.
4. outline the Factors influencing the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development news in the study area.

### **Materials and Methods**

Cross River is a coastal state in southeastern Nigeria known for its diverse cultures, tropical rainforests, and vibrant tourism. Its capital is Calabar, and it is nicknamed "The People's Paradise". Weather The state has a humid tropical climate, though conditions vary by location. It lies between latitude 4°27' and 5°32'N and longitude between 7°50' and 9°28' E Greenwich of the meridian. Average temperatures typically range from 15°C to 30°C. It records significant annual rainfall, especially during the wet season. While the dry season has less of an effect in the region, the high-altitude plateau in Obudu experiences lower temperatures, sometimes dipping to 4°C Land size Cross River is the 19th largest state in Nigeria by area. Its landmass is approximately: 20,156 km<sup>2</sup>22,590 km<sup>2</sup>. According to Wikipedia's 2022 estimates, Cross River's population was 4,406,200, ranking it 28th out of Nigeria's 36 states. The economy of Cross River State is predominantly agrarian, about 70% of residents work in agriculture, producing cash crops like oil palm, rubber, and cocoa. Food crops such as cassava. Cross River State has 18 Local Government Areas such as : Abi, Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwarra, Biase, Boki, Calabar Municipal, Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obubra, Obudum Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr and Yala. The population of the study comprised of cassava farmers residing around mass media houses in the study area who listens to or utilize the daily/weekly editions and newspaper publication in agricultural issues. The population of the study comprised of cassava farmers residing around mass media houses in the study area who listen to or utilize the daily/weekly editions and newspaper publication in agricultural issues. The study identified 12 mass media houses. The study adopted the proportionate sampling technique to select 150 respondents at 30% out of

500. A researcher structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Table 1: Distribution of sample size**

S/N	Number of Media houses in the Study Area	Number of cassava farmers in the location	Sample population (30%)
1.	Cross River State Broadcasting Television Stations	50	15
2.	The Radio FM Station	34	10
3.	NTA Channel 24	42	15
4.	The Nigeria Chronicle	40	12
5.	This Day Newspaper	44	13
6.	Nation Newspaper	35	10
7.	Tribune	49	15
8.	Vanguard	46	13
9.	Punch	38	12
10.	The Sun	41	12
11.	Daily Independent	43	13
12.	Guardian	36	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>150</b>

Source: Field survey, 2025

## Results and Discussion

### Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The distribution of respondents by sex shows that 55.7% of cassava farmers were male, while 44.3% were female. This indicates that cassava farming in the study area is male-dominated, although female participation remains significant. This aligns with earlier findings that both men and women are active in cassava production in Nigeria, but men often have more access to resources and decision-making opportunities (Apata, 2019). In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents (43.3%) fell within the 15–25 years age group, followed by 24.7% in the 26–35 range. This suggests that cassava farming is dominated by younger farmers, which may be attributed to their strength, energy, and openness to innovation. On the other hand, older farmers (46 years and above) accounted for only 18%, suggesting reduced participation due to age-related limitations. Since younger farmers are often more receptive to technology and mass media, media programs targeting agricultural development may find a ready audience among this group (Omoregie & Aziken, 2022). Regarding marital status, 45.3% of respondents were single, while 38% were married, and 9.3% were widowed. Only 7.3% were divorced. This indicates that cassava farming attracts both single and married individuals, with a slightly higher proportion of unmarried respondents. The relatively high proportion of single respondents may be linked to the dominance of younger farmers. Marital status is important in agricultural communication, as married individuals may have larger households and greater dependence on farming as a livelihood source (Oladoyin et al., 2022).

Household size analysis revealed that 50% of farmers had fewer than five members, while 46% had between 11 and 15 members, and only 17.3% had between 5–10 members. This irregular distribution suggests a mix of small and large households among cassava

farmers. Household size is critical because larger households may provide more labor for farming activities and influence farmers' reliance on mass media for agricultural knowledge and practices (Nwaobiala & Anyanwu, 2018). The data on agricultural activity engagement shows that 39.3% of respondents were primarily engaged in farming, 30.7% in trading, 11.3% in fishing, and 18.7% in other activities. This highlights the fact that while farming remains the dominant activity, diversification into trading and other occupations is common. Diversified livelihood activities may affect the way farmers use mass media, as those engaged in trading may rely more on market-related information from media outlets (Nwibo et al., 2022).

With respect to membership in associations, a large majority (75.3%) of farmers did not belong to any association, while only 24.7% were members. This suggests limited participation in cooperative or farmer groups in the study area. Since associations often serve as key platforms for accessing agricultural information and mass media initiatives, the low membership rate could hinder information flow and adoption of innovations (Albert & Joseph, 2020). Farming experience was distributed across three categories, with 37.3% having less than five years of experience, 29.3% with 5–10 years, and 33.3% with over 11 years of experience. This indicates that the sample includes both novice and experienced farmers, creating an opportunity to analyze how farming experience influences mass media utilization. Farmers with longer experience may be less dependent on media for farming decisions compared to newer farmers who are still exploring best practices (Ekanem & Ekerete, 2018). Finally, the type of crops grown shows cassava (38%) as the dominant crop, followed by maize (32%) and yam (23.3%). A small proportion (6.7%) grew other crops. This confirms cassava's central role in the farming system of Cross River State, which justifies the focus of this study. The crop mix also implies that farmers may require diversified information from mass media, ranging from cassava production and processing technologies to maize and yam market opportunities (Angba & Iton, 2020).

### **Type of Mass media used for accessing rural and agricultural development issues in the study area.**

Table 3 shows distribution of respondents based on mass media used for accessing rural and agricultural development issues in the study area. The results from the Table indicate that radio was ranked the most widely used source of information by cassava farmers, with a mean of 3.83, followed closely by town criers (mean = 3.81). This suggests that despite technological advancement, traditional media such as radio and oral communication remain highly effective in disseminating agricultural information to rural communities. Village meetings ranked third (mean = 3.45), which highlights the importance of communal gatherings in sharing relevant development issues and strengthening collective decision-making among farmers. These findings are consistent with the notion that accessible and culturally appropriate media play a critical role in agricultural extension, especially where literacy levels and infrastructure pose challenges. On the other hand, mobile phones (mean = 3.31) and internet (mean = 3.10) ranked fifth and sixth, respectively, showing moderate utilization. This reflects increasing exposure to digital platforms but also suggests possible barriers such as poor connectivity, low affordability, or digital illiteracy. Meanwhile, television ranked fourth (mean = 3.41), indicating moderate reliance, possibly due to electricity challenges and cost of ownership in rural households. The least used media were newspapers (mean = 2.34) and bulletins (mean = 2.28), which may be attributed to literacy constraints, limited distribution in rural areas, and low preference compared to oral and audio-visual channels. In all, the results reveal a media usage pattern dominated by traditional and oral methods, which supports the findings of Angba & Iton, (2020) that a gradual shift toward modern digital tools requires supportive policies for greater adoption among cassava farmers.

**Table 2: Distribution of cassava farmers based on socio-economic variables**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	83	55.7
Female	67	44.3
Total	150	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
15-25	65	43.3
26-35	37	24.7
36-45	21	14.0
46-55	17	11.3
56>	10	6.7
Total	150	100.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	68	45.3
Married	57	38.0
Divorced	11	7.3
Widow	14	9.3
Total	150	100.0
<b>Household size</b>		
<5	75	50.0
5-10	57	38.3
11-15	18	12.0
Total	150	100.0
<b>Agricultural Activity Engagement</b>		
Farming	59	39.3
Trading	46	30.7
Fishing	17	11.3
Others	28	18.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Membership of Association</b>		
Yes	37	24.7
No	113	75.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Years of Framing experience</b>		
<5	56	37.3
5-10	44	29.3
11>	50	33.3
Total	150	100.0
<b>Type of crop grown</b>		
Cassava	57	38.0
Yam	35	23.3
Maize	48	32.0
Others	10	6.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on mass media used for accessing rural and agricultural development issues in Cross River State.**

ITEMS	MEAN	SD	RANK
Newspaper	2.34	1.83	7 <sup>th</sup>
Television	3.41	2.32	4 <sup>th</sup>
Radio	3.83	2.57	1 <sup>st</sup>
Town criers	3.81	2.51	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Village meeting	3.45	2.42	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Bulletin	2.28	1.99	8 <sup>th</sup>
Internet	3.10	2.22	6 <sup>th</sup>
Mobile phones	3.31	2.40	5 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

**Reasons for use of mass media in agricultural information management in the study area.**

The analysis of reasons for mass media use in agricultural information management in Cross River State as indicated in Table 4 shows that education ranked highest (Mean = 3.85, SD = 2.25), highlighting the strong role of media in enhancing farmers' knowledge and skills on agricultural practices. This was followed by access to input sources (Mean = 3.74, SD = 2.16) and awareness creation (Mean = 3.62, SD = 2.11), emphasizing the importance of media platforms in providing farmers with timely knowledge of improved inputs and raising awareness about new agricultural innovations. Similarly, persuasion (Mean = 3.48, SD = 1.68) ranked fourth, suggesting that media also plays a role in influencing farmers' decisions regarding adoption of technologies. On the other hand, entertainment (Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.53) and access to subject matter specialists (Mean = 2.86, SD = 0.86) were rated moderately, indicating they are useful but not as significant as educational and awareness roles. Meanwhile, engagement (Mean = 2.36, SD = 0.45) ranked lowest, suggesting that two-way communication and interactive participation between media practitioners and farmers remain underutilized in the dissemination of agricultural information. According to Oladoyin et al., (2022) mass media is effective in education, awareness, and input accessibility, however, there is still a need to strengthen its role in fostering dialogue and closer interaction between farmers and agricultural experts.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on reasons for use of mass media in agricultural information management in the study area**

Items	Mean	SD	Rank
Entertainment	3.10	1.53	5 <sup>th</sup>
Engagement	2.36	0.45	7 <sup>th</sup>
Persuasion	3.48	1.68	4 <sup>th</sup>
Education	3.85	2.25	1 <sup>st</sup>
Access to input source	3.74	2.16	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Access to subject matter specialist	2.86	0.86	6 <sup>th</sup>
Awareness	3.62	2.11	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Source: field survey, 2025

**Factors influencing the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development news in the study area.**

The findings in table 5 revealed that accessibility ranked highest (Mean = 3.85),. This was closely followed by youth immigration to urban centers due to conflicts over land(Mean = 3.81)showing that rural-urban migration significantly affects mass media use in accessing agricultural news since the young age are akin to the use of gadgets and mass media devices, and lack of internet connectivity (Mean = 3.75), highlighting the importance of infrastructure and digital access in enabling effective communication. Cost (Mean = 3.74) also emerged as a critical factor, indicating that affordability plays a major role in farmers’ ability to access mass media. Additionally, illiteracy (Mean = 3.58) and poor accessibility to change agents due to communal clashes (Mean = 3.57) were notable challenges, suggesting that low literacy levels and social conflicts limit farmers’ capacity to benefit from agricultural information. The language used in accessing agricultural news (Mean = 3.59) also ranked relatively high, underscoring the importance of using local and understandable languages for effective message delivery. In contrast, poor television network (Mean = 3.50) and ancient agricultural norms and values (Mean = 3.49) were considered moderately influential but still hinder mass media effectiveness. On the other hand, factors such as poor transport network (Mean = 2.65), land fragmentation reducing application of innovation (Mean = 2.76), and leaders’ perspectives in group action (Mean = 3.26) ranked lowest, indicating that while they are relevant, they do not strongly limit the use of mass media compared to infrastructural and socio-economic challenges. To support this findings, Apata, (2019) had also asserted that mass media effectiveness in accessing rural agricultural information is shaped largely by accessibility, connectivity, cost, and socio-cultural factors.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondent based on factors influencing the use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development news.**

ITEMS	MEAN	SD	RANK
Cost	3.74	2.53	4 <sup>th</sup>
Youth immigration to urban center due to conflicts over land	3.81	2.65	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Poor television network	3.50	2.32	8 <sup>th</sup>
Poor transport network	2.65	2.36	13 <sup>th</sup>
Illiteracy	3.58	2.34	6 <sup>th</sup>
Ancient agricultural norms and values	3.49	1.57	14 <sup>th</sup>
Communal clashes over land	2.42	2.03	9 <sup>th</sup>
Poor access to change agent due to communal clashes	3.57	2.33	7 <sup>th</sup>
Land fragment depleting application of innovation	2.76	1.65	12 <sup>th</sup>
Accessibility	3.85	2.76	1 <sup>st</sup>
Leaders perspective in group action	3.26	2.00	11 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of internet connectivity	3.75	2.5	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Language used in reporting agricultural news	3.59	23.4	5 <sup>th</sup>
News delivery time	3.34	2.02	10 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2025

## Conclusion

The use of mass media in accessing rural and agricultural development is central to improving farmers' access to timely, relevant, and actionable information in Cross River State. The background of this study reveals that socio-economic characteristics such as age, income, and education influence media utilization, while radio, television, newspapers, and ICT platforms remain the key channels for agricultural communication. Despite the potential of mass media, there remain gaps in how effectively information is disseminated and how well it responds to the needs of rural farmers. Strengthening mass media reporting in agriculture is therefore crucial for enhancing farmers' knowledge, adoption of improved technologies, and overall rural development. This study underscores the importance of assessing the socio-economic profiles of farmers, identifying the most effective media platforms, examining the type of information disseminated, and evaluating the constraints to mass media use in accessing agricultural information. By addressing these factors, policymakers, media practitioners, and extension workers can foster a more inclusive and efficient agricultural communication system in Cross River State. Such interventions will not only promote food security but also improve the socio-economic wellbeing of rural farmers and their communities.

## Recommendations

1. Capacity-building initiatives should be tailored to address the needs of marginalized groups, particularly women and low-income farmers. Also, policies should be introduced to subsidize media access for rural farmers, making agricultural information more inclusive.
2. Radio programs in local languages should be strengthened as the primary medium for rural farmers.
3. Media content should prioritize timely information on improved technologies, market prices, and weather forecasts.
4. Government and private stakeholders should invest in rural broadcasting infrastructure to improve coverage to improve farmer's learning. Also, extension services should integrate media platforms into their communication strategies to reach a wider farmer audience.

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