

JOURNALISM AND DISSEMINATION OF AGRICULTURAL RELATED NEWS: THE PROSPECT
AND CHALLENGES

By

Nkemjika George Njinma
Freelance Journalist and Researcher
Enugu State
Nigeria

And

Ngozi Comfort Omojunikanbi Ph.D
Department of Journalism and Media Studies,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University of Port Harcourt

And

Urenna Lydia Anyeji MD
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
bronxCare Health System, Bronx NY

Abstract

The study explores the opportunities and difficulties of journalists disseminating agricultural-related news, especially in the context of economic development, and how they deal with the many obstacles that journalists face, including the intricacy of agricultural issues, misinformation, and resource scarcity. In the field of journalism, the dissemination of agricultural-related news is a vital but complicated undertaking that influences both public opinion and policy decisions. The study also explores the changing opportunities for journalism, including improving farmer access to information, encouraging sustainable farming methods, and influencing agricultural policy. It also identifies the important role journalism plays in agricultural news, including filling knowledge gaps and influencing public opinion, as well as the frequency with which journalists disseminate agricultural news, including heightened attention to food security and climate change and increased cooperation with agricultural specialists. The study also found that journalism is essential for spreading agricultural news and connecting farmers, policymakers, and the general public. It also suggested that governments and agricultural organizations should make investments to close the digital divide by giving rural residents access to the internet and training in digital literacy as this would allow farmers to access online agricultural news platforms and real-time updates on important topics like weather patterns, market prices, and farming practices.

Keyword: Journalism, Agriculture, Prospects, Effects, Prevalence and Challenges.

Introduction

As a conduit between agricultural advances, policy, and the general public, journalism is essential to the spread of news about agriculture. It is impossible to overestimate the

significance of timely, accurate, and thoroughly researched agricultural journalism since it keeps farmers, stakeholders, and policymakers up to date on new farming practices, market trends, and policy changes. According to Godswill & James (2024), English communication plays a pivotal role in the field of journalism, serving as the primary medium for news dissemination in many parts of the world, including Nigeria as the use of English in journalism facilitates not only the reach and impact of news stories but also ensures a standardised mode of communication across diverse linguistic groups. This ensures that vital information is available to farmers, enabling them to make informed decisions that improve productivity and contribute to sustainable agricultural development (Musa & Ibrahim, 2017). However, a study conducted by Isaac & David (2021) mentioned that the composition of information resources makes deterioration inevitable. In the agricultural industry, journalism also makes it easier for success stories to be shared, which encourages creativity and development in rural farming communities.

Agricultural journalism does, however, encounter a number of difficulties. The fact that news about agriculture frequently receives little attention from the mainstream media is one of the fundamental challenges. Major media outlets in many areas do not focus primarily on agriculture, which results in underreporting and a lack of in-depth coverage of important topics impacting farmers and the agricultural industry. This has contributed to a gap in the flow of essential information that could benefit rural farmers, especially in developing countries (Obidike, 2018). The digital gap is another issue, especially in rural areas where most farming occurs. The internet and digital platforms that regularly disseminate agricultural news and updates are usually inaccessible to farmers in these areas. As a result, traditional forms of media like radio and print newspapers continue to play a crucial role in delivering agricultural news in many parts of the world (Aina, 2020). Because of this, there is still inconsistency in the way agricultural news is disseminated, with urban audiences frequently having greater access to information than farmers in rural areas.

However, there are also a lot of opportunities in the field of agricultural journalism, especially with the growth of digital media. As mentioned by Ekanem, Afia & Udoh (2024), Training retirees can contribute towards generating employment opportunity for unemployed rural person and thus play a role in improving socio-economic conditions and alleviating poverty. The expansion of mobile technology and internet access in rural areas has provided new platforms for sharing agricultural information. Online portals, social media, and mobile applications dedicated to agricultural news have the potential to reach wider audiences and provide real-time updates on critical issues such as weather forecasts, pest outbreaks, and market prices (Rahman & Adekunle, 2019). The caliber and audience of agricultural journalism can be improved by collaborations between media outlets and agricultural institutions. To make sure that the information being shared is correct, pertinent, and beneficial to farmers, journalists can work with agricultural extension agencies, research institutes, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such partnerships also create opportunities for training and capacity building, where journalists can develop specialized knowledge in agriculture reporting (Ekong & Akpan, 2017). The field of agricultural journalism presents both intriguing potential and evident problems.

Concept of journalism

With the introduction of radio, television, and the Internet in the 20th century, the term journalism expanded to encompass all printed and electronic communications pertaining to current affairs. Originally, the term was used to describe the reporting of current events in printed form, particularly newspapers. The collection, preparation, and dissemination of news and related commentary and feature materials through print and electronic media, including newspapers, magazines, books, blogs, webcasts, podcasts, social networking and social media sites, and e-mail, as well as through radio, film, and television, is referred to as "journalism," or "news writing." According to Godswil & James (2024) Journalism is the creation and dissemination of reporting on the relationships between people, ideas, events, and facts that are current events and, to the best of the journalistic ability, inform society.

As noted by Omojunikanbi (2024), the gathering, preparing, and dissemination of news, along with related analysis and feature materials, is known as journalism. Perceptions of the profession and its associated standing vary from nation to nation, as does the proper role for journalism. Furthermore, journalism is typically carried out in collaboration with a news organization that compiles and disseminates journalistic articles. The art and science of gathering, assembling, and disseminating news via various mass media platforms is known as journalism. It is essentially a way of spreading knowledge and facts, often from an objective position, with an emphasis on truth and education (Ikems & Bassey, 2023).

Journalism is the creation and dissemination of reports that constitute the "news of the day" and that, to a certain extent, accurately enlighten society about the interactions of events, facts, ideas, and people. The wonderful profession of journalism demands a great deal of in-depth information, reading, curiosity, writing style, and dedication to the work. It must be carried out with moral principles. which, if absent, may cause anarchy since people might be misled by misleading information. Journalism writers are referred to as "journalists." They may be employed by radio or television stations, newspapers, magazines, or internet. Journalism is fundamentally an instrument for empowerment, notwithstanding its intrigue and engagement. Experts give people the knowledge they need to run their lives by writing and reporting as journalists. The way we engage with our communities, cultures, businesses, and even governments is influenced by today's media.

Concept of agriculture

The term "agriculture" is derived from the Latin word "agricultura." Furthermore, "AGR" stands for "field," and "culture" for "growing" or "cultivation." Agriculture includes the production of food and non-food items from forestry, aquaculture, and crops and livestock. Because domesticated species farming produced food surpluses that allowed people to live in cities, agriculture played a significant role in the establishment of sedentary human civilization. As mentioned by Piate, Udongwo, & Etim (2022), many different attributes are used to define particular forms of agriculture, such as soil type, frequency of cultivation, and principal crops or animals. Though it typically implies both, the term "agriculture" is sometimes limited to agricultural production, excluding the rearing of domestic animals.

The production of plants, animals, fungi, and other living things for food, fiber, biofuel, medications, and other goods that support and improve human life is known as agriculture, sometimes referred to as farming or husbandry. Since domesticated species farming provided food surpluses that drove civilization's rise, agriculture was a crucial turning point in the development of sedentary human civilization. The scientific study of agriculture is known as agricultural science. Since agriculture has existed for thousands of years, a vast array of climates, civilizations, and technological advancements have shaped and impacted its development. In order to address global issues like poverty, climate change, and food insecurity, agriculture is essential. It is stated that the practice of sustainable agriculture has been around for a long time and involves a wide range of techniques known by many names.

The systematic process of growing plants, rearing animals, and managing land in order to produce food, fiber, and other necessities is known as agriculture. It is among the most significant and ancient human endeavors, serving as the foundation for economic growth in numerous communities. Agriculture has changed dramatically in recent years as a result of improvements in farming methods and technology. Precision farming, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and better irrigation systems are examples of this contemporary shift, which aims to increase output while reducing environmental impact. Furthermore, agriculture encompasses a variety of environmental, social, and economic aspects in addition to the production of food.

Concept of information dissemination

The process of disseminating facts to the general public is known as information dissemination. Over the past few decades, the methods by which individuals and organizations disseminate knowledge have multiplied dramatically. Humans initially disseminated information through oral and visual ways, then through written communication. These fundamental tools are the foundation of all communication methods. As stated by Taylor (2020), dissemination of information refers to the distributing of a company's or customer-specific information to the public, whether through printed or electronic documents or other forms of media. "Responding to employee requests for "access to information" or using information within the organization are not considered forms of "dissemination of information."

Disseminating information involves telling people about new or current knowledge. It can be accomplished by technology, writing, or speech. Since it guarantees that information reaches its target audience, dissemination is an essential part of effective communication. The term is most commonly used in the context of news media, but it can also apply to other forms of communication, such as marketing or advertising (Bhasin, 2023). The process by which facts are made available to the wider public is known as information dissemination. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the way that people and organizations convey information. It is no longer restricted to in-person interactions or textual letters. The method that information is distributed has changed significantly as a result of technology.

The methodical delivery of scientific and technological knowledge to those who require it is known as information dissemination. The results of research must be made

available to as many people as possible in an understandable and accessible manner if it is to have the greatest influence. To make sure that individuals receive the most accurate and up-to-date information possible to safeguard themselves and their loved ones, information dissemination is essential.

Journalism and dissemination of agricultural related news

Since the media is essential in bridging the information gap between farmers, policymakers, and the general public, journalism has a great deal of potential for spreading news about agriculture. Social media, mobile technologies, and digital journalism have opened up new avenues for the timely and accurate distribution of agricultural information. Better agricultural practice decision-making and greater farmer understanding have resulted from this. However, the following is a list of these prospects:

Enhancing Farmer Access to Information: Farmers can obtain vital information about market trends, climate change, and emerging agricultural technologies through journalism. Rural farmers can now get real-time updates thanks to mobile technology, which enables them to make well-informed decisions that increase output. According to a study by Srinivas et al. (2020), the use of digital media in agricultural news dissemination has improved farmers' awareness and decision-making capabilities, particularly in developing countries.

Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Practices: By showcasing articles about organic farming, climate-smart agriculture, and the effects of farming methods on the environment, journalism plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Agriculture-focused media channels provide forums for professionals to exchange insights on sustainability, thereby influencing public opinion and policy choices. For instance, Ramesh and Prasad (2019) suggest that agricultural journalism has a pivotal role in promoting eco-friendly farming practices by disseminating critical information on the benefits of sustainable agriculture.

Influencing Agricultural Policy: By offering a platform for discussion between legislators, farmers, and agricultural specialists, the media significantly influences agricultural policy. Journalists who focus on agricultural news can draw attention to pressing problems like market access, government subsidies, and agricultural loans. However, by raising awareness of topics like food security and rural development, the media significantly influences agricultural policies.

Building Trust through Accurate Reporting: By guaranteeing the accuracy of information, agricultural journalism also has the ability to increase public and farmer trust. When it comes to reporting on crop diseases, agricultural breakthroughs, and government initiatives, this is particularly crucial. Reputable reporting can improve stakeholder relations and provide a deeper understanding of the agriculture industry. A study by Baker et al. (2019) highlights how accurate and ethical journalism in agriculture leads to increased public trust and better stakeholder collaboration.

Fostering Collaboration between Agricultural Stakeholders: Farmers, extension agencies, and agricultural researchers can work together more successfully through journalism. Journalists act as go-betweens, converting intricate study results into information that

farmers and the broader public can understand. Research indicates that the media platforms have been successful in promoting partnerships that improve agricultural innovation, especially in the fields of biotechnology and precision farming.

Challenges and Future Prospects: Notwithstanding these encouraging advancements, there are still obstacles in the way of agricultural news distribution. Significant obstacles include poor training for agricultural journalists, a lack of coverage of rural topics, and restricted internet access in rural areas. However, with to developments in mobile journalism, the growing popularity of niche journalism, and rising investments in rural connection, the future looks bright.

Effect of journalism on agricultural related news

By influencing agricultural regulations, enhancing access to important information, and influencing public opinion, journalism has had a significant impact on news about agriculture. The effect and reach of agricultural news have increased due to the changing landscape of digital journalism, which has improved the information exchange between farmers, consumers, and policymakers. Among these effects are:

Bridging the Knowledge Gap: In order to bridge the knowledge gap between the farming community and agricultural academics, journalism is essential. Journalism makes sure that breakthroughs and best practices reach the people who need them most by demythologizing complex scientific results and disseminating them through easily accessible media platforms. Increasing yields and sustainable farming methods have resulted from farmers' increasing awareness of better farming practices, soil management, and insect control thanks in large part to the media.

Shaping Public Perception: Public opinion and purchasing habits can be influenced by media coverage of agriculture. In addition to showcasing farming achievements, journalism raises awareness of issues that farmers deal with, like food security, climate change, and the effects of governmental regulations. Additionally, the public's knowledge of sustainable consumption has grown as a result of the media's emphasis on agricultural issues, which has also increased demand for environmentally friendly and organic products.

Impact on Agricultural Policy: Agricultural policy is significantly impacted by journalism as well. The media serves as a watchdog by keeping legislators responsible and bringing important agricultural concerns to the public's attention through in-depth coverage and investigative reporting. Reporters that cover agriculture and rural areas frequently highlight inconsistencies in government subsidies or programs, which leads to changes in policy. Nonetheless, persistent media pressure has improved policy interventions in rural development and agricultural funding in a number of African nations.

Improving Agricultural Productivity: Journalism has made a direct contribution to increased agricultural output by disseminating accurate and timely information. News stories can assist farmers maximize their operations by providing real-time information on weather, market pricing, and technological advancements—especially in the digital age. However, Kumar and Singh (2018) found that the use of mobile-based agricultural journalism

significantly increased farmers' access to market prices and weather forecasts, enabling better decision-making and risk management.

Promoting Agricultural Innovation: Innovation in agriculture is also fueled by journalism. Conversely, media platforms work as channels for promoting the use of innovative agricultural technologies and methods. Higher agricultural productivity and efficiency are a result of agricultural journalism's role in pushing breakthroughs like digital farming tools, biotechnology, and precision farming.

Media as an Educational Tool: In agriculture, journalism is a valuable teaching tool that helps farmers learn about government programs, sustainable practices, and new techniques. Farmers can receive education on important subjects like disease prevention, water conservation, and climate resilience through media campaigns. A study by Glover and Asante (2021) highlighted that educational programs on radio and television have been particularly effective in improving farmers' knowledge in rural areas, where access to the internet is limited.

Challenges of Journalism in the Dissemination of Agricultural-Related News

News regarding agriculture must be widely disseminated in order to educate the public, legislators, and farmers on breakthroughs and crucial practices. However, a number of obstacles prevent agricultural journalism from being as successful as it could be. The following are the difficulties journalists face when disseminating news about agriculture:

Complexity of Agricultural Issues: The intricacy and variety of agricultural concerns provide one of the main obstacles for agricultural journalists. Biotechnology, climate change, and sustainable practices are just a few of the many themes that fall under the umbrella of agriculture and all call for specific expertise. The technical know-how required to properly report on these intricate topics is sometimes lacking among journalists. This disparity may cause important problems to be oversimplified or misrepresented, which would ultimately impair public comprehension and participation. For example, the public may misunderstand the significance of climate-smart agriculture for sustainability and food security if media do not adequately explain its subtleties.

Misinformation: Another major issue affecting agricultural journalism is misinformation. False or misleading information on agricultural technologies and practices has become more widely disseminated as a result of the growth of digital media. According to Tandoc (2018), sensationalized headlines and unfounded claims can dominate news cycles, overshadowing accurate reporting. As demonstrated by discussions about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the use of pesticides, this false information can lead to public mistrust of legal agricultural methods. Effective journalism is weakened as a result, and consumers could base their decisions on inaccurate information.

Limited Access to Resources: The field of agricultural journalism is made more difficult by a lack of training and resources. Many journalists might not have access to up-to-date research, expert interviews, and training opportunities, particularly those employed by underfunded or rural media organizations. As highlighted by Jansen and van Wezel (2018), this lack of resources can lead to poorly researched articles that fail to inform or engage readers

adequately. Furthermore, journalists could find it difficult to keep up with the quickly changing agricultural technologies and practices if they lack continual professional development.

Audience Engagement: Successful agricultural journalism requires effective communication techniques, but they can also be difficult. Journalists have to strike a balance between the requirement to engage a variety of audiences and the need to give factual information. As described by Walford and Houghton (2019), agricultural topics can be perceived as dry or overly technical, making it difficult to capture the public's interest. To make agricultural news more approachable and interesting, journalists must use relatable tales and storytelling approaches. But striking this equilibrium calls for talent and originality, which some reporting attempts might lack.

Conclusion

Journalism plays a critical role in the dissemination of agricultural-related news, bridging the gap between farmers, policymakers, and the public. While the sector faces challenges such as limited media coverage, the digital divide, and a lack of specialized knowledge in agricultural reporting, there are promising prospects ahead. The rise of digital platforms, mobile technology, and partnerships between media organizations and agricultural institutions offer new opportunities for improved coverage and access to vital information. To overcome existing challenges, it is essential to enhance the skills of agricultural journalists, promote collaboration, and expand digital access to ensure that farmers, particularly in rural areas, are well-informed and empowered to adopt sustainable practices.

Recommendations

1. Media organizations should prioritize agricultural reporting by creating specialized departments or segments dedicated to agriculture. This would ensure consistent coverage and highlight the importance of agriculture to the economy and society.
2. Journalists need to receive specialized training in agricultural topics to enhance their understanding of farming practices, technologies, and policies. This would improve the accuracy and depth of reporting, making the information more valuable and relevant to farmers and stakeholders.
3. Governments and agricultural institutions should invest in bridging the digital divide by providing internet access and digital literacy training in rural areas. This would enable farmers to access online agricultural news platforms and real-time updates on critical issues such as weather patterns, market prices, and farming techniques.

REFERENCES

- Aina, L. O. (2020). *The role of traditional media in agricultural information dissemination in rural areas.*
- Baker, H., Kumi, G., & Tetteh, L. (2019). Ethical Journalism in Agriculture: The Need for Accurate Reporting. *Journal of Media Ethics.* 32(1): 45-67.
- Bhasin, H. (2023). Information Dissemination – Definition, Types and Importance. Available at: <https://www.marketing91.com/information-dissemination/>
- Ekanem, J. E., Afia O. E. & Udoh, F. (2024). Assessment Of Cat Fish Pond Construction And Stocking Skills Training Needs For Self-Employment By Retired Secondary School Teachers. *International Journal of Education and Scientific Research Findings.* 6(1): 100-114.
- Ekong, S., & Akpan, U. (2017). *Strengthening agricultural journalism through collaboration between media and agricultural institutions.*
- Glover, M., & Asante, A. (2021). The Educational Impact of Radio Programs on Rural Farmers. *Journal of Rural Development.* 44(2); 56-72.
- Godswill G. O. & James, C. (2024). The Role Of English Communication In Journalism Practice: Investigating The Merits. *Eurasian Journal Of Modern Media And Communication.* 3(1): 17-26.
- Godswill, G. O., & James, C. (2024). The role of English communication in journalism practice: investigating the merits. *Eurasian Journal of Modern Media and Communication.* 3(1): 17-26
- Ikems, K., & Basse, M. (2023). People's perception and trust in Radio journalism: A Panacea to mitigating of fake news from social media: *Universal Journal of Education, Science and Technology.* Afrischolar Discovery Repository (Annex)
- Isaac, E. B. & David, U. E. (2021). Regular Maintenance Of Library Buildings: The Prospects, Benefits And Challenges. *Library and Information Science Compendium.* Chapter 13.
- Jansen, H. J., & van Wezel, A. P. (2018). The future of agricultural journalism: Challenges and opportunities. *Journalism Studies,* 19(5), 696-710.
- Kumar, V., & Singh, P. (2018). Mobile-Based Agricultural Journalism: A Tool for Enhancing Farmer Productivity. *Journal of Agricultural Technology.* 22(1): 95-108.
- Musa, Y., & Ibrahim, A. (2017). *Agricultural journalism and the information gap in developing countries.*
- Obidike, N., Ezeano, C., & Ugwuoke, C. (2018). *Challenges facing agricultural journalism in Africa: A Nigerian perspective.*

- Omojunikanbi, N. C. (2024). Investigating the roles of effective journalism practices in health crisis management: a case of cholera outbreak in Nigeria. *International Journal of Modern Health Systems and Medical Sciences*. 2(1): 85-94
- Piate, C. R, Udongwo, G. E. & Etim, G. J. (2022). A Critical Assessment of Drone Technology: Its Prospects and Roles in Sustainable Agriculture and National Food Security in Nigeria. *World Atlas International Journal of Education & Management*. 5(1): 38-51.
- Rahman, M., & Adekunle, O. (2019). *The role of digital media in disseminating agricultural information to rural farmers*.
- Raj, S. Rastogi, M. Prajapati, A & Kumar, E (2023). *Morden Concepts of Agriculture*. Golden Leaf Publisher.
- Ramesh, K., & Prasad, V. (2019). Media Coverage of Sustainable Agricultural Practices: A Global Perspective. *Environmental Media*. 27(6): 389-405.
- Srinivas, P., Rao, S., & Patel, A. (2020). The Impact of Digital Platforms on Agricultural Decision Making. *Journal of Digital Agriculture*. 14(1): 75-89.
- Tandoc, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining “fake news”: A typology of scholarly definitions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 137-153.
- Taylor, C. (2020). Information Dissemination. Available at: <https://cyberhoot.com/cybrary/dissemination-of-information/#:~:text=Dissemination%20of%20Information%20refers%20to,or%20other>
- Walford, A., & Houghton, R. (2019). Engaging the public in agricultural issues: The role of storytelling in agricultural journalism. *Journal of Communication*, 69(2), 245-263.