

Agricultural Extension Worker Training Needs Survey. The Case Of Irrigation Schemes In The Midlands Province Of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Agricultural extension plays a very important role in improving crop production at the extension worker/ farmer inter-face on smallholder irrigation schemes through the provision of technical and advisory services. In the study 71% of the extension workers had a formal training at National Certificate level, while 28 % was at Certificate and Diploma levels. Very limited and relevant on the job training was provided to the resident extension workers in the last five to ten years. Twenty-eight percent of extension workers received no training at all, forty-three percent received training in technical and relevant courses while the remaining twenty-eight percent received training in one relevant and one non-relevant course. Out of a combined list of thirteen pest and diseases mostly found in horticultural crops, one maize pest (*Busseola fusca*) was known to all respondents, five pests and diseases were known by some extension workers, while the control of eight pests and diseases that included early blight (*Alternaria solani*), late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*), bean stem maggot (*Ophiomyia* spp), fruit fly (*Dacus* spp) and Red Spider mite (*Tetranychus* spp) were completely unknown to all the respondents. Extension workers indicated a need for training in technical subjects like pest and disease identification and control to close the knowledge gap in order to facilitate provision of effective extension services to farmers.

Keywords: Smallholder, Extension and advisory services, Needs assessment, Formal qualification, on the job training.