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**MASTERS IN FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
(PRO)**

Review the ethical considerations for an extension agent in Zimbabwe and develop your own code of conduct for extension staff in your organisation

Question 1: Review the ethical considerations for an extension agent in Zimbabwe and develop your own code of conduct for extension staff in your organisation

Introduction

Zimbabwe's agricultural industry depends heavily on extension officers, who make major contributions to the nation's food security, economic expansion, and rural development (Mupangwa, et al. 2017). Some of the responsibilities of an extension agent include; disseminating new technologies and farming practices; training farmers indifferent skills; providing guidance on best practices including pests and disease management; empowering small scale farmers; linking farmers with markets; assisting farmers adopt to climate change; rural development and so on (Mupangwa et al., 2017). Extension personnel need to continue to be credible and trustworthy to communities and farms. According to Mupangwa et al. (2017), unethical behaviour can sour relationships and reduce the efficacy of programs. To effectively serve various communities, extension agents need to be cognizant of and respectful of local practices, values, and beliefs (Chitata et al., 2019). According to the Zimbabwe Agricultural Extension Services Policy (2019), agents may handle sensitive material; confidentiality must be upheld to foster confidence and prevent harm. According to Mavhura et al. (2020), agents are accountable for overseeing resources and documenting program outcomes. Transparency and accountability are guaranteed by ethical conduct. Regardless of a farmer's gender, age, or socioeconomic standing, extension agents are required to guarantee that they have equitable access to services and opportunities (FAO, 2014).

In Zimbabwe agricultural extension is crucial. when considering the ethical responsibilities of extension agents in Zimbabwe, several critical factors come into play. Respect for local customs and traditions is paramount in ensuring effective communication and engagement with the communities they serve.

Definition of Key terms

Ethics

Ethics refers to principles by which to assess behaviour as right or wrong, good or bad, (Edwards, 2008).

Code of Conduct

A code of conduct is a set of values, rule, and principles, outlining what employers expect from staff within an organisation (Ivan A., 2022). It is set of rules or behaviour expected of an agricultural extension agent.

Ethical Considerations for an Extension Agent in Zimbabwe

There are various ethical consideration for extension agents in Zimbabwe.

- **Confidentiality**
- **Impartiality**
- **Respect**
- **Accountability**
- **Competence**
- **Integrity**
- **Transparency and honesty**
- **Gender and cultural sensitivity**
- **Equity, diversity and inclusivity**
- **Conflict of interest**
- **Reporting**
- **Professional development**

Confidentiality

Extension agents have fundamental obligations to respect privacy and confidentiality in their dealings. Ensuring the confidentiality of personal data disclosed by participants in consultations or programs is crucial for upholding ethical norms and fostering confidence. Extension agents are essential in guaranteeing the confidentiality and security of sensitive information supplied by community members in Zimbabwe, a country that places a high value on privacy.

To preserve the dignity and privacy of people they assist, extension agents should give top priority to maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information. In addition to respecting moral principles, this dedication to confidentiality creates a secure atmosphere where people

feel free to discuss their worries and difficulties. Extension agents can build trusting relationships with community members by honouring their privacy, and trust is a prerequisite for productive communication and collaboration (Katsvanga & Mupangwa, 2018).

Confidentiality is not only required by law but also by morality in an environment where private information is frequently held securely. In order to ensure that personal information is only used for the intended purposes and is never revealed without agreement, extension agents must handle personal data carefully. According to Brown (2022), extension agents can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of their programs by adhering to strong confidentiality rules, which indicate their commitment to preserving individuals' autonomy and dignity.

Impartiality

Regardless of a farmer's gender, age, social standing, or political affiliation, extension agents have an obligation to treat them equally and impartially. This guarantees equal access to opportunities and resources for all (Chitata, et al., 2017). therefore, extension agents should Understand the following: farmers' political connections or views should not be the basis for discrimination by extension agents; no particular tribe or ethnic group shall be discriminated against when providing services (Katsvanga & Mupangwa, 2018); farmers of both sexes and of all ages ought to get the same support and attention; agents shouldn't give preference to powerful or affluent farmers over marginalized or smallholder farmers; and farmers in all areas, even isolated or underdeveloped ones, should have access to services (Mavhura & Manyati, 2019). Because of Zimbabwe's complicated political past, varied cultural environment, and social inequality, objectivity is essential. To guarantee that their work helps all farmers, regardless of their origin or status, extension workers must negotiate these relationships.

Respect

According to Mupangwa & Chitata (2018), extension personnel ought to honour the cultural customs, knowledge, and beliefs of farmers. This entails appreciating conventional farming methods (such as monoculture, crop rotation, irrigation and so on) and applying them to contemporary farming approaches. contemporary farming approaches include smart agriculture, conservation agriculture, vertical farming, permaculture, precision agriculture, organic farming, agroecology and so on.

Accountability

Manyati & Mavhura (2020) state that the choices and actions of extension agents are their own responsibility. In addition to accepting responsibility for their errors, they ought to respond to farmers, stakeholders, and their company.

Competence

For extension agents to deliver quality services, they need to keep up to date on their knowledge and abilities. This entails keeping up with emerging technology, scientific discoveries, and industry best practices (Chitata & Mupangwa, 2019). Chitata, et al. (2019) discovered that due to inadequate resources and infrastructure, some extension agents are not competent to perform their duties resulting in decreased agricultural productivity and income for farmers. Manyati (2020) and Mavhura (2019) noticed that high staff turnover and brain drain coupled with limited access to information and technology have been a recipe for lack of competence for most extension agents which have resulted in disillusionment with extension services and reduced trust from farmers, consequently increasing farmers' vulnerability to climate change and pests.

Integrity

The foundation of extension staff members' ethical behaviour is their professional integrity. Credibility-building and preserving the integrity of extension services depend on upholding honesty, transparency, and professionalism in all contacts. Extension agents can increase their efficacy and influence in the communities they serve by acting morally and upholding strict standards of behaviour (Anderson, 2020). It is expected of extension agents to accept accountability for their deeds. Exaggeration and factual misrepresentation might result in improper behaviour.

Transparency and honesty

Establishing trust with farmers requires being truthful and open. Extension agents ought to give truthful information, refrain from making deceptive claims, and express their intentions clearly (Mavhura & Manyati, 2019). To prevent miscommunication, clear communication is essential. It is important for extension agents to be transparent about their goals, strategies, and standards (Mupangwa & Chitata, 2019).

Gender and cultural sensitivity

Extension agents ought to be cognizant of and considerate of regional traditions, values, and beliefs. This entails acknowledging and utilizing customs with consideration for their work (Manyati & Mavhura, 2019). According to FAO (2012) and IFAD (2016), agents should recognize that men and women have distinct roles and obligations when it comes to making decisions for the home and farm and to take note of differences between genders when it comes to knowledge, technology, credit, and land. They went on to say communication strategies should be tailor made to the requirements and preferences of both men and women and that agents should promote equal chances for men and women to participate in and make decisions. It goes without saying that tools, technology design, workload and time management should be gender appropriate. In some instances, there may be cases of gender based violence on farming households. The effects of these GBV acts have to be recognized, confronted, and mitigated (Katsvanga, et al., 2018).

Equity, diversity and Inclusivity

In Zimbabwe, extension agents prioritize equity and inclusivity. It is imperative to guarantee that services are inclusive and available to all members of the community in order to advance social justice and fair results. Extension agents are vital in bridging gaps and promoting inclusivity within communities in a nation with a diverse population and historical inequities. Extension agents can improve inclusive and sustainable development methods by aggressively addressing inequities and engaging marginalized people. This entails identifying and removing obstacles that keep particular populations—such as women, individuals with impairments, or residents of remote areas—from using extension services. By means of focused outreach and customized initiatives, extension agents may guarantee equitable access to extension services for every member of the community.

Encouraging fairness and inclusion necessitates more than just offering services; it also calls for a thorough comprehension of the particular requirements and difficulties that various demographic groups experience. Extension workers need to actively seek out viewpoints from underrepresented groups, include them in the decision-making process, and create programs that are tailored to their particular need. Extension agents may empower marginalized communities, elevate their voices, and pave the way for social and economic growth by placing a high priority on inclusivity.

Extension agents are essential in fostering social justice and cohesion in Zimbabwe's dynamic social terrain, where historical injustices still affect people's access to opportunities and

resources. Through their advocacy of fairness and diversity, extension agents have the potential to enhance the resilience, cohesiveness, and prosperity of their communities that thrive on the principles of fairness and respect for diversity (Williams, 2021). According to Katsvanga (2020), Diversity takes participation and cultural sensitivity into account. Extension agents must handle these cultural sensitivities with caution and respect because of Zimbabwe's rich cultural diversity. Extension agents must have a thorough understanding of the subtleties of traditional practices, beliefs, and values in order to effectively customize their interventions and guarantee that they are respectful of and relevant to local cultures. It is not just polite to match interventions with the beliefs and traditions of the community; it is also a fundamental component of ethical behaviour. Extension agents should show respect for the community's history and encourage a sense of ownership among participants by incorporating regional customs into their activities. By enhancing already-existing community structures and traditions, this strategy not only increases the acceptability and effectiveness of interventions but also fosters sustainable outcomes. Building trust and fostering meaningful relationships with community members is contingent upon acknowledging and appreciating these cultural nuances, which go beyond simple sensitivity. The community is more likely to accept extension agents and view them as partners in their development process if they actively participate in and respect local customs.

Conflict of Interest

Another crucial ethical factor for extension workers to address is managing conflicts of interest. Maintaining objectivity and impartiality in decision-making processes requires being open about any potential conflicts and acting proactively to resolve them. Extension agents can preserve stakeholders' trust and guarantee the moral provision of services by managing conflicts of interest with accountability and integrity (Clark, 2019). This trust serves as the cornerstone for productive teamwork and communication, which in turn leads to the successful execution of extension initiatives that genuinely meet the needs and goals of the community (Johnson, 2023).

Reporting

Precise reporting is necessary for program assessment and enhancement. Regular updates on the status, difficulties, and effects of programs should be given by extension agents.

Professional development

Extension agents must pursue ongoing professional development in order to stay up to date on industry best practices, cutting-edge technology, and moral standards. Continual learning and skill development not only improves the calibre of services rendered, but it also shows a dedication to one's own development and the highest calibre of extension work. Extension agents can effectively contribute to sustainable development projects and adjust to changing problems by placing a high priority on continual professional development (Roberts, 2018). Respecting ethical principles improves the legitimacy of agricultural extension workers and makes a significant contribution to the aims of sustainable development, which improves food security.

Code of Conduct for Santa Farmers Extension Staff

Introduction

The employment code of conduct for extension staff, or the "Code," shall be cited in reference to this text. Extension agents understand the importance of disciplined behaviour in achieving extension objectives.

1. Conflict of interest

Potential conflicts of interest must be avoided by extension agents. Any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed to the CEO by way of the organization's human resources management. It is improper to conceal a conflict of interest.

2. Professionalism

Every extension agent has to behave themselves with professionalism and ethics through their dress code and language of communication with farmers.

3. Respect

We urge extension agents to treat farmers and other stakeholders with respect and acknowledge the diversity of cultures. Farmers should be greeted in a manner that's respectful.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality We pledge to uphold and protect the confidentiality of stakeholders' data and information. We will only use the information we collect for the

purposes allowed by law, our security policy, and privacy policy. No official documents leave the office.

5. Unethical Behaviour

It is not recommended for extension agents to accept gifts. Bribery with respect to any external or internal party is forbidden so is favouritism, misrepresentation, and misuse of resources.

6. Property Misuse - Company property, including cars, buildings, furniture, copy rights, patents, and software, should not be abused by extension agents. Property owned by the company should be shielded against harm and vandalism.

7. Policies - The policies that govern extension work should be reviewed and followed by all extension agents.

8. Disciplinary Action

Extension agents who wilfully violate or neglect to abide by the code of conduct shall face disciplinary action. Depending on how serious the infraction was, different disciplinary measures will be taken.

Potential sanctions:

- a) Verbal or Written Warning
- b) Final Written warning
- c) Dismissal
- d) Demotion
- e) Detraction of benefits for stipulated of time
- f) Legal action may be taken in cases of theft, embezzlement, corruption and other unlawful behaviours.

By abiding by this code of conduct, we show that we are dedicated to using effective extension techniques to advance food security.

This code of conduct must to be effectively conveyed to all staff members, included into staff training programs, and routinely evaluated and modified to reflect changing best extension practices.

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