

ASSESSMENT OF FARMERS AWARENESS AND PRACTICE OF HEALTH SAFETY MEASURES IN THE USE OF AGROCHEMICALS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The broad objective of the study was to assess farmers' awareness and practice of health safety measures in the use of agrochemicals in Niger state, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to describe the socio-economic and demographic features of the farmers, identify the common agrochemicals being used by the farmers, determine the farmers' awareness about safety measures in the use of agrochemicals and ascertain the regularity at which the farmers' have put these health safety measures into practice in their agricultural activities. A total of 150 farmers were randomly sampled from the three geo-political zones of the State, (that is. Interview Schedule was employed for primary data collection. Data collected were analyzed using Descriptive) and Inferential Statistics (Chi-Square and Analysis of Variance, ANOVA). Findings showed that majority of the farmers (81.4%) were within 21-50 years old, mostly male (92.0%), with low level of formal education but most of them (70.7%) had more than 20 years farming experience. Results also showed that Yam and Maize crops were being cultivated by majority of the farmers. All the farmers used N.P.K. fertilizer, while between 41.3 and 74.1 percent of them did use Atrazine, Weed off, Apron Plus, Fernasan-D and Urea. Results on farmers' awareness showed that at least 56.7percent of the farmers were variously aware of 70 percent (seven out of 10) of the health safety measures. Also, at least 62.7 percent of the farmers practiced each of the first seven most aware health safety measures, while at least 36.6 percent of the farmers practiced 60 percent of the health safety measures always. Chi-Square test indicated significant relationships between both educational attainment and farming experiences of the farmers, and their awareness of health safety measures ($X^2 = 7.84, P < 0.05$ and $X^2 = 6.52, P < 0.05$ respectively). This suggests that the higher the educational attainments and farming experiences of the farmers, the more their awareness about health safety measures and vice-versa. Also, Analysis of Variance results showed statistical significant differences between actual practice ($F = 4.81, P < 0.05$), regularity of practice of health safety measures ($F = 3.34, P < 0.05$) and farmers' awareness of the safety measures. It could be concluded that despite farmers' awareness of health safety measures, not many of them practiced most of these measures always. It is recommended in addition to creating more awareness; farmers should be given adequate orientation about the importance of health safety measures.

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