

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to use a series of adult educational programs conducted in a developing country as a case study of adult extension education. The specific objectives were to describe an adult education program in sustainable agriculture in a selected country in Africa, identify problems and develop an improved adult agricultural education program model for the delivery of the technical information.

Training programs on postharvest loss minimization and storage were conducted in Ethiopia from 1999 to 2003. This program was a part of a five-year program by Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteer Overseas Cooperative Agency (ACDI/VOCA) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to develop agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia. The program was administered to cooperative managers and promoters with the purpose of enhancing capacity and improving skills in postharvest loss minimization and storage. Participants were asked to share information regarding their experiences in postharvest loss minimization and storage that was used in this case study.

The study revealed major problems in postharvest losses and storage. Information and knowledge for postharvest loss minimization and storage did not reach most farmers. Participants acknowledged the many barriers that blocked flow of information for the grassroots farmers. Poverty, limited knowledge, infrastructure, poor government policies, drought and starvation were limiting factors to the adoption of postharvest loss minimization and storage.

Participants recognized need for educational programs for technical information for postharvest loss minimization and storage. Sources of information from schools, colleges, on-farm demonstrations, field days, seminars, workshops and visits to successful cooperatives were most useful strategies in agricultural education programs. A multidisciplinary team of experts need to work together in order to achieve a goal of postharvest loss minimization and storage. Needs assessments to be conducted working as a team of experts and farmers. The multidisciplinary team of experts could train cooperative managers, promoters and extension agents through formal and non-formal educational programs such as workshops, seminars and in-house training programs. Participants would then train cooperative workers and farmer leaders who would train farmers at the grassroots.