

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN CAMEROON

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Managers concerned with implementing knowledge management in their organizations today face a number of challenges in developing sound methods for this still emerging area of management practice. Both the growing literature on knowledge management and the advice offered by various knowledge management consultants; however, seem to advocate forms of knowledge management practice that often appear incomplete, inconsistent, and even contradictory. In this research author analyzed two fundamentally different approaches to identifying and managing knowledge in organizations. These two approaches are characterized here as the “tacit knowledge” approach and the “explicit knowledge” approach.

The challenge facing agricultural extension in the 21st century is how to develop sustainable approaches that go beyond extending technical knowledge to producers, to playing a leading role in helping small-scale farmers organize themselves for production, marketing and advocacy in ways that promote farmer empowerment.

The average yield of cocoa in Cameroon is low at 354 kg per hectare due to the age of the trees (up to half of all trees are above 30 years old), poor farm management and two major biotic constraints: black pod disease caused by *Pytophthora megakarya* and mirids, an insect pest that feeds on young shoots and pods. From the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s, when active cocoa extension was phased out due to declining state and donor support, SODECAO, the government agency responsible for cocoa improvement, trained farmers on farm management practices mainly through demonstrations. It also subsidized the cost of pesticides used to control black pod disease and mirids. Cocoa extension activities focused on blanket technical messages with much emphasis on understanding interactions within the cocoa agro-ecology and factors contributing to diseases and pests. While demonstrations may be an effective method for teaching farmers skills and practices such as pruning cocoa trees, Similarly, teaching farmers to spray fungicide on a calendar basis and mass spraying campaigns undertaken by government agents.

The objectives of impacting modern farming techniques are to increase farmers' yields and reduce pesticide use by encouraging good farm sanitation (pruning, shade management, weeding), rational pesticide use for black pod and mired management and improve farmers' knowledge of diseases and pests, crop physiology, and post-harvest operations.