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THE NATURE OF AGRICULTURAL INPUT SYSTEM TO FARMERS IN CENTRAL RIVER REGION OF THE GAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

This study on the nature of agricultural inputs was conducted in the Central River Region of the Gambia. The study examines the socio-economic background, nature of the input system to farmers and suggests strategies to improve farmers' access to inputs. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered through a cross-sectional survey of 384 randomly sampled farmers cultivating rice in the tidal ecologies during the 2016 cropping season. Pearson correlation was used to check the relationship between each of the input accessed and certain socio-economic characteristics with rice yield. The results obtained show that farmers obtained inputs from multiple sources such as those distributed to support rice growers by government, project or NGOs, seeds obtained from friends or relatives, seeds purchased in the local markets and those saved by farmers from their harvest. It also shows the supply of other inputs is very limited apart from the NERICA seeds variety meant for the upland rice production ecologies. It also shows that the distribution of agricultural inputs is inefficient for the fact that those poor and rural farmers do not easily receive adequate amounts and at the right time when needed. These indicate that inputs have major impact on rice yield and therefore, it is recommended that farmers' access to agricultural inputs should be improved in order to increase rice yields. This can be done by developing the input sector, provision of input subsidy and giving affordable credit to farmers.



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