



**REPRESENTATION AND PROMINENCE OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION IN
THE NIGERIAN PRESS**

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Abstract

This study examined the representation and prominence of agricultural information in selected Nigerian newspapers. Five nationally circulated newspapers Vanguard, The Nation, Business Day, the Sun, and Daily Trust were purposively selected for the study. A total of 420 newspaper editions containing 600 agricultural articles published over six months were analyzed using content analysis. Findings revealed that The Nation (33.3%) and Daily Trust (30%) provided the highest coverage of agricultural information, while Business Day recorded the least (9.3%). Food crop production (57.2%) and livestock farming (24.5%) dominated the subject matter, while irrigation farming (2.4%) and weather information (1.9%) were least reported. In terms of story type, straight news (30.5%) was the most prevalent, followed by feature stories (28.6%). However, agricultural stories received minimal front-page coverage (1.8%), indicating low editorial prioritization. Correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between agricultural and other economic news categories, suggesting that agriculture was not given special prominence. The study recommends that newspaper organizations diversify their agricultural coverage and increase the frequency and visibility of agro-related news to enhance public awareness, promote rural development, and strengthen food security in Nigeria.

Keywords: Agricultural journalism, Information dissemination, Food security, Agricultural information

1.0 Introduction

Agriculture has long been regarded as the backbone of rural, social, and economic development. Rural progress is closely linked to agricultural growth, and without it, meaningful development becomes difficult to achieve (Kuye, 2014). One of the primary channels through which farmers receive information necessary to improve agricultural production is communication. Agricultural communication focuses on disseminating relevant information to farmers to help them acquire the required skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to improve productivity and enhance their overall standard of living (Agbarevo, 2010). According to Idiku, Eta, and Elemi (2021), the emergence of modern news media, particularly internet-based and web-based platforms, has created new opportunities for achieving sustainable growth in the agricultural sector. The success of agricultural development therefore depends largely on the quality, accessibility, and dissemination of relevant information to farmers and other stakeholders.

Beyond merely transmitting information, newspapers perform an important interpretative function by providing background details, contextual explanations, and analyses of agricultural issues. This analytical strength distinguishes newspapers from many other media formats (Dennis and DeFleur, 2014). In an agrarian society, the media play a critical role in facilitating agricultural innovation, communicating policies, and educating farmers on improved production practices (Black *et al.*, 2015). Obinne (2016) identifies several sources of agricultural information available to farmers,

including radio, television, extension agents, cooperative societies, newspapers, magazines, mobile phones, printed materials, libraries, and the internet. These diverse communication channels collectively contribute to the transformation of the world into a global information village.

The press plays a vital role in national development by serving as a bridge between policymakers, researchers, and the general public. In the context of agriculture Nigeria's largest employer of labour and a key contributor to national food security the press is expected to shape public understanding, influence policy discourse, and enhance farmers' awareness of modern production techniques. Agriculture remains a major sector of the Nigerian economy, contributing about 24% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing more than 70% of the population (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). Despite this significant contribution, agricultural reporting in Nigerian newspapers has often been overshadowed by political, entertainment, and conflict-related news, resulting in the underrepresentation of important agricultural development issues (Eko, 2018; Nnadi and Ezeh, 2019).

The way agriculture is represented in the media largely determines how audiences perceive its importance and the level of attention it receives from policymakers and investors. According to McQuail (2010), media framing and agenda-setting processes influence public priorities by determining which issues receive coverage and how they are presented. Previous studies have shown that Nigerian newspapers frequently

emphasize crisis-oriented agricultural stories, such as herdsmen–farmers conflicts and rising food prices, rather than focusing on agricultural innovations, technological advancements, or success stories in food production (Akpabio & Udoma, 2004; Odoemelam and Okorie, 2016). Such narrow thematic framing weakens the connection between agricultural research institutions, rural farmers, and the broader society.

Furthermore, the prominence given to agricultural information often measured through factors such as placement, frequency of publication, and headline size reflects the editorial value assigned to agricultural issues within the media landscape. Research by Fawole and Olasinde (2012) indicates that consistent visibility of agricultural stories enhances farmers' access to new innovations and promotes public discourse on food security. However, many Nigerian newspapers provide irregular and superficial coverage of agricultural issues, often failing to adequately contextualize government agricultural policies, climate change impacts, and farmer-support programmes (Akinwale, 2017). This situation creates an information gap between agricultural stakeholders and the public, thereby hindering effective agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development.

Given these realities, examining the representation and prominence of agricultural information in Nigerian

newspapers becomes essential. Such an assessment not only reveals the editorial tendencies of the Nigerian press but also highlights the extent to which agricultural journalism contributes to national food security discourse and rural transformation. Understanding how agricultural news is framed and prioritized can therefore inform strategies for strengthening the role of the media in promoting agricultural innovation, policy awareness, and farmer empowerment.

2.0 Materials and Methods (Methodology)

Study Area: This study was conducted in Nigeria, a West African country with a diverse and culturally rich people having a range of geographical features and characteristics. Nigeria is bordered by several countries, to the north with Niger, to the east by Chad and Cameroon; to the west by Benin Republic and to the south by a coastline along the Gulf of Guinea, with the Atlantic Ocean. The country has six geo-political zones and thirty-six states. Nigeria spans approximately from 4° to 14° north latitude and 3° to 15° east longitude. Nigeria experiences a variety of climates where the southern coastal regions have a tropical rainforest climate with high humidity and abundant rainfall. Moving northward, the climate transits to a tropical wet and dry climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. The northern regions, especially in the northeast, have a semi-arid climate with low rainfall. Rainfall patterns in Nigeria vary by region and season.



Fig 1: Showing the map of the study area

2.1 Sampling Technique and Sample Size:

A purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of newspapers based on their national coverage, editorial influence, and wide readership across Nigeria. Accordingly, five national dailies Vanguard, The Nation, Business Day, The Sun, and Daily Trust were purposively selected as the units of analysis. Systematic sampling method was used to select specific editions for content analysis. Daily editions were chosen on an alternate-week basis, resulting in a total of fourteen (14) editions per month for a period of six months. This approach yielded eighty-four (84) editions per newspaper, culminating in a grand total of four hundred and twenty (420) editions across the five newspapers. From these editions, a total of six hundred (600) agricultural-related articles were identified and analyzed.

3.0 Result and Discussion

3.1 Distribution of agricultural stories by daily Newspapers

Table 1 presents the distribution of reported agricultural stories among the five selected daily newspapers in Nigeria. The findings indicate that The Nation accounted for the highest proportion of agricultural news coverage at 33.3%, followed by Daily Trust with 30%, Vanguard with 14.3%, The Sun with 13%, and Business Day with the least coverage at 9.3%. These results reveal notable variations in the level of attention devoted to agricultural issues across the newspapers, with the highest coverage being more than three times that of the lowest. The disparity in coverage may be attributed to differences in editorial priorities, target readership, and institutional policy orientations of the newspapers. For instance, The Nation and Daily Trust have historically demonstrated greater interest in socio-economic and developmental reporting,

which may explain their relatively higher agricultural content. Conversely, Business Day a newspaper with a strong focus on corporate and financial news appears to allocate less space to agricultural topics.

This pattern of uneven reportage is consistent with the findings of Degarr (2015), who

observed that Nigerian newspapers tend to report agricultural issues irregularly and selectively, depending on editorial focus and perceived audience interest. The result underscores the need for a more balanced and consistent representation of agricultural information across media platforms, given the sector’s vital role in national development and food security.

Table 1: Distribution of Agricultural Stories by Daily Newspapers

	Newspapers	Frequency	Percentages
1	Vanguard	86	14.3
2	The Nation	200	33.3
3	Business Day	56	9.3
4	The Sun	78	13.0
5	Daily Trust	180	30.0
	Total	600	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

3.2 Types of Agricultural News Reported in Daily Newspapers

Table 2 presents the distribution of the types of agricultural news reported across the selected Nigerian newspapers. The analysis shows that straight news constituted the largest share of agricultural coverage at 30.5%, followed by feature stories (28.6%), interviews (21.2%), and opinion articles (19.7%). Among the individual newspapers, The Nation recorded 10% for straight news, 6.75% for interviews, and 11.7% for feature stories, while Daily Trust had the highest representation in opinion news with 8.3%. The dominance of straight news suggests that

Nigerian newspapers prioritize factual and timely reporting on agricultural issues, focusing on events, policies, and sectoral developments. This reflects an editorial emphasis on the dissemination of concrete information rather than analytical or interpretive content. The prominence of straight news also indicates an effort by newspapers to keep readers informed about agricultural programmes, government initiatives, and market trends that directly affect farmers and consumers.

The relatively high proportion of feature stories (28.6%) demonstrates that newspapers also allocate considerable

attention to in-depth reporting and analysis of agricultural themes. Such features often provide background information and context on agricultural challenges, innovations, and success stories, thus enhancing public understanding of key issues in the sector. The inclusion of interviews (21.2%) highlights a growing interest in giving voice to diverse stakeholders including farmers, extension officers, researchers, and policymakers thereby enriching the content with expert insights and personal experiences. However, opinion articles accounted for the lowest share (19.7%), indicating limited editorial

space for analytical commentary or advocacy-based discussions on agricultural policy and reform. Overall, this distribution reveals that while Nigerian newspapers maintain a commitment to factual reporting, there remains a need for deeper analytical and interpretive coverage that can stimulate informed debate and policy action on agricultural development. Similar findings were reported by Odoemelum and Okorie (2016), who noted that Nigerian newspapers tend to emphasize event-driven agricultural news rather than investigative or opinion-based reporting.

Table 2: Types of Agricultural News Coverage by Daily Newspapers

Newspapers	Vanguard		The Nation		Bus Day		The Sun		Daily Trust		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Straight news	20	3.3	60	10.0	16	2.7	35	5.8	52	8.7	30.5
Interviews	30	5.0	40	6.7	14	2.3	15	2.5	28	4.7	21.2
Feature news	20	3.3	70	11.7	14	2.3	18	3.0	50	8.3	28.6
Opinions	16	2.7	30	5.0	12	2.0	10	1.7	50	8.3	19.7
Total	86	14.3	200	33.4	56	9.3	78	13.0	180	30.0	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

3.3 News in Daily Newspapers in Nigeria

Table 3 presents data on the prominence of agricultural news across different sections of the selected Nigerian daily newspapers. The findings reveal that The Nation newspaper recorded the highest proportion of agricultural stories on the front page (0.7%), followed by Daily Trust (0.5%), while Vanguard, Business Day, and The Sun each

recorded 0.2%. Similarly, The Nation led in coverage within the editorial and opinion pages with 50%, followed by Daily Trust (33.3%), Vanguard and The Sun (5.8% each), and Business Day with the least at 3.3%. Notably, none of the newspapers published agricultural information in the special reports or supplements section, recording 0% coverage. The overall distribution indicates a

limited front-page visibility of agricultural news, with only 1.8% of agricultural content appearing in this prime space. This suggests that, in the hierarchy of editorial importance, agricultural issues are not typically considered headline material compared to topics such as politics, security, or entertainment. As front-page stories are usually reserved for the most sensational or urgent matters, the marginal inclusion of agriculture reflects the perception that agricultural issues may not attract immediate public attention or commercial value.

Conversely, the high concentration of agricultural content in editorial and opinion sections (98.2%) demonstrates that newspapers tend to engage with agricultural issues more deeply through analytical and interpretive writing rather than breaking news coverage. This approach may reflect an editorial preference for presenting agriculture within reflective or policy-oriented discussions, offering readers insights into the broader implications of agricultural practices, climate change, food security, and

government programmes. While this enhances the depth of coverage, it limits immediate visibility, as such pages generally receive less attention from casual readers. The complete absence of agricultural news in special reports and supplements indicates an underutilization of these sections for in-depth agricultural journalism. This could be due to editorial priorities that favor political or economic features, or perhaps a lack of specialized agricultural journalists to produce such content.

These findings align with the studies of Akpabio *et al.* (2004), Ita *et al.* (2013), and Ogesse and Sife (2014), who reported that agricultural news in Nigerian newspapers often receives low prominence and is rarely featured in leading sections. Collectively, this pattern underscores the need for Nigerian print media to re-evaluate their editorial strategies and accord greater visibility to agriculture, considering its central role in national development, employment, and food security.

Table 3: Prominence of coverage of agricultural information by Newspapers

Newspapers Total	Vanguard		The Nation		Bus Day		The Sun		Daily Trust		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Prominence											
Front page/Top Story Placement	1	0.2	4	0.7	1	0.2	1	0.2	3	0.5	1.8
Editorial and opinion Pieces	35	5.8	300	50.0	20	3.3	35	5.8	200	33.3	98.2
Special Reports and Supplements	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Awards and Recognition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	36	6.0	304	50.7	21	3.5	36	6.0	203	33.8	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

3.4 Correlation Analysis Between Agricultural News and Other News Category

Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients between agricultural news and other major news categories published in the selected Nigerian daily newspapers. The results show a positive and significant correlation between agricultural news and sports ($r = .860^*$), politics ($r = .915^{**}$), foreign news ($r = .890^*$), business ($r = .680$), entertainment ($r = .912^{**}$), and education ($r = .984$) at both the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. This strong positive correlation implies that the level of prominence accorded to agricultural news tends to move in the same direction as the prominence given to other categories of economic news. In other words, newspapers that devote more space or attention to agricultural stories also tend to feature more stories on sports, politics, business, entertainment, and education. This finding indicates that agricultural reporting is not treated as a distinct editorial priority, but rather as part of the general news flow pattern influenced by the overall publication space and editorial agenda.

The implication of this result is that Nigerian newspapers did not give any special or consistent attention to agricultural issues during the study period. Instead, the coverage of agricultural news fluctuates alongside other topics depending on the general volume of news production. This situation may

reflect the limited editorial prioritization of agricultural communication within Nigerian print media, despite agriculture's critical role in national economic development and food security. The finding contradicts that of Ovwigho and Orogun (2013), who reported a negative correlation between agricultural news and other categories such as sports, politics, and education in *The Pointer* newspaper. Their result suggested that increases in coverage of other sectors tended to reduce the space allocated to agriculture. In contrast, the present study shows that agricultural coverage increases in tandem with other economic news, indicating a more balanced though still low-priority distribution across topics.

Based on the correlation results, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between agricultural news and other economic news items (sports, politics, foreign news, business, entertainment, and education), is rejected. The alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between agricultural news and other economic news items, is accepted. This analysis, conducted using the Pearson correlation coefficient, underscores the interdependence of news categories in Nigerian dailies and highlights the need for deliberate editorial efforts to increase the visibility and independent prominence of agricultural reporting.

Table 4: Correlation Between Agricultural News and Other News Category

	Entertainment	Politics	Foreign	Business	Education	Sport	Agric
Entertainment	1						
Politics	.698	1					
Foreign	.466	.736*	1				
Business	.160	.689*	.845*	1			
Education	.799	.967**	.805	.661	1		
Sports	.860*	.889*	.670	.580	.775	1	
Agricultural	.912*	.915**	.890*	.680*	.948**	.860	1

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4.0 Conclusion

Despite the pivotal role of agriculture as the backbone of rural, social, and economic development in Nigeria, the media’s contribution particularly through newspapers in disseminating agricultural information remains limited. Although newspapers are traditionally considered reliable and accessible sources of information, the coverage of agricultural issues is significantly lower compared to other sectors such as politics, business, and entertainment. The findings of this study reveal that agricultural reporting receives low editorial priority, especially in public newspapers, where institutional policies often do not favor agro-related news. Consequently, political and economic headlines dominate, sidelining the pressing agricultural concerns that directly affect food security, rural livelihoods, and sustainable national development.

Access to timely and accurate agricultural information is a prerequisite for agricultural transformation, as it empowers farmers with

knowledge and innovations essential for productivity improvement. To harness the full potential of agriculture in Nigeria’s development agenda, there is a pressing need to enhance the administration, accountability, and editorial responsibility of newspaper organizations. Newspapers should prioritize comprehensive, accurate, and consistent coverage of agricultural information, strengthening the link between research, policy, and practice. Such an approach would not only bridge the existing knowledge gap but also contribute meaningfully to national food security and rural economic resilience.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. There is a need to encourage other national newspapers such as Vanguard, The Sun, and Business Day to, as a matter of editorial policy, increase the frequency and depth of their reportage on agricultural issues. Greater

consistency in agricultural coverage across media outlets will enhance public awareness and stimulate informed discourse on the sector's challenges and opportunities.

ii. Newspapers should be encouraged to diversify their agricultural coverage by giving more attention to underrepresented areas such as irrigation farming, fish farming, extension services, agro-processing, and marketing. Broader coverage of these sectors will provide a more holistic and inclusive representation of agriculture, catering to the diverse information needs of farmers, policymakers, and stakeholders.

iii. Reporters and editors should move beyond routine news on fertilizer distribution and availability to focus on critical and emerging agricultural issues, including farmer herder conflicts, climate change impacts, and rural infrastructure challenges. Prioritizing these areas will not only improve the relevance of agricultural reporting but also contribute to the formulation of policies that enhance agricultural productivity and rural peace.

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