

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT IN MAIHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ADAMAWA STATE (2015–2024)

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ABSTRACT

This study examined public administration and grassroots development in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State (2015–2024), with the aim of assessing the availability and functionality of basic social amenities and evaluating the achievements of the local government in agricultural development. The specific objectives were to determine the extent to which healthcare facilities, road infrastructure, educational services, and potable water supply are available and functional, and to evaluate the major contributions of the local council in promoting agricultural productivity. A descriptive research design was employed, targeting residents and key officials of Maiha LGA. Simple random sampling was used to select five communities Mayo-Nguli, Pakka, Sorau, Belel, and Humbutudi. A total of 380 respondents participated. Data were collected using structured questionnaires with council officials and community leaders. Quantitative data were analysed using percentages and frequencies. The findings revealed that basic amenities in Maiha LGA are largely insufficient or irregularly available, with healthcare, roads, education, and water supply rated poorly by most respondents. Agricultural support from the local government was inconsistent, with limited access to inputs, extension services, and markets, resulting in minimal enhancement of productivity. The demographic analysis indicated a largely literate and economically active population capable of contributing to local development, yet constrained by inadequate government intervention. Based on these findings, study recommends enhancing local government autonomy, improving institutional capacity and funding, and prioritizing investment in essential services to strengthen disaster management and community resilience, and expanding support for sustainable agricultural development.

Keywords: Public administration, Grassroot development, Maiha Local Government, Basic amenities, Agricultural development

Introduction

Local government is the closest administrative institutions to the people, having a constitutional the mandate to promote grassroot development and improve the quality of life in the local communities. They play a significant role in socio-economic transformation whereby, by translating national and state policies into tangible development outcomes at the grassroot level. According to Okafor and Nweke (2018), local governments constitute the bedrock of grassroot

development in Nigeria by providing essential services with respect to education, healthcare, rural infrastructure, and social welfare. However, their effectiveness often depends on factors such as governance quality, fiscal autonomy, and administrative capacity (Ibrahim, 2020).

In Adamawa State; Maiha Local Government Area (LGA) represents a case that illustrates both the potential and limitations of local governments in fostering grassroots development. As a predominantly agrarian community with diverse cultural and socio-economic characteristics, Maiha LGA relies heavily on local government interventions for rural infrastructure, agricultural support, and social services. The period between 2015 and 2024 has been particularly critical, as Nigeria experienced economic recession, heightened insecurity, and fiscal constraints, all of which had direct implications for local governance and development in Maiha. The ability of the local government administration to respond to these challenges determines the extent to which grassroots development can be achieved.

Historically, local government administration in Nigeria is regarded as a means of ensuring national cohesion, administrative efficiency, and socio-economic progress (Egonwan, 2014). States with diverse ethnic and religious beliefs such as Adamawa, local governments also play a stabilizing role by fostering unity among heterogeneous groups while simultaneously preserving local identities (Forman & Godwin, 2014). In Maiha LGA, this function has been crucial in mediating between government authorities and residents, thereby providing avenues for citizen participation, conflict resolution, and local decision-making. Nevertheless, persistent challenges undermine the developmental mandate of local governments in Nigeria, and Maiha LGA is not an exception. Political interference from higher tiers of government, financial mismanagement, corruption, and inadequate manpower are constraints to the capacity of local authorities to deliver on their responsibilities (Agbakoba & Ogbonna, 2004). These limitations raise critical concerns about the extent to which public administration in Maiha has translated into measurable grassroots development between 2015 and 2024. Addressing this concern requires a systematic assessment of the relationship between local government administration and grassroots development within the context of Maiha's unique socio-economic realities.

Statement of the Problem

Local governments in Nigeria are mandated to promote equitable development, enhance citizen participation, and complement State and Federal efforts in delivering essential services (Agagu, 2014). However, many LGAs are battling with the challenges of political interference, corruption, limited fiscal autonomy, and weak institutional capacity, which leads to persistent poverty gross deficit in infrastructure (Okafor & Nweke, 2018; Ibrahim, 2020). Maiha Local Government Area exemplifies these challenges. Despite its agricultural potential and commercial activity, the LGA

struggles with bad roads, limited healthcare, unemployment, and insecurity, compounded between 2015 and 2024 by economic recession, fiscal constraints, and insurgency in the Northeast.

Existing research on Nigerian local governments often overlooks the specific context of Maiha, leaving a gap in understanding how public administration has influenced grassroots development in the area over the past decade. This highlights the need for a focused study to assess the effectiveness, limitations, and prospects of local governance in promoting development at the grassroots in Maiha LGA.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine public administration and grassroots development in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State (2015–2024). The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the availability and functionality of basic social amenities such as healthcare facilities, road infrastructure, educational services, and potable water supply in Maiha Local Government Area.
- ii. evaluate the comparative advantage of Maiha Local Government Council in with respect agricultural development within the period under review.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Public Administration

Scholars have offered diverse definitions of public administration, reflecting its multidimensional role in governance. According to Wilson (1887), often regarded as the father of public administration, posit public administration as “the detailed and systematic execution of public law.” This definition emphasizes administration as the machinery through which laws are carried out. Wilson’s perspective, while foundational, is overly legalistic and does not fully address the role of local governments in developmental outcomes, especially in rural Nigerian contexts.

In contrast, Gulick and Urwick (1937) describe public administration through the POSDCORB framework (Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting), stressing efficiency in management processes. This managerial lens is useful but tends to overlook the political and socio-cultural dimensions of grassroots governance, which are critical in places like Maiha LGA where community participation and cultural factors influence development.

Nigro and Nigro (1980) define public administration as “cooperative group effort in a public setting, covering all three branches of government, and linking policy-making with implementation.” While broader than earlier definitions, this still generalizes administration at all levels, offering limited insights into the unique challenges of local councils in Nigeria, such as limited autonomy and interference from state governments.

Similarly, Henry (2013) conceptualizes public administration as “the study and practice of public bureaucracy and public policy implementation.” This emphasizes the bureaucratic structure that connects citizens with government services. Henry’s view highlights bureaucracy but fails to

capture the grassroots development mandate of local governments, which extends beyond mere bureaucracy into active community empowerment and socio-economic transformation.

in addition, Adebayo (2010) contextualizes public administration within Nigeria as “the machinery set up by the state to achieve the goals of government in terms of social welfare, development, and service delivery.” Although this is closer to the Nigerian experience, it remains general and does not sufficiently interrogate the effectiveness of local government councils, such as Maiha LGA, in delivering development between 2015–2024.

Based on these perspectives, this study defines public administration as: The system of structures, processes, and practices employed by the Maiha Local Government Council to implement policies, manage resources, and deliver services that directly influence grassroot development between 2015 and 2024. This operational definition recognizes both the administrative and developmental dimensions of public administration while situating it within the local government framework of Maiha LGA.

Conceptualising Grassroot Development

Grassroots development has been widely examined in development literature, with scholars offering different perspectives on its meaning and scope. According to Chambers (1983), grassroots development emphasizes putting the “last first,” focusing on people-centered strategies that prioritize the needs and voices of rural communities. This definition draws attention to participatory approaches but leaves a gap in linking these approaches to formal administrative structures like local governments, which are crucial in facilitating service delivery and governance in Nigeria. Friedmann (1992) conceptualized grassroots development as the empowerment of local populations through access to resources, skills, and decision-making power. This definition is significant because it stresses empowerment rather than mere service provision. However, it does not fully engage with how institutional actors such as local government councils can operationalize empowerment through programs in sectors like health, education, and agriculture, especially within the Nigerian local government system.

Similarly, Korten (1990) argued that grassroots development is a process of building sustainable community capacity to solve problems through bottom-up initiatives rather than top-down directives. While this highlights sustainability and local initiative, the gap lies in its underestimation of the structural role of government institutions in complementing community-driven efforts. In the Nigerian context, rural communities such as Maiha depend heavily on local government interventions for infrastructure, agricultural support, and social amenities, making government input indispensable. At a more policy-oriented level, the World Bank (2000) defines grassroot development as the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. Although this captures the economic and social dimensions of development, it tends to frame rural development in general

terms and does not address the contextual realities of governance challenges, corruption, and political interference that affect local governments in Nigeria.

In the Nigerian academic context, Akinwale (2010) views grassroots development as the active involvement of local governments in providing essential social amenities, agricultural support, and livelihood opportunities to rural populations. This definition is closer to the realities of Maiha Local Government, as it emphasizes the administrative responsibility of councils in promoting development. However, the limitation of this perspective is that it does not adequately assess how effective local governments have been in bridging the persistent development gap, especially in periods of governance reform and fiscal limitations such as those experienced between 2015 and 2024.

Drawing from these scholarly perspectives, this study defines grassroots development as the sustained improvement of social amenities, agricultural productivity, and livelihood opportunities through both administrative interventions and community participation at the local level. Within the context of Maiha Local Government Area, grassroots development is viewed as the outcome of public administration efforts aimed at enhancing healthcare, road infrastructure, education, potable water supply, and agricultural development between 2015 and 2024.

The Functions of Local Government in Grassroots Development

The local government, as the third tier of administration in Nigeria, plays a vital role in promoting grassroots development through the provision of essential social and infrastructural services. Among its statutory functions are the delivery of primary healthcare, construction and maintenance of rural roads, and the provision of basic education. These sectors collectively represent key indicators of local governance performance and sustainable rural development.

In the area of healthcare, local governments are mandated to provide and maintain primary health centres, maternal clinics, and community-based health programmes. Studies have shown that functional primary healthcare significantly enhances maternal and child health outcomes in rural areas. However, limited funding, shortage of skilled personnel, and weak institutional capacity continue to undermine effective service delivery (Adebayo & Ojo, 2019; Nwankwo & Okorie, 2020). Although community-driven health models have been encouraged to improve local participation and accountability, there is limited evidence on how these models operate in conflict-affected LGAs such as Maiha (WHO, 2021).

Similarly, road infrastructure development is a core local government function crucial to economic integration and mobility. Well-maintained rural roads enhance access to markets, support agricultural productivity, and facilitate trade. Yet, poor road conditions and limited maintenance funding remain major constraints in many local councils (Olasupo & Fayomi, 2018; Ibrahim, 2020; Adedeji, 2022). Despite the recognized importance of rural infrastructure, there is a dearth of localized data on the state of roads and related interventions within Maiha LGA.

In education, local governments are tasked with establishing and maintaining primary schools, supporting teacher recruitment, and ensuring the promotion of literacy (Okoli & Ugwu, 2017). Nonetheless, the sector faces persistent challenges including inadequate facilities, teacher shortages, and insecurity, particularly across Nigeria's North-East (Musa, 2023; UNICEF, 2021). There is, however, little empirical evidence on the extent to which Maiha LGA has fulfilled its educational responsibilities between 2015 and 2024.

Therefore, while existing studies provide valuable national and state-level insights, there remains a significant research gap concerning how local governments, particularly Maiha LGA, have performed their statutory functions in healthcare, road infrastructure, and education. Understanding this relationship is essential for assessing the effectiveness of local governance and its contribution to grassroots development in conflict-prone areas.

The Role of Local Government in Agricultural Development

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of grassroots development and food security, and local governments play a critical role in supporting farmers through agricultural extension services, input distribution, and rural infrastructure development. Effective local governance promotes smallholder productivity, facilitates policy implementation, and enhances food systems resilience (Okafor & Nweke, 2018; FAO, 2020; Garba, 2023). Despite this, there is limited localized evidence on the specific contributions of Maiha Local Government Area (LGA) to agricultural development over the past decade.

Maiha LGA possesses a comparative advantage in agriculture due to its fertile land, favourable climatic conditions, and the cultivation of diverse crops such as maize, millet, sorghum, groundnuts, and vegetables, which form the backbone of local livelihoods. The area's vast arable land and proximity to regional markets position it as a potential hub for agricultural production within Adamawa State. However, the effective harnessing of these advantages depends on the capacity and commitment of local governance structures.

Agricultural extension services essential for promoting modern farming techniques and improved yields remain underdeveloped in many parts of Adamawa State due to inadequate funding, low staffing, and weak institutional coordination (Eze & Nwankwo, 2017; Abdullahi, 2021). The adoption of digital platforms for farmer training and information dissemination is also limited, leaving rural farmers in Maiha LGA without adequate access to innovation and market information (Oladipo, 2024).

Furthermore, local governments influence market development and agricultural value chains by providing rural markets, storage facilities, and farm-to-market roads (Lawal, 2016; Adeyemi & Yusuf, 2020). However, weak market infrastructure and poor access to credit continue to constrain profitability and limit farmers' participation in broader value chains across Adamawa (Haruna & Buba, 2022). There is scant empirical research on how Maiha LGA supports market development

or enhances agricultural value addition, making it difficult to evaluate its impact on farmers' livelihoods and local economic growth.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts decentralisation theory. Decentralization theory explains the transfer of authority and resources from central governments to sub-national entities, with the aim of improving governance through responsiveness, accountability, and citizen participation (Rondinelli, 1981). In Nigeria, this underpins the creation of local government councils as the third tier of government to enhance grassroots development. The theory's key proponents include Rondinelli (1981; 1999), who identified administrative, political, fiscal, and market dimensions of decentralization, and Cheema and Rondinelli (1983), who emphasized its role in tailoring development projects to local needs. Oates (1972) argued that local governments are better suited to provide public goods, while Olowu and Wunsch (2004) highlighted its potential for governance and rural development in Africa.

Its strengths lie in promoting efficiency, responsiveness, and democratic participation while encouraging innovation in local service delivery (Oates, 1972; Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983). However, critics note that weak institutions and poor accountability often limit its effectiveness, enabling elite capture, corruption, and fiscal dependence (Smoke, 2003; Crook & Manor, 1998; Agagu, 2014). In Nigeria, state interference further undermines local government autonomy. Applied to this study, decentralization theory provides a lens for assessing whether Maiha Local Government had the autonomy, capacity, and resources to drive grassroots development between 2015 and 2024, while also considering challenges such as political interference, corruption, fiscal dependence, and insecurity in the Northeast.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the role of public administration in promoting grassroots development in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State. The descriptive approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to systematically describe and analyse the existing conditions, practices, and perceptions of local government administration within the communities under study.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study consists of principal officers of Maiha Local Government Council, staff members across relevant departments, and residents from selected communities within the local government area. These groups were chosen because they represent key stakeholders who are the drivers of grassroots development initiatives.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

From the total population of 188,942, according to the National Population Commission (NPC) 2023 data, Maiha Local Government Area. To ensure fair representation, a simple random

sampling technique was employed in selecting five communities in the local government: Mayo-
Nguli, Pakka, Sorau, Belel, and Humbutudi.

Taro yamane sample size calculation, is used to determine the sample size for the questionnaire
respondents. The following is the formula for the calculation:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where :

n= sample size required

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

Substitute numbers in formula

$$n = \frac{188,942}{1 + 188,942(0.05)^2}$$

$$n \approx 399$$

Data Collection Methods

The study used primary data, collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Questionnaires capture residents' views on basic amenities and the council's role in grassroots development, while interviews with council officials and community leaders provide deeper insights into the achievements and challenges of public administration in Maiha LGA (2015–2024).

Data Analysis Techniques

The study used frequency distribution for the analysis of data collected for the purpose of the study.

Results and Discussion

The table 1 shows that the majority of respondents (45.8%) fall within the age bracket of 31–45 years, followed by 18–30 years (26.1%). About 20% are between 46–60 years, while only 7.9% are above 60. This indicates that most respondents are in their economically active years, suggesting that the data largely reflects the perspectives of the productive population who are directly engaged in community and developmental activities.

Table 1: Age Range

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
18–30	110	28.9	Youthful population, energetic workforce
31–45	150	39.5	Majority, economically active
46–60	80	21.1	Mature, experienced
Above 60	40	10.5	Elderly, less active

Total	380	100
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Source: Field Survey, 2025

The responses in table 2 indicates that 380 respondents, 57.9% were male while 42.1% were female. The male respondents are slightly more than the female respondents. This shows that both genders were well represented, but with a higher participation from males, which may reflect the traditional gender dynamics of participation in community-based surveys.

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Male	210	55.3	Slightly dominant
Female	170	44.7	Well represented
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results in table 3 show that the largest group of respondents (39.5%) attained secondary education, followed closely by 34.2% who had tertiary education. A smaller proportion (15.3%) had primary education, while 11.1% had no formal education. This indicates that most respondents are literate, with a significant proportion having secondary and tertiary education. This level of educational attainment suggests that respondents are capable of providing informed opinions on issues of public administration and grassroots development in the area.

Table 3: Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
No formal education	50	13.2	Marginal group
Primary	90	23.7	Basic literacy
Secondary	150	39.5	Majority, informed views
Tertiary	90	23.7	Educated elite
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table 4 shows that only 21.1% of respondents rated healthcare facilities as *adequate* or *very adequate*, while a majority (52.6%) rated them *inadequate* and 26.3% reported *not available*. This indicates that healthcare services in Maiha LGA are generally insufficient, with most residents lacking adequate access to functional healthcare facilities.

Table 4: Healthcare Facilities

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Very adequate	40	10.5	Few communities satisfied
Adequate	90	23.7	Limited functionality

Inadequate	160	42.1	Majority dissatisfied
Not available	90	23.7	Poor grassroots service
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The responses in table 5 reveal that 36.8% rated roads and transport infrastructure as *poor*, and 34.2% as *very poor*. Only 18.4% considered them *fair*, while just 10.5% rated them *very good*. The majority of respondents perceive the road and transport system as poor, suggesting that infrastructural development in this area is weak and hinders grassroots mobility and development.

Table 5: Roads and Infrastructure

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Very good	30	7.9	Few good roads
Fair	100	26.3	Moderate access
Poor	150	39.5	Majority dissatisfied
Very poor	100	26.3	Severe neglect
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Results in table 6 show that 42.1% rated educational services as *ineffective*, while 26.3% indicated that such services were *not available*. Only 21.1% considered them *effective*, and just 10.5% rated them *very effective*. This suggests that educational services are poorly delivered, with a significant portion of the population either experiencing inadequate schooling or lacking access altogether.

Table 6: Educational Services

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Very effective	60	15.8	Few functioning schools
Effective	100	26.3	Some access to education
Ineffective	140	36.8	Weak delivery
Not available	80	21.1	Many lack schools
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Findings in table 7 indicate that only 15.8% of respondents reported regular access to potable water, while 31.6% indicated occasional access. A further 31.6% reported rare access, and 21.1% stated they had no access at all. This shows that potable water supply is irregular and unreliable in most communities, highlighting one of the most critical challenges to grassroots development in the study area.

Table 7: Potable Water Supply

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
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Yes, regularly	50	13.2	Very limited supply
Occasionally	120	31.6	Irregular access
Rarely	110	28.9	Water scarcity common
Not at all	100	26.3	Many lack safe water
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table 8 shows that 36.8% of respondents said farmers received support sometimes, while 31.6% reported rarely. Only 15.8% indicated regular support, and another 15.8% stated that support was not provided at all. This indicates that while some efforts were made to support farmers, such interventions were inconsistent and insufficient to drive sustainable agricultural growth.

Table 8: Support to Farmers

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Yes, regularly	40	10.5	Minimal regular support
Sometimes	100	26.3	Some aid provided
Rarely	120	31.6	Weak support
Not at all	120	31.6	Many excluded
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 9: Contribution of Local Government to Agricultural Productivity

Findings in table 9 reveal that only 21.1% considered the council's contribution significant, while 47.4% rated it insignificant and 21.1% said there was no contribution. A small group (10.5%) rated the contribution as very significant. The data suggests that the local government's role in enhancing agricultural productivity has been minimal, leaving most farmers dissatisfied with the level of intervention.

Table 9: Contribution to Agricultural Productivity

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Very significant	50	13.2	Few communities benefited
Significant	80	21.1	Moderate impact
Insignificant	150	39.5	Weak contributions
No contribution	100	26.3	Many excluded from benefits
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Responses in table 10 indicate that the most pressing challenges include lack of inputs (42.1%), followed by poor market access (31.6%), and inadequate extension services (15.8%). A small proportion (10.5%) identified other issues. This highlights that farmers in Maiha LGA struggle

primarily with access to essential inputs and markets, which undermines agricultural productivity despite local government efforts.

Table 10: Farmers' Challenges

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Short Interpretation
Lack of inputs	140	36.8	Major barrier
Poor market access	100	26.3	Limited sales opportunities
Inadequate extension services	90	23.7	Weak technical support
Others	50	13.2	Minor issues
Total	380	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that the provision and functionality of basic social amenities in Maiha Local Government Area (LGA) remain largely inadequate. Although the population is relatively literate and economically active, key services such as healthcare, road infrastructure, education, and potable water are poorly developed. Most respondents rated health and road facilities as inadequate or very poor, limiting access to essential services and economic activities. Educational services showed modest improvement, though many communities still face shortages of teachers and learning facilities. Access to clean water remains inconsistent, reflecting uneven service delivery across the LGA. Overall, these shortcomings highlight the persistent gap between the statutory responsibilities of local government and the actual level of grassroots development achieved in Maiha.

In terms of agricultural development, Maiha LGA has a clear comparative advantage due to its fertile land, favourable climate, and diverse crop production, including maize, millet, sorghum, and groundnuts. However, the study found that local government support for farmers has been irregular and insufficient. Most respondents reported limited access to inputs, poor market infrastructure, and weak extension services, which have constrained productivity and income generation. Despite the area's agricultural potential, weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, and poor governance practices have hindered effective utilization of these advantages. Consequently, Maiha LGA has not fully harnessed its natural and human resources to drive sustainable rural development and food security.

Conclusion

This study assessed the role of public administration in grassroots development in Maiha Local Government Area (2015–2024), focusing on basic amenities and agricultural support. Findings show that while Maiha LGA is mandated to drive local development, weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, and political interference have hindered its effectiveness. Social amenities such as healthcare, education, roads, and water remain insufficient, while agricultural support has been irregular, limiting productivity. Despite having a literate and active population, the lack of

consistent service delivery constrains development. Overall, Maiha's experience reflects the wider challenges of decentralization in Nigeria, where local governments lack true autonomy and resources. Strengthening institutional capacity, improving funding, and prioritizing basic services and agriculture are vital for sustainable grassroots transformation in Maiha LGA.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following thus:

- i. To enhance grassroots development, the Maiha Local Government Council should prioritize the rehabilitation and expansion of basic social amenities such as healthcare facilities, road networks, schools, and potable water systems. This requires improved budgetary allocation, transparent resource management, and partnerships with state agencies and development organizations to strengthen service delivery and ensure equitable access across all communities.
- ii. Given Maiha's comparative advantage in agriculture, the local government should develop a coordinated agricultural support programme that provides farmers with consistent access to inputs, modern extension services, and market infrastructure. Efforts should also focus on promoting value addition, supporting cooperative societies, and leveraging digital platforms for farmer training and market information to enhance productivity and improve rural livelihoods.

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