

Constraints of Youths Involvement in Agricultural Production in Isoko North Local Government Area, Delta State

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the constraints of youth involvement in agricultural production in Isoko North Local Government Area, Delta State. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) youths were selected using a multi-stage random sampling technique for the study. Twenty (20) respondents (youths) from secondary and post-secondary were selected from six (6) communities in the study area. The major problem hindering youths involvement in agriculture was identified. The finding shows the following mean scores - inadequate credit facility ($x=2.883$), poor return to agricultural investment ($x=2.667$), lack of agricultural insurance for produce during glut or unfavorable climatic conditions ($x=2.667$), poor basic farming knowledge of modern technique ($x=2.567$) and lack of access to tractors and other farm inputs ($x=2.483$) etc. The study recommended among others the need for provision of credit facilities with less stringent procedures and resuscitation of agricultural training centres across the state to enhance youth's involvement in agriculture.

Keywords: Constraints, Youths, Involvement, Agricultural Production, Isoko North

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation blessed with good climatic conditions that favor agricultural production. Agriculture is an important sector in economic development and poverty alleviation drive of many countries. The importance of this sector is more pronounced in the developing countries including Nigeria where it is the main thrust of national survival, employment, food and foreign exchange earning (Abdullah, 1986; Adebayo and Okuneye, 2005). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has put the figure of unemployed Nigerians in the first half of 2012 at 23.9 percent, up from 21.1 percent in 2010 and 19.1 percent in 2009 (Osalar, 2012). The role played by agriculture in the industrial growth and

development of most of the industrialized countries in the world can not be over emphasized (Adeyemi and Adekunmi 2005). The youth constitute the major base for any country which is committed to sustainable agricultural and rural development policies. Youth in agriculture programme has been described as a very important structure for land and agrarian reform which will go a long way towards promoting the interest of youth in the agricultural sector of the economy (Gwanya, 2008). Since agricultural development is the basic tool for economic development, there is need for emphasis to be placed on the role youth can play in agriculture (Fatunla, 1996). In Nigeria, agricultural production is still carried out using manual labour, which declines with age of individual. This has therefore been observed as one of the major constraint to agricultural production in Nigeria (Okeowo *et. al*, 1999). Though youths have desirable qualities that can promote agriculture, most of them have strong apathy toward it (Jibowo, 1998; Adedoyin, 2005; Adewale *et al*, 2005). Successive governments at both federal and state government level have introduced various agricultural development schemes with the aim of encouraging the youths in boosting food production and farmers income through provision of agricultural infrastructure, inputs and effective extension work (Jibowo, 2005). In Delta state for instance the Ministry of commerce and industry operated the graduate self-employment scheme as from year 2000, through a packaged entrepreneurial training programme and granting of soft start -up loans (Orubu, 2014). With fewer youths in to agriculture, the long term future of the agricultural sector is in question. This has resulted in mass unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood activities among the youths (Breitenbach, 2006). This has led most youths into cultism, prostitution and street begging, among other crimes (Sodique, 2006). The development of the agricultural sector of the Nigeria economy therefore depends on the young people, more especially the rural youths. This is because a larger population of youths represents the link between the present and the future as well as a reservoir of labour (Okeowo *et al*, 1999). The youths presently constituted about 60% of Nigeria population and have over the years made significant contribution to national development (Vision 2010 report, 2005). Unfortunately the present environment makes it even more difficult to explore their full potential in agricultural production. In order to stimulate the interest of our youths in agricultural production, government has put in place certain measure that will eliminate the associated constraints. Involvement of youths in agricultural production has suffered nationally in recent years especially in rural area (Russed, 2001). Despite the vast growing opportunity in agricultural sector, it is alarming and quiet incredible to see many rural youths opting out of farming in search of non existing white- collar job in the cities leading to unprecedented level of rural-

urban migration. This is obviously a potent challenge to the aspiration of government to achieve food security by 2020. The over-all effect of this scenario is that more Nigerians are going hungry by today and resources that could be used to improve on our infrastructures are spent on importation of food into the country. There is therefore an urgent need to boost agricultural activities and sustain youth's interest and participation in agricultural production.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the constraints to youth's involvement in agricultural production in Isoko North Local Government Area, Delta state

The specific objectives are:

- i. Examine the socio economic characteristics of the youth involved in agriculture in the study area.
- ii. Identify the various activities carried out by youth in the study area.
- iii. Determine the level of youth participation/involvement in agricultural production.
- iv. Identify the factor militating against youths participation in agricultural production.

Justification of the Study

For sustainable agricultural development in Nigeria, there is an urgent need for a more rapid transformation from subsistence farming to a more commercialized one, involving the application of modern technology (Adisa, 2005). The future of agriculture of most developing countries may be bleak if the bulk of the production efforts are left in the hands of aged subsistent farmers who presently constitute the major farming population. The productivity level of the aged farmers cannot meet the food and fibre needs of the rapidly growing population and they will definitely phase out on the account of age (Cook, 1996). A study of the constraints faced by youths in agriculture is expedient and also a step in the right direction.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Isoko North local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria. The population for the study was all rural community based youths in the area of study. Six communities were randomly selected out of the thirteen communities in Isoko North Local Government Area. Twenty youths from secondary and post secondary were randomly selected from each of the

communities, giving a total sample size of 120 respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents (youths). Relevant information sought from respondents includes; socio characteristics, activities of the youths in agriculture, level of participation and factors militating against their effective participation in agricultural production. Descriptive statistics such as use of frequency, percentages, mean and ranking order were used to analyzed the data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socio- Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)		
<15	8	6.7
16-20	14	11.7
21-30	88	73.3
31 and above	10	8.3
Total	120	100
Gender (sex)		
Male	96	80
Female	14	20
Total	120	100
Marital status		
Single	74	70
Married	34	20
Unspecified	12	10
Total	120	100
Educational level (years)		
No formal education	12	10
Primary education	72	60
Secondary education	30	25
Post secondary education	6	5
Total	120	100
Years in Youth Programs		
1-5	72	74
Unspecified	48	26
Total	120	100
Areas of interest		
Crop farming	37	31.4
Poultry production	34	28.1
Crop /livestock marketing	21	17.4
Livestock farming	13	10.7
Crop processing	11	9.1
Fish farming	4	3.3
Total	120	100

Field survey, 2013

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

As shown in Table 1, majority (78.3%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21-30 years, while 22% and 10% were between the ages of less than 15 and 31 and above. This implies that most of the respondents were mainly youths. This finding is in agreement with the definition of youths as reported in vision 2010 report (2005). The report noted that youth as period of an individual life which comes between the end of childhood and entry into adulthood. More so, Table I also revealed that 80% of the respondents were males, while the remaining 20% were females. The sex distribution gave room to balance opinion from male and female respondents. In area of educational level, the result showed that 60%, 25% and 5% of the respondent had primary, secondary and post-secondary education. The remaining 10% of the respondents had no formal education. This finding is in agreement with (Idrisa *et al*, 2006) that identified level of formal education to be associated with less likelihood of respondents to understand the scientific basis of agriculture and superiority of improved practices. Table I also shows that majorly (74%) of the respondents had participated 1-5 years in different youth programs on agriculture, while only 26% did not specify if they had participated in such programs. Table 1 equally reveals youth's area of interest in agriculture. Crop farming 31.4%, poultry production (28.1%) and crop /livestock marketing (17.4%). Other areas of interest to the respondents includes, fish farming (10.7%), livestock farming (9.1%) and crop processing (3.3%). The various choices by the youths reflected the agricultural system common in the study area. The result also shows that crop production is predominant, while crop processing is not so popular in the study area.

Table 2: Constraints to rural youth involvement in Agriculture

S/No	Constraints	Mean score	Ranking
1.	Inadequate credit facility	2.883	1 st
2.	Low returns to agricultural investment	2.667	2 nd
3.	No agricultural insurance	2.667	2 nd
4.	Poor basic farming knowledge of modern technique	2.567	4 th
5.	Lack of access to tractor & other farm inputs	2.483	5 th
6.	No ready market	2.350	6 th
7.	It is energy-sapping	2.333	7 th
8.	Nigeria economy	2.300	8 th
9.	People's perception of farmers	2.283	9 th
10.	Lack of initial capital	2.150	10 th
11.	Farmers are not respected	2.100	11 th
12.	Non lucrativeness of agriculture	2.033	12 th
13.	Continuous poor, harvest	1.940	13 th
14.	No storage facilities	1.933	14 th
15.	Insufficient land	0.967	15 th

Source: field survey, 2013.

Constraints Affecting Youth's Involvement in Agricultural Production as Perceived by Respondent

Table 2 revealed a wide range of mean score of the constraints as perceived by the respondents which militate against active participation of youths in agricultural production activities. The result shows that inadequate credit facilities ($\bar{x}=2.883$), poor returns to agricultural investment ($\bar{x}=2.667$), lack of agricultural insurance for produce during glut or unfavorable climatic Conditions ($\bar{x}=2.667$), and lack of access to tractors and other farm inputs ($\bar{x}=2.483$) were the major factors reducing youths involvement in agricultural production in Nigeria. This result is in agreement with the finding of (Lyocks *et al*, 2013 and Adekunle *et al*, 2009)

Conclusion

The identification of constraints in the involvement of youths in agricultural production had become critical for future food security. The findings of this study had emphasized the need to enhance youth's active involvement in agricultural production. This study had identified inadequate credit facilities, low return to agricultural investment ,poor basic farming knowledge of modern technique ,lack of access to tractors and other farming inputs as the major impediments .Other factors perceived as constraints by respondents includes; energy sapping ,no ready market and people perception of farming. All these problems areas demand prompt attention in order to encourage greater involvement of youths in agriculture production.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings the study recommends the following,

- Enhancement of youth's knowledge of basic farming activities through establishment of new agricultural training centres and strengthening of existing ones.
- Provision of credit facilities for youths in agriculture through microfinance and other financial institutions.
- Changing of people's perceptions toward farming through proper orientation and public enlightenment.
- Adequate policies and legislation for improved and easier access to resources such as land, capital, technology and information targeted at the youths so as to develop adequate interest in agricultural activities.

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