

AN ASSESSMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND NON AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES OF YOUTHS IN KABOJI DISTRICT, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA.

BY

S.I. UMAR

Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Extension Technology, F.U.T. Minna
iumarsheshi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study assessed agricultural livelihood activities of youths in Kaboji District of Niger State. To achieve the study objectives, 75 youth respondents were randomly selected from five villages in the District. Data collected from the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square test. The result revealed that majority of the respondents (44.00%) fall within the age range of 26 to 32 years, while more than half of the respondents (56.00%) have no formal education. The major agricultural livelihood activity of the youths in the area was crop farming with 96.00% response, followed by livestock farming as indicated by 68.00% of the respondents. On the other hand, the most popular non-agricultural livelihood activity among the respondents was pack animal business (58.67%); using camels and donkeys to transport a variety of items including farm products for a fee depending on distances and size of the load. Further analysis indicates that significant relationship exists between age and household size of the respondents and their participation in agricultural livelihood activities. Based on the findings, the paper drew attention to the need to consider the age and family size of the youths when planning and implementing agricultural programme. Furthermore, sensitization of youths on diverse agricultural livelihoods was suggested to enable them obtain more opportunities for sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the most serious problems in Nigeria today. Despite the efforts of various governments from independence to date, poverty among the people has been on the increase. Available data indicate that by 1960 the poverty level in the country covers about 15 percent of the population and by 1980 it grew to 28 percent. In 1985 the poverty level was 46 percent. By 1996 The Federal Office of Statistics estimated the poverty level in Nigeria at about 66 percent and there are a number of real indications to show that the present poverty level has gone up (NAPEP, 2001).

Several reasons account for this, according to Olomola, (1995) Agricultural potentials are far from being fully realized and this has unpalatable implication for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development. Unlike other sectors, agriculture plays a critical role in employment and revenue generation as well as in the provision of raw materials for industrial development and foreign exchange earnings. It is probably the recognition of the role agriculture can play in poverty alleviation that led to the inclusion of agriculture in most youth empowerment programme across the states of the federation.

Notwithstanding the apparent widespread of youths empowerment programme in states, particularly in Niger State has not produce the desired result of youth's engagement in agriculture. This is probably due to the dearth of empirical research information on the agricultural activities of youths. In most cases, the policy makers assume definition of both problems and solutions on behalf of the youths. Therefore, a study needs to be carried out to provide information on the agricultural livelihood activities of youths in the area. This would likely result into formidable policy foundation block for effective youth's involvement in agriculture in the area in particular and nation at large. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i determine socio-economic characteristics of the youths in the study area

- ii identify the agricultural livelihood activities of the youths
- iii determine the non-agricultural livelihood activities of youths and
- iv determine relationship between youth's socio-economic characteristics and participation in agricultural livelihood activities

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A crucial factor in sustainable development is the establishment and strengthening of youth programmes. Youths constitute a potent force. This is because they have a number of attributes which when nurtured and utilized are great assets to sustainable development (Adedoyin, 2003). Ayioko (1986) asserted that youths in African like their counterpart in other developing parts of the world play an active role in agriculture in the area of primary production, animal production, and transportation of crops from farm to the home, processing, storage and marketing. However, within the context of Nigerian environment, it is to be expected that socio-cultural and economic factors are likely to influence the participation of youths in agricultural livelihood activities.

In line with that reasoning, Agumagu *et al.*, (2006) in a study of livelihood interests of youths, used chi-square test to determine the relationship between interest levels of youths and socio-economic characteristics. They found that age, marital status and education were the significant factors influencing livelihood interest of youths. Also in a related study using chi-square test, Edna *et al.*, (2006) reported significant relationship between education, household size and income with livelihood diversity strategies. In an earlier report, Oladele *et al.*, (1999) stressed that chi-square is a widely used test for independence, relationship and association of the variables or to compare sample measures with population measures (goodness of fit).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kaboji District located in Mashegu Local Government Area of Niger State. Niger State falls within the Guinea Savanna region of Nigeria, the state experiences dry and wet seasons with annual rainfall varying from 1600mm in the south to 1100mm in the north and average monthly temperature range of about 23°C to 29°C. The major occupation of the people is crop and livestock farming (Niger State Government Diary, 2003).

To achieve the objectives of the study, five villages were randomly selected from the District using a sampling frame established with the assistance of the District Head. The villages selected are Adogo-malam, Baban-rami, Magogo, Kaboji and Karamin-rami. In each village, a sampling frame of all household heads was obtained from the village head. Then 15 male youths were randomly sampled, giving a total sample size of 75 respondents. Data were collected from the respondents with the aid of an interview schedule in March, 2007. Data were collected on the socio-economic characteristics, as well as on the livelihood agricultural and non-agricultural activities of the youths. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square test.

Chi-square test was carried out to determine whether the age, educational level and household size of the respondents has any relationship with the number of agricultural activities in which they partake in (including crop farming, livestock farming, farm labour business and agricultural product marketing). These were tested at 0.05% level of significance. The tool was used in achieving objective four of the study. Chi-square is expressed as:

Where:

- = *chi-square*
- o* = *observed frequency*
- e* = *expected frequency*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

The data in Table 1 revealed that 20.00% of the respondents were 25 years and below. Majority (44.00%) were between the ages of 26 to 32 years while 25.33% of the respondents were between the ages of 33 to 40 and the remaining 10.67% were 41 years and above. The age distribution depicts that the youth respondents were still in their active productive years. Therefore, they will be able to respond to many agricultural career opportunities.

The size of household largely depends on the marital status of the respondents, particularly on the number of wives they have. Results in Table 1 also indicate that 26.67% of the respondents have household size of 1 to 3 while 24.00% of the respondents have family size range of 7 to 9 members. Similarly, 10.66% have household size of 13 and above. Furthermore, Table 1 shows that 24.00% and 14.67% of the respondents possess primary and secondary certificates respectively, while 5.33% have Nigeria Certificate in Education. However, 56.00% of the respondents did not receive formal education. This low educational status may pose serious problems that may affect effective job performances of youths in the area. In buttressing this point, Obiabuaku, (1983) stressed that acquisition of formal education is necessary for every human being in respective of occupational profession.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
19-25	15	20.00
26-32	33	44.00
33-40	19	25.33
41-49	8	10.67
Total	75	100.00
Household size		
1-3	20	26.67
4-6	20	26.67
7-9	18	24.00
10-12	9	12.00
13-15	8	10.66
Total	75	100.00
Educational status		
No formal education	42	56.00
Primary education	18	24.00
Secondary education	11	14.67
Tertiary education	4	5.33
Total	75	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Agricultural Livelihood Activities of Respondents

Table 2 reveals that crop sub-sector constitutes the most dominant agricultural activity of the respondents in the area. This is evidenced by the involvement of the overwhelming majority (96.00%) of respondents in crop farming. Livestock farming was next to crop farming with 68.00% response. However, the number of livestock owned range from 1-5 cattle and few stocks of poultry and goats. The ownership of camels and donkeys is widespread in the area, which are used for transporting farm and domestic goods.

The implication of this finding is that youth respondents are falling to utilize other agricultural opportunities to their advantage. Potentially, agriculture provides a lot of opportunities for youths to be self employed without seeking for government jobs. There is need, therefore for the youths to engage in other sub-sector with limited responses such as fish farming, if they are to earn a meaningful livelihood in agriculture.

Table 2: Types of agricultural livelihood activities of respondents (n=75)

Agricultural livelihood activities	Frequency	Percentage
Livestock farming	51	68.00
Marketing of agric. Products	12	16.00
Food processing	7	9.33
Farm labour business	30	40.00
Fish farming	2	2.67
Hunting	24	32.00
Crop farming	72	96.00

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Non-Agricultural Livelihood Activities of Respondents

Apart from using the animals to transport their own products, Table 3 indicated that almost 60.00% of the respondents also hired out their camels and donkeys to carry other people's load. In fact, some of the respondents considered hiring out of camel and donkey (pack animal business) as their major occupation. The amount charged depends on the distance and to a lesser extent, the size of the load. Although the expenses incurred in feeding and housing the animals were not calculated in the study, because most of these inputs were not purchased but were obtained as by-products of arable farming or from the natural range. Regardless of this, the amounts realized seem to be reasonable for a rural community in Nigeria where alternative sources of income generation outside farming are usually scarce. Therefore, empowering more youths to acquire camel and donkey could contribute to poverty alleviation in the area.

Furthermore, Table 2 depicts that 28.00% of respondents engaged in petty trading. Tailoring was also practiced by 24.00% of respondents. Other activities that the youth respondents partake in include weaving (12.00%) and carpentry (9.33%).

Table 3: Nonagricultural livelihood activities of respondents (n=75)

	Frequency	Percentage
Non-agricultural livelihood activities	3	4.00
Civil service	7	9.33
Carpentry	18	24.00
Tailoring	44	58.67
Pack animal business	21	28.00
Petty trading	6	8.00
Art craft	9	12.00
Weaving	2	2.67
Pottery		

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Relationship between Respondent's Socio-economic Characteristics and Their Participation in Agricultural Livelihood Activities

As shown in Table 4, age (28.675) and household size (58.506) of the respondents have a significant relationship with their participation in agricultural livelihood activities. A possible reason for this is that compared to the younger ones, older respondents have more access to production resources such as land, have more responsibilities in terms of meeting family needs and are more concerned on the need to put in place tangible assets for generation coming behind. While lending credence to this assertion, Olomola, (1995) said that one of the most important factors conditioning the level of production and productivity on rural farmers is the composition and size of the farming family.

Table 4: Relationship between respondent's socio-economic characteristics and their participation in agricultural livelihood activities.

Socio-economic characteristics	χ^2 cal	χ^2 tab	Df	Sig. level	Decision
Age	28.675	12.592	6	0.05	Significant
Education	6.837	12.592	6	0.05	Not sig.
Family size	58.506	14.067	7	0.05	Significant

Source: Computed from field data, 2007.

CONCLUSION

The livelihood activities of youths in Kaboji District of Niger State are both agricultural and non agricultural activities. The major agricultural activity among the youths in the area was crop farming while the predominant non-agricultural livelihood activity was pack animal business. Findings also show that age and household size influences the participation of youths in agricultural livelihood activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sensitization of youths on diverse livelihoods should be carried out to enable them obtain more opportunities for sustainable development. Specifically, more emphasis should be given to the non-crop sub-sector. This can be achieved through a deliberate effort and setting of a national agenda for livestock and fisheries development with targets.

To further improve pack animal business in the area and enable more youths to acquire pack animals, they should be empowered. This could come in form of loans given in kind. For instance, camels and donkeys could be purchased under the State's Youth Empowerment or Poverty Alleviation Programme and distributed to youths on loan. To facilitate this, youths should be encouraged to form associations through which the animals could be made available.

Finally, age and household size of the youths should be considered when planning and implementing any agricultural programme in the area.

REFERENCES

- Adedoyin, S. F. (2003): The Nigerian child and the national plan for decent livelihood. In: the 6th Annual Research Network Meeting and Conference of Children-In-Agriculture Programme (CIAP), Lagos, Nigeria pp 1-8.
- Agumagu, A. C., O. M. Adesope, O. N. Nwaogwugwu and J. U. Mgbada (2006). Livelihood Interests of Rural Youths in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. Paper Presented at the 11th Annual Conference of Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria, 3rd - 6th April, Abeokuta- Nigeria.
- Ayioko, M. A. (1986) "Integration of Women into Farming System. Research Extension for faster technological change" Egerton University College Research Committee paper No 11, pp 1-5.
- Edna, C., M. Njoku and O. M. Adesope (2006). Livelihood Diversity Strategies of Rural Women in Imo State, Nigeria. Paper Presented at the 11th Annual Conference of Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria, 3rd 6th April, Abeokuta-Nigeria.
- Hassan, W. A. and M. Bode (1990). Camels and donkeys as pack and transport animals in semi-arid northern Nigeria. Proceedings of the Fourth Workshop of the West Africa Animal Traction Network. Pp. 140-144.
- National Poverty Eradication Programme. NAPEP,(2001):Report booklet on Conception, Implementation, Coordination and Monitoring. Pp 1-51.
- Niger State Government Diary (2003) A yearly publication by the Ministry of Information and Culture, Niger State. Pp 1-6.
- Obiabuaku, L. O. (1983). Agricultural Extension as a Strategy for Agricultural Transformation. University of Nigeria Press, Nsukka, pp119.
- Oladele, J. O., L. A. Akinbile and A. E. Adekoya (1999) **Social Science Research: Approaches, Techniques and Reporting**. Published by Shanu Books Nigeria Ltd Ijebu Ode 1-141pp.
- Olomola, A. S. (1995) Source of Growth and Performance Trend in Nigeria. Agriculture 1960-1992 in IKPI, A. A. and J. K. Olayeme (eds) Sustainable Agriculture And Economic Development in Nigeria. Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, Arlington 43-56p.