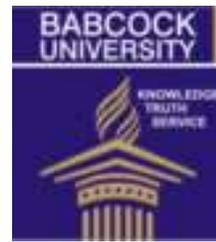




Available online @ www.actasatech.com



actaSATECH 6(1): 19 - 26 (2015)

Research

Challenges facing Rural Youths' Involvement in Active Agricultural Practices in Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP)

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Abstract

Rural youths exist in very harsh and unstable economic circumstances that leave them with little room to think positively and constructively. This study therefore explores the rural youth's involvement in agricultural production in Ogun state. Multistage sampling techniques were used to select 120 rural youths in the study area of Ogun State. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Data collected were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed that the rural youth were within the mean age of 28 years with majority (96.7%) had one form of education ranging from primary to tertiary education. Most (79.2%) of the rural youth are married. Also, the study found out rural youth involvement in agriculture is very high in arable crop production than livestock production. More than half (52.7% and 55.3%), of the respondents indicated that environmental factors such as crop failure and diseases and pest infestation are constraints facing rural youth involvement in agriculture, while most (68.3%) of the rural youth were faced with insufficient skill in the field of agriculture practice. Pearson Product Moment Correlation result showed a significant relationship between the age ($r = 6.215$, $p = 0.002$), household size ($r = 16.12$, $p = 0.041$) and their attitude towards agricultural practices. The study therefore concluded that rural youth have a lot of opportunity in agriculture, but they need to be enlightened and motivated on how to exploit these opportunities. The study thus recommended that effort should be made by initiating youth trade fairs in order to identify and encourage rural youth with innovative ideas which can generate self-employment and enhance human and nation development.

KEY WORDS: rural youth, attitude, involvement, agriculture, development

Introduction

The strength of a nation lies in her youth. Nigeria's rural communities are endowed with youth between the ages of 13 and 30 years who constitutes over 32% of the rural population (Torimiro, 1999). It has been a major problem to retain this potent force in the rural areas as they continue to migrate to urban centres in the quest for a better life. It has been observed that the majority of these youths having been socialized into farming from their childhood days often abandon the rural communities for urban centres with the aims of getting white-collar jobs. Some other reasons why they are quitting the rural areas and farming profession may include the following: lack of rural infrastructure and social amenities, poor living standards of rural dwellers, unattractiveness of farming and taste for cities (Oni, 2013). Nigeria could be described as basically an agricultural nation, because it provided employment for the rural dwellers especially the youth (FAO, 2002). Agriculture being one of the foundation pillars of any society can only function as such if this insufficient youth participation is reversed. This is in view of the fact that the number and proportion of the older persons is growing faster than any other age group (UNFPA and Help Age International, 2012). The youth with the dynamism and flexibility has the potential as an agent of positive change and this should be ensured by development programmes. As stakeholders, rural-based youth are actively engaged in family livelihood activities and play key support roles within their families and usually desire to be acknowledged, emotionally and financially, for such contributions and for the supporting role they played within their families, in addition to controlling the financial returns from their activities (PAFNET, 2010). Exposures of youths to modern cash economy and technologies that give them access to information from around the world are changing the perceived needs of young people, and this must be recognized especially by leaders, thus harnessing the opportunities and challenges thereof. Abdusalam-Saghir, Aromolaran, and Ajeigbe, (2008) observed that, in many African countries the average food energy supplied remained well below minimum national requirement as recommended by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO). In the world, agriculture's share of contribution to employment is 35% compared to 86.8% in Africa according to International Labour Organization (2010) cited in Wobst (2011) and this makes agriculture the basic sector of Africa's economy on which majority of the people depends on for their livelihood. The poor state of agricultural productivity and low esteem of agriculture as manifested in rural-urban migration, rural youths develop low interest in farming activities,

lack of industrial firms to process agricultural products and lack of skilled labour among others has led to worsening situation of Nigerian food deficit. Production ranges from small-scale subsistence farming to large-scale export industries. Agriculture contributes to about 50% of Africa's total export value and approximately 21% of its total gross domestic product (GDP) (Mendelsohn *et al.*, 2000). There is also poor monitoring of the conditions and problems of employment of work in the agriculture sector. Related to this is the lack of proper medical care or access to it particularly in rural communities. Increased and sustained productivity in agriculture ensures food security and contributes immensely to the health and well-being of the people. It is against this backdrop that this research work was carried out with the following objectives:

- i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area;
- ii. ascertain the level of youths' involvement in agricultural activities in the study area;
- iii. examine the attitude of the rural youth towards agricultural activities in the study area and
- iv. identify the constraint rural youth faced towards agricultural activities in the study area.

Material and methods

The study was carried out in Ogun State, Nigeria. Ogun State covers a land area of approximately 16,409,26 square kilometres with a population of about 3,728,098 people (NPC 2006), and is bounded in the west by the Republic of Benin, on the south by Lagos State and the Atlantic ocean, and on the east by Ondo State and in the south by Oyo State. It falls between longitudes 2° 40'E - 6° 40'E and latitudes 4° 40'N -9° 15'N. Ogun state has a total of 20 local government areas. These are Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ogun Waterside, Ijebu Ode, Ijebu North, Ijebu East, Ijebu North East, Odogbolu, Ikenne, Sagamu, Obafemi Owode, Odeda, Ado/Ota, Yewa North, Yewa South, Imeko Afon, Ipokia, Ewekoro, Ifo and Remo North. The state has a tropical climate with mean annual rainfall of about 1,500 millimetre and temperature range of 250C – 350C. The raining season runs between April and November, is characterised by two distinct raining seasons brought about by temporary cease of rain in August. Agriculture is the

major occupation of the people of Ogun State, which is favoured by the climatic condition. Commonly crops cultivated are maize, yam, plantain, beans, cocoa, rubber, palm tree, sugar cane, and cassava. The commonly reared livestock in the State include sheep, goat, poultry, cattle, and local chickens.

The study population were rural youths in the selected area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The state is further subdivided into four agricultural zones namely Abeokuta, Ikenne, Ijebu-Ode, and Iaro by Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP). Each zone is further divided into blocks and cells for the provision of extension services in the state. In all, there are twenty (20) blocks and one hundred and twenty six cells in the state. Purposively sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents from five blocks of OGADEP zones. A total of 120 rural youth formed the sample size. Data were collected through the use of structured interview guide. To determine perceived attitude of youths towards agriculture, twenty-item statements were presented and assessment based on a five point Likert-type rating scale of strongly agree (1), agree (2), undecided (3), disagree (4) and strongly disagree (5). Involvement in agricultural activities was measured by using the Awareness, participation, Benefit and Support (APBS) frame work as used by Obasi and Oguche (1995). Participants were given quantitative judgment such that level of involvement is said to be very low if percentage participation indicated by the respondents is between 0-29%, low if 30-44% moderate if 45-59%, high if 60-79% and very high if 80-100%. Constraints to youths involvement in agricultural activities was determined by assessing respondents based on yes (1) and no (2). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages; mean frequency distributions were used to summarize the data while inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Chi-square were used to test the hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic characteristics

Result in Table 1 showed that the mean age of the respondents was 28 years. Most (79.2%) of the respondents were less than 30 years of age, while 20.8% of the respondents were range between 31 – 35 years thus revealing the presence of respondents that are economically active. This is also in line with Adeokun (2005) who states that youth interest could be better stimulated between childhood and 18 years of age. Most Nigerian youth farmers are within this age group and they are the economically active part of the population. There is also insufficient youth participation in the agricultural sector (Mangal, 2009) even though this class of people is the most productive of any society as it contains people in the prime of their lives physically and mentally. Most (70.8%) of the respondents were males while few (29.2%) were females. This shows the dominance of the male respondent towards agriculture as a venture in study area of Ogun state. This finding indicates that since most farming work or activities is energy demanding, hence men tend to be more involved in production while marketing and processing of food crops are often the chores of women (Adisa and Okunade, 2005). Most (79.2%) of the respondents were married while majority (96.7%) the respondents had one form of formal education or the other. The findings of this study further showed that most (72.5%) of the rural youth had between 3–5 people in their households and 13.3% had between 6 -8 people in their household, while 9.2% had less than 3 people and 5.0% had above 9 persons in their household. This means respondents had relatively small household size. The mean year of farming experience for the rural youth was 15 years, while more than half (54.2%) of the rural youth were into farming. This results shows that agriculture remains one of the important occupation in the rural areas in Nigeria. This implies that agriculture employs a high percentage of youths, especially in the rural areas where agriculture is the major occupation for self reliance and generation of income (Kompman, 1999).

Table 1: Distribution of rural youths based on socio-economic characteristics (n = 120)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean (x)
Sex			
Male	85	70.8	
Female	35	29.2	
Age (year)			
≤ 19	5	4.2	
20 – 25	15	12.5	
26 – 30	75	62.5	28years
31 – 35	25	20.8	
Marital status			
Single	15	12.5	
Married	95	79.2	
Separated	10	8.3	
Household Size (persons)			
< 3	11	9.2	
3 – 5	87	72.5	4persons
6 – 8	16	13.3	
9& above	6	5.0	
Educational status			
No formal education	4	3.3	
Primary education	35	29.2	
Secondary education	68	56.7	
Tertiary education	13	10.8	
Farming experience			
Less than 10	30	25.0	
10 -19	75	62.5	15years
Above 20	15	12.5	
Membership of Social Organisation*			
Traditional group	15	12.5	
Social club	45	37.5	
Co-operative societies	35	29.2	
Self-help organization	5	4.2	
Religion societies	20	16.6	
Occupation			
Civil servant	10	8.3	
Farming	65	54.2	
Trading	20	16.6	
Artisan	15	12.5	
Fishing	5	4.2	
Others	5	4.2	

Field survey, 2014.

Youths Involvement in Agricultural Activities

Table 2 showed that rural youths were highly involved in arable crop production (74.2%), farm labour (72.5%) and crop (palm oil) processing (70.0%). Most (60.0%) of the rural youths were moderately engaged in agric business and about half (50.8%) of the rural youth were involved in poultry production in the study area. Low involvement was seen in the area of horticulture (45.0%) and cash crop (34.2%) production. The finding implied that rural youths were

more involved in arable crop production and farm labour supply than livestock production. According to Gwary, Pur and Bawa (2008) in their study reported that youths were interested in crop production than livestock, probably due to the short gestation period of the crop varieties produced, which ensures quick turnover. In addition, livestock production could be more capital intensive than crop production, hence the preference for crop production by most rural youths.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by level of involvement in agricultural activities

Agricultural activities*	Frequency*	Percentage (%)	Remarks
Arable crop production	89	74.2	High
Farm labour	87	72.5	„
Crop (Palm oil) processing	84	70.0	„
Agric business	72	60.0	Moderate
Poultry production	61	50.8	„
Horticulture	54	45.0	„
Cash crop production	41	34.2	low
Sheep rearing	22	18.3	Very low
Fishery	30	25.0	„
Goat rearing	18	15.0	„

Field survey, (2014)

* multiple responses

Attitude of Respondents towards Agriculture as a Choice of Career

The findings of this study as shown in Table 2 reveal the attitude of secondary school students in Ogun State towards agriculture as a choice of career. ‘I will pursue a career in agriculture up to a adult level’ has the mean value of ($\bar{X} = 2.87$). This shows that majority of the rural youth strongly agreed that agriculture is an important field of study and that most of them see agriculture as a means of feeding the nation if government can really intervene more in agriculture. ‘I will need agricultural skills for my future challenges’ has the mean value of ($\bar{X} = 2.73$). This implies that the essential tools, practices, training and practical aspects of agriculture will assist them in developing positive attitude towards the choice of a career in agriculture. ‘I will need agriculture practices in many ways when I grow old’ has the mean value of ($\bar{X} = 2.62$). Youths are still in need of encouragement

towards pursuing a choice of career in agriculture once the interest is still growing and burning in them. This implies that agriculture is crucial and useful to the other vocations of the respondents when they grow to any stage in life and also they can still make use of the knowledge acquired in agriculture at any stage of life. Agriculture allows one to practice other professions alongside it has the mean value of ($\bar{X} = 2.53$). This is an indication that agriculture readily fits in as a complementary occupation to rural youths to other profession such as the civil service, teaching, engineering etc. ‘I will need the good understanding of agriculture principle for my future plan’ has the mean value of ($\bar{X} = 2.50$). Similar results have been observed in the earlier studies that were conducted by Onuekwusi and Ijeoma (2008). This indicates that knowledge and skills acquired on agriculture can be of added advantage for their future challenges as it allows other professions to be incorporated alongside with it.

Table 2: Attitude of respondents towards agricultural production (n = 120)

S/n	Attitudinal statements	Mean
1	I like agricultural practices	1.70
2.	I have a very good interest in agriculture	1.82
3.	Agriculture is very interesting than others after all	1.88
4.	Agriculture is hard for me to practice	3.89
5.	Agriculture has been my worst occupation	3.99
6.	Agriculture is not important for my future career	3.59
7.	It is difficult to get land for agriculture	3.17
8.	I cannot get good yield in agriculture	3.74
9.	Agriculture is an important field to be embark upon	2.16
10.	Establishing institutions of agriculture is a right step	1.82
11.	Money spent on agriculture is a waste	4.21
12.	I will need agricultural skills for my future challenges	2.73
13.	Agriculture is not important to me in my life’s work	3.71
14.	I will need agriculture practices in many ways when I grow old	2.62
15.	I do not expect much from agriculture, even when i leave home	3.32
16.	I will need the good understanding of agricultural practice for my future plan	2.50
17.	It is not easy to access funding for agriculture	2.71
18.	Agriculture allows one to practise other professions alongside it	2.53
19.	I will pursue a career in agriculture up to my adult level	2.83
20.	Income from agriculture is not encouraging	3.64

Field survey, 2014.

Constraints rural youths face toward the choice of agriculture

Rural youth identified a wide range of constraints associated with agriculture as a chosen career; series of constraint are militating against active participation of rural youth in agricultural production activities in the study area. Table 3 reveals that more than half (52.7% and 55.3%), of the respondents indicated that environmental factors such as crop failure and diseases and pest infestation are constraints facing rural youth choice of agriculture as a discipline, likewise most (63.0%) of them attribute seasonality of farm produce also contribute to the constraints faced in the study area. Half (56.0% and 50.7%) of the respondents indicated financial assistance and inadequate farm

implements as perceived challenge experienced by the rural youths in the study area. Half (50.7%) of the respondents identified human constraint, such as injury during farming exercise as a constraint faced; while 68.3% of the rural youth were faced with insufficient skill in the field of agriculture. It could be said that the perceived constraints to take up agricultural profession by the respondents are attributed to the aforementioned factors, all of which have been the barriers to agricultural development of the nation from onset. Despite all the agricultural programmes launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the key challenges of agricultural production have neither being reduced nor alleviated in the study area which is of a concern to the rural youth in Nigeria.

Table 3: Distribution based on constraints rural youths face toward the choice of agriculture (n=120)

S/N.	Constraint	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
Challenges					
1.	Financial assistance	138	(56.0)	162	(44.0)
2.	Marketing of farm produce	66	(22.0)	234	(78.0)
3.	Lack of improved seeds	60	(20.0)	240	(80.0)
4.	Land problem	100	(33.3)	200	(66.7)
5.	Inadequate farm implement	152	(50.7)	148	(49.3)
Environmental constraints					
6.	Low rainfall	64	(21.3)	236	(78.7)
7.	Excessive flooding	86	(28.7)	214	(71.3)
8.	Excessive rainfall/sunlight	60	(20.0)	240	(80.0)
9.	Seasonality of farm produce	189	(63.0)	111	(37.0)
10.	Bush burning	93	(31.0)	207	(69.0)
11.	Pest and Disease infestation	167	(52.7)	133	(47.3)
12.	Crop failure	175	(55.3)	125	(44.7)
Human constraints					
13.	Injury during farming exercise	152	(50.7)	148	(49.3)
14.	Drudgery nature of farming	91	(30.3)	209	(69.7)
15.	Insufficient skill	205	(68.3)	95	(31.7)
16.	Time wastage	99	(33.0)	201	(67.0)
17.	Stealing and pilfering	100	(33.3)	200	(66.7)

Field survey. 2014

Test of hypotheses:

Chi-square and PPMC analyses were employed in testing the relationship that exists between the socio-economic characteristics of rural youth and their attitude towards agricultural development. The data in Table 5: showed that age ($r = 6.215, p = 0.002$) and household size ($r = 16.12, p = 0.041$) were significant related to their attitude towards agricultural development in the study area at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that their age and household size influence the attitude of rural youth involvement

in the agricultural development in the study area as they advance in age their interest can still stimulate interest in farming activities while the respondent from homes with small household size have less people to cater for in the study area. Also the result in Table 4: revealed that sex does not have any association with the attitude towards agricultural development. This means that being a male or female does not have anything to do with agricultural development.

Table 4: Chi- square analysis result of socio-economic characteristic of rural youths and their attitude towards agricultural development.

Variable	χ^2 -value	Df	p-value	Decision
Sex	2.311	1	0.314	Not significant
Level of education	9.987	3	0.674	Not significant
Marital status	1.879	2	0.089	Not significant
Occupation	3.189	5	0.200	Not significant

Field survey, 2014.

Table 5: PPMC analysis result of socio-economic characteristic of rural youths and their attitude towards agricultural development.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Age	6.215	0,002	Significant
Household size	16.120	0.041	Significant

Field survey, 2014.

Conclusion

It is evident from the findings of the study that Young people in rural areas have often found themselves marginalised both by decisions on the formulation and development of agricultural and by decision-making processes related to agricultural policy which showed from their attitude towards agricultural development. Development requires the mobilization of actors in economic and civil affairs. Youths are the major key players in this regard. Rural youth have a lot of opportunity in agriculture, but they need to be enlightened and motivated on how to exploit these opportunities. As agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, the government should encourage the formation of young farmers clubs from different categories of youth upwards by providing them with land, farm implements and other support services.

Effort should be made by initiating youth trade fairs in order to identify and encourage rural youth with innovative ideas which can generate self-employment and enhance human and nation development. It is important to find an approach that embraces both youth policy and rural development policy. Government should stimulate agricultural production by providing extension services directed at rural youths to improve participation in agricultural activities. There is need for development planning to put adequate structures in place for youths to appreciate their immediate environment. In this regard, government should provide infrastructures and social amenities in the rural areas to encourage youths to live and work in the rural areas.

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