

**ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN
AGRICULTURE IN JALINGO, TARABA STATE, NORTH-EASTERN
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to assess the level of youth involvement in Agriculture in Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria. Both purposive and multi-stage random sampling techniques were adopted for selection of one hundred and twentyone (121) respondents in the study area. Primary data were collected using structures questionnaires and interview techniques administered on the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics and oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) using GraphPad 5.0 software and means were separated using Turkey Multiple Comparison Test. Result indicated that 66.1% were males and 33.9% were females in the study area. The result also showed that 62.8% were single while 29.8 % were married. Majority of the youth (87.6 %) were involved in arable crop production while 77.7% were involved in farm labor and 55.5% were involved in cash crop production. The result suggested that most of the youth were involved in crop production and farm labor than livestock production. The result further indicated constrains affecting youth participation were statistically significantly different between inadequate credit facilities, initial capital, production input, poor infrastructure, low farming profit and lack of agricultural insurances at p -value<0.05. Lack of agricultural insurances was highly statistically significant in comparison with all other constrains affecting youth involvement in agriculture. Government should ensure provision of a workable agricultural insurance scheme for young farmersand it should be accessible. This will in turn encourage them to be fully engage in agricultural production.

Keywords: Soil fertility, Crop production, Poor infrastructure and Agricultural insurance

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to (1) life expectancy in Nigeria for male is 53.4, female 55.6 and total life expectancy is 54.5 which gives Nigeria a world life expectancy ranking of 177. In 2009, the

national unemployment rate was 19.7% with the youth accounting for more than 75% [2]. Increased involvement of youth in agricultural activities could help reduce the problems of the ageing farm population and increasing youth unemployment [3]. Youth is a state of transition between childhood and adulthood characterized by the possession of attributes such as energy, intelligence and hopes which enable them to improve their knowledge and capabilities [4]. The United Nation's Youth Agenda (UNYA) in 2004 defined a youth as an individual between the ages of 15-24 years. The psychologist views the youth as an individual in whom there is time, energy and potentials which have not been fully utilized. Youths are people with zeal, exuberance, dynamism and are volatile in nature.

According to [5], Nigeria's government has attempted to stimulate youth's interest in agricultural production and processing since the late 1980s. In 1986, according to him, the Federal Government established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to provide vocational training to the youth, and in 1987, the Better Life Programme was created to empower women, especially female youths in the rural areas through skills acquisition and healthcare training. [6] further indicated that; People's Bank and Community Banks were established in 1989 and 1990 respectively, to provide credit facilities to low income earners embarking on agricultural production and other micro enterprises, with special consideration to youth engaged in agricultural production. In 1992, the Fadama programme was initiated to enhance food self-sufficiency, reduce poverty, and create opportunities for employment for youths in the rural areas [3].

Young people living in rural areas are forced to migrate to cities as they do not find enough incentives, profitable economic opportunities and attractive environments in rural areas [6]. Poor policies coupled with poor performance of the sector itself have led to youth's disinterest in agriculture sector despite of its available opportunities. Also lack of rural credit, unemployment, rural poverty, weak profitability of the sector and capacity constraints are perceived to be the factors which hinder youth participation in agricultural activities in rural areas [6].

The youth in the study area are the most active but are gradually losing interest in farming activity which is a treat to the livelihood of the people of the area as they depend on agricultural proceeds for their normal economic survival and feeding. They form largely the labour force in agricultural production and process. Due to the poor soil fertility and erosion hazards of their lands, agricultural activity is tedious and most times require manual soil management through cultural practices which the older folks may not be able to do all by themselves. Hence, there is need for youth to actively participate in the production circle in the study area.

Therefore, the main objective of this study was to assess the level of youth participation in Agriculture in Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to; describe the socio

economics characteristics of the respondents in the study area, determine level of youth involvement in agriculture and to ascertain constraints to youth involvement in agriculture in the study area.

2.0 STUDY AREA

This study was conducted in Taraba State, Nigeria. It has an estimated population of 2,294,800 million and land area of 54,428km²[7].

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Youth Farmers in Taraba State constituted the population of this study. In selecting respondents for the study, a multistage sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage 6 wards were purposively selected out of the 10 wards in Jalingo Local Government Area. Selection was done based on activeness of youth participation in agriculture in the area.

In the second stage 15 % (0.15) of the population in each of the six (6) wards were selected through the use of simple random sampling techniques to select 121 respondents. This is shown on the table below.

Table 1: Sample Size Selection Plan

Selected Wards	Sampling frame (Population)	Sample size (0.15)
Kona	200	30
Mayo-gwoi	108	16
Kofai	180	27
Nasarawo	100	15
Dorowa	160	24
Magami	60	9
TOTAL	808	121

This theory was postulated by [8]. The theory focuses on identifying the factors underlying the formation and change of behavioral intent [9].

3.1 Data collection and Analysis

Data for the study were collected from primary sources; it involves the use of structured questionnaire and interviewing method employed for the collection of data. Responses from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using GraphPad 5.0 software and means were separated using Tukey Multiple Comparison Test to determine the variation between the constraints and the most varied constraint to youth involvement in agriculture in the study area.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result from Table 1 showed that 66.1% of the respondents were males while the remaining 33.9% were females. The low number of female respondents could be as a result of the fact that agricultural activities such as soil improvement through composting is laborious due to the nature of the soils of the area which are low in fertility, typical of the farraginous soils of the tropics. Also, tillage practice is time consuming and cattle rearing is an energy demanding job and tend not to attract females. It could also be attributed to the fact that females in the study area are involved in several other activities outside farming like hair dressing and tailoring. The findings agree with [10] that practical farming requires physical fitness and men can withstand more rigorous work than women. However, the result contradicts the view of [11] that gender is no barrier to active involvement in agricultural production activities. Result indicated 49.6% and 50.4% of the respondents were within the age group of 21-30 years and 31-40 years respectively. The result indicated that majority of the respondents were at their productive age where energy can be utilized for profitable venture in agricultural production and more receptive to new innovation unlike older farmers who are usually resistant to changing their old systems of farming.

The findings showed that majority of the respondents were single with 62.8%, while 29.8% were married and 6.6% were divorced. Since most of the respondents were single, they might have more time to learn new skills as well as save enough money to expand and invest more in agricultural activities. [12]in their work "socio-economic determinant factors to youth participation in broilers production in Imo State of Nigeria" revealed that majority of their respondents were single. Educational level of the respondents revealed that 94.2% were literates, 65.3% had tertiary education, 21.5% had secondary education, 7.4% had primary education and 5.8% had no formal education. These results suggested that most of the respondents had moderate knowledge necessary for understanding modern farming techniques, adoption of innovations and applications. This finding agrees with [13] that education will likely enhance the adoption of modern farm technologies by youth and thereby sustaining a virile farming population.

Result showed 52.1% of the respondents had 3-4 hectares of land, 28.1% had more than 5 hectares and 19.8% had 1-2 hectares of land through recognizance soil survey and soil morphological analysis of the study area. Going by [14], classification of farm size of 0.1 hectare to 5.9 hectares as small farms, it then implies that all the respondents were small scale farmers. This will not allow for meaningful investment and returns to scale on food security.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics (n=121)

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	80	66.1
Female	41	33.9
Age (years)		
21-30	60	49.6
31-40	61	50.4
Marital Status		
Single	76	62.8
Married	36	29.8
Divorced	8	6.6
Widowed	1	0.8
Farm size (Hectares)		
1-2	24	19.8
3-4	63	52.1
Above 5	34	28.1
Educational Level		
Non formal education	7	5.8
Primary	9	7.4
Secondary	26	21.5
Tertiary	79	65.3
Annual income (naira)		
≤50,000	54	44.6
50,001-80000	37	30.6
80,001-110,000	14	11.6
Above 110,000	16	13.2

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The entries in Table 2 indicated that youths were highly involved in Arable crop Production (87.6%), Farm labor (77.7 %), and Cash Crop Production (55.5 %). Youth were moderately engaged in Poultry production (45.5 %); lowly engaged in Cattle rearing (11.6 %), Sheep rearing (16.5 %), Fish production (27.3 %) and Goat rearing (21.5 %). The finding implied that

youths were more involved in crop production and farm labour supply than livestock production. This result is in agreement with the findings of [15] who stated that youth were interested in crop production than livestock, probably due to the short gestation period of the crop varieties produced, which ensures quick turnover. Furthermore, this could be because livestock production could be more capital intensive than crop production, hence the preference for crop production by most youth.

Table 3: Distribution of Responding According to their Level of Involvement in Agriculture (n=121)

Variables	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Arable Crop production	106	87.6
Farm labor	94	77.7
Poultry	55	45.5
Cattle rearing	14	11.6
Cash crop	67	55.4
Sheep rearing	20	16.5
Fish production	33	27.3
Goat rearing	26	21.5

Source: Field Survey, 2018

*Multiple responses

Figure 1: Constraints Affecting Youth Participation in Agriculture

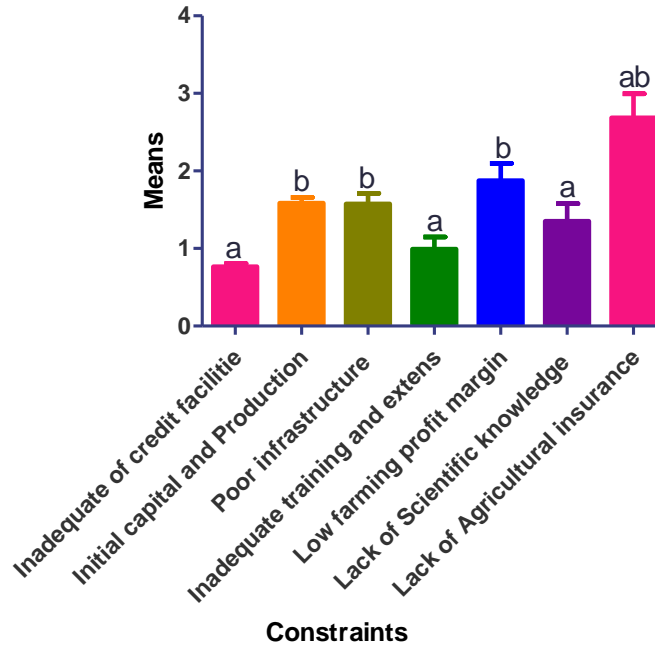


Figure 1 shows constrains affecting youth involvement in agriculture using Turkey Multiple Comparison Test. The result indicated statistically significantly difference between inadequate credit facilities, initial capital and production input and poor infrastructure (p -value<0.05). This implied that initial capital and production input that will improve the fertility status of the soils and poor infrastructure are constrains that tend to affect youth involvement than inadequate credit facilities in the study area. This suggests that, initial capital and production facilities such as soil inputs are what the young farmers do consider before they get into any agricultural production as a business. Poor infrastructure discouraged youth from transporting goods and services to where they are needed. This is similar to the study of [16]who discovered that production resources such as land, finance and market intelligences are a serious constraint considering the fact that agriculture is capital intensive.

The result indicated high statically significant difference between inadequate credit facilities and low profit margin (p -value<0.05). This showed that low farming profit margin was a constrain that hinders youth involvement in agriculture than inadequate credit facilities. This could also be true in the sense that most youth tend to look for white collar jobs and view farming as a poor man’s venture. According to [17]who postulated that, growing youth population (60% of Africans are between 16-24 years of age) do not see agriculture as a profitable opportunity, but rather, regard it as subsistence farming, or a dead end.

Also, result showed that there was very high significant difference between initial credit facilities and lack of agricultural insurances (p -value <0.05). This suggests that lack of agricultural insurances affect youth participation in agriculture more than inadequate credit facilities in the study area. This could be due to most of the young people were educated and they know the effect of the risk involved in business, they could have more courage if they were financially insured. The study recorded high significant difference between initial capital, production input and lack of scientific knowledge of agriculture among the survey generation of illiterate farmers (p -value <0.05). This also indicated that initial capital production input had affected youth involvement in agriculture than lack of scientific knowledge of agriculture among the survey generation of illiterate farmers. There was statically significant difference between poor infrastructures and lack of agriculture insurances (p -value <0.05). The result revealed that constrain in lack of agricultural insurance had affected youth involvement in agriculture than poor infrastructure in the study area.

The result further showed statically significant difference between constrain in inadequate training and extension visit and low farming profit margin (p -value <0.05). This revealed that low farming profit margin affect youth participation in agriculture than inadequate extension visit. This could be because information had become accessible due to the transformation in Information and Communication Technology, extension services are less needed than before. There was very high significant difference between inadequate training and extension visit and lack of agricultural insurance (p -value <0.05). This suggests that lack of agricultural insurance had affected youth involvement far more than inadequate training and extension visit. Constrain in low farming profit margin and lack of agricultural insurance showed similar trend. This result revealed that lack of agricultural insurances affected youth participation in agriculture than low farming profit. This could be due to most young farmers' loose confidences and becomes insecure if there business is not financially insured. There was very high significant difference between constrain in scientific knowledge of agriculture among the survey generation of illiterate farmers and lack of agriculture insurances (p -value <0.05), this entails that lack of agricultural insurance highly affected youth participation in agriculture than lack of scientific knowledge of agriculture among the survey generation of illiterate farmers in the study area.

Among all the constrains that affected youth participation in agriculture, lack of agricultural insurances were found to have affected youth involvement in agriculture than inadequate credit facilities, initial capital and production input, poor infrastructure, inadequate training and extension services, low farming profit margin, lack of scientific knowledge of agriculture among the survey generation of illiterate farmers. The findings correspond to that of [6] who identified factors that limit rural youth involvement in agricultural production in Nigeria. He divided these factors into economic, social and environmental factors. Economic factors include; inadequate

credit facilities, low farming profit margins, lack of agricultural insurance, insufficient initial capital and production inputs. Social factors were; public perception about farming and parental influence to move out of agriculture.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Young and single men were predominant in the study area and their primary occupation is farming through soil fertility improvement and cultural management methods. The youth were within productive age of 21-40 years. They were more involved in crop production and farm labor than livestock production. The constrains affecting youth participation were inadequate credit facilities, initial capital, production input, poor infrastructure, low farming profit and lack of agricultural insurances and were significantly different when compared using ANOVA. Lack of agricultural insurance was highly significant compared with all other constrain affecting youth involvement in agriculture in the study area due to poverty and inadequate information on credit facility and their accessibility. Lack of agricultural insurance is the major constrain of youth participation in agricultural production in the study area. Therefore, the general agricultural production of youth in the area was low.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i. Government should ensure the provision of a workable agricultural insurances scheme and make provision for the funds to be accessible to the youth; this will in turn encourage them to be fully engage in agricultural production.
- ii. The young farmers should be reoriented and encouraged so as to change their mindset of seeing agricultural farming as low profit venture. This could be achieved by local contribution community program which will encourage youth to embark on productive and profitable farming enterprise.

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