

Contributions of Cooperative Societies to Agricultural Development in Edo state, Nigeria. A Case study of Akoko-edo Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

This study was to assess the contributions of cooperative societies to agricultural development in Edo State: A case study of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area. A total of 121 cooperative farmers were used for the study. The data were obtained through the use of structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result revealed that 66.1% of the cooperative farmers were between 41-60 years old, 46% had secondary education, 52.9% of them had long years of farming experience, 64% had no extension visits from extension agents and 72.7% of the farmers belonged to one co-operative society and another for 11-15 years. The result also revealed that majority (37.19%) of the farmers benefited from the cooperative marketing which was ranked 1st. This was followed by Provision of farm inputs to farmers (24.79%) and Provision of credit facilities to farmers (23.14%) which were ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively. The result of this study also revealed that the major (37.19%) source of information to farmers was through cooperative society while extension visits was the least (12.40%) source of information to farmers. Additionally, farmer's participation in cooperative activities was majorly constrained by insufficient credit facility. It was therefore, recommended that farmers should utilize their membership of cooperative societies effectively by contributing money together in order to assist themselves financially.

Keywords: Contribution; Cooperatives; Agricultural development; Edo State

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries including Nigeria, agriculture dominates the nation's economy. It is by far the most important sector of Nigeria's economy engaging about 70% of the labour force. Agricultural land holdings are generally small and scattered, family is often of the subsistence variety characterized by simple tools and shifting cultivation. These small farms produce about 80% of the total foods. About 30.7 million hectares (76 million acres) or 33% of Nigeria land area are under cultivation. Nigeria's diverse climate makes it possible to produce virtually all agricultural products that can grow in the tropical and semitropical area of the world. The economic benefits of large scale agricultural development in Nigeria allows the formation of cooperative societies and groups to engage in agriculture. Large scale agriculture, however, is not common [1].

The history and importance of agricultural cooperative organizations in Nigeria is a long-standing one. Ihimodu (1998) traced their origin to British administration in 1935 with the enactment of the cooperative society law. Moreover, before the legislative control, there had been indigenous attempts to form associations such as cocoa farmers' society and kola-nut planters

union. These associations were formed in major cocoa producing areas and they were independent of government support [2]. The collapse of the traditional mode of cooperatives was attributed to incapacitation of members to bear risk, expectation of high returns on investment and poor management. Therefore, cooperative organizations have undergone changes over the years ranging from traditional, informal to modern and formal institution.

The cardinal objective of introducing agricultural cooperative was to increase crop production and credit facilities to cultivators. They have been deeply involved in the activities that have impacted on the livelihood of members in particular and rural people in general. This opinion was shared by Omotosho that cooperatives often ploughed back resources in terms of dividend on share capital and distributed proportionally to members as patronage bonus. These voluntary social organizations are found in communities possessing common interests but differ in size and degree of interaction among members [3].

In these societies, members have had the ability to influence ideas and actions of the government through a common bargaining power. Adefila had the belief in principle that agricultural cooperatives were competing favourably with private individuals including

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multinational companies amidst of various challenges such as price fluctuations, legislative controls and low capital accumulation. In this regard, most communities and agricultural development agencies have sought the support of these organizations as effective means of imparting new ideas, techniques, harnessing their resources towards improving agricultural production and this constitutes significantly towards the development of agricultural sector [4].

Cooperatives have been regarded as one of the main institutional machineries for empowering the economically weak members of the society. With this recognition and the determination of government (at all levels) to transform agricultural production and raise the standard of living of people in the rural areas, many agricultural cooperative societies have been formed all over the State. But, despite the contributions made by the cooperative societies towards agricultural development in Edo State, they have not been well recognized by government in the past. Therefore, there was need to examine the contributions of cooperative societies in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area (LGA).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study was to examine the contributions of cooperative societies to agricultural development in Edo State. The specific objectives were to:

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of cooperative farmers
2. Identify the contributions of cooperative farmers to agricultural development
3. Identify the sources of agricultural information available to cooperative farmers
4. Identify constraints that hinder farmers' participation in cooperative activities.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Akoko- Edo Local Government Area of Edo State. The Local Government has an area of 1.371km² and a population of two hundred and sixty two thousand, one hundred and ten (262,110) people (5). Based on a reconnaissance survey conducted in the study area, a multistage sampling procedure was used in this study. The first stage, was the purposive selection of Edo State. The State is highly dominated with cooperative societies. In the second stage, one LGA (Akoko-Edo) was purposively selected from the State out of 18 LGAs. In the third stage, three communities (Ibillo, Lampese and Ojirami) were randomly selected from the LGA chosen. However, all the communities together were chosen because they were more dominated by cooperative societies. In the fourth stage, ten percent (10%) of the sample frame was proportionately selected amounting to 121sample size out of 1,206 cooperative members (farmers) used for the study. Data were derived using structured questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive statistics [5].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-economic characteristics of cooperative farmers in the study area

The result revealed that 66.1% of the cooperative farmers were between 41-60years old, 46% had secondary education and with

long years of farming experience (52.9%) while 64% had no visits from extension agents and 72.7% of the respondents belonged to one co-operative society and another (Tables 1-5).

Contributions of cooperative societies to agricultural development

The result revealed that majority (37.19%) of farmers benefited from the cooperative marketing which was ranked 1st. This was followed by Provision of farm inputs to farmers (24.79%) and Provision of credit facilities to farmers (23.14%) which were ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively (Table 6).

Sources of information available to cooperative farmers

The spread of information sources among the cooperative farmers in the study area. The result shows that, the major source of information to farmers was from the cooperative societies (37.19%) while radio was 28.49 percent and about 21.5% from neighbors. This implies that, farmers got most agricultural information through cooperative societies. This consequently led to more interactions among farmers who were members of cooperative societies (Table 7).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their age.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Age (Years) | - | - |
| 21-40 (young) | 32 | 26.5 |
| 41-60 (middle) | 80 | 66.1 |
| 61-80 (old) | 9 | 7.4 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Field survey, 2017

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their years of schooling.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Never attended school (0yr) | 7 | 5.8 |
| Primary school (6years) | 42 | 34.7 |
| Secondary school (6years) | 56 | 46 |
| Tertiary school (2-5years) | 16 | 13 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their extension visits.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Extension contact (number of visits) | | |
| No visit | 77 | 64 |
| 1-2 | 24 | 19.8 |
| 3-4 | 20 | 16.5 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their farming experience.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Farming experience (years) | | |
| 6-10 | 64 | 52.9 |
| 11-15 | 40 | 33.1 |
| 16-20 | 15 | 12 |
| 21-25 | 2 | 1.7 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to their cooperative society.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Membership of Co-operative societies (years spent) | | |
| 1-5 | 10 | 8.3 |
| 6-10 | 21 | 17.4 |
| 11-15 | 88 | 72.7 |
| 16-20 | 2 | 1.7 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Table 6: Distribution of Contributions of cooperative societies to farmers.

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages | Rank |
|---|-----------|-------------|------|
| Engage in cooperative marketing | 45 | 37.19 | 1st |
| Provision of farm inputs for farmers | 30 | 24.79 | 2nd |
| Provision of credit facilities for farmers | 28 | 23.14 | 3rd |
| Cooperative influence on government for rural development | 18 | 14.88 | 4th |
| Total | 121 | 100 | |

Field survey, 2017

Table 7: Distribution of sources of information to farmers.

| Sources of information | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Cooperative societies | 45 | 37.19 | 1st |
| Radio | 35 | 28.93 | 2nd |
| Neighbours | 26 | 21.49 | 3rd |
| Extension agents | 15 | 12.40 | 4th |
| Total | 121 | 100 | |

Field survey, 2017

Constraints that hinder farmers' participation in cooperative societies

The constraints faced by farmers in the study area were ranked according to their magnitude as indicated by the farmers. The problem of insufficient credit facilities was the most severe constraint to farmers with 28.93percent attested to this fact which was ranked 1st and pests and disease attack was the second major constraints (24.79%) responsible for pre-harvest and post-harvest losses of cocoyam. About 19% of the respondents indicated that weeds problem was also a constraint which were ranked 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively (Table 8).

Table 8: Distribution of constraints to farmers' involvement in cooperative societies.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Insufficient credit facilities | 35 | 28.93 | 1st |
| Pest and diseases | 30 | 24.79 | 2nd |
| Weed problem | 23 | 19.01 | 3th |
| Shortage of farm land | 18 | 14.88 | 4th |
| Shortage of labour | 15 | 12.40 | 5th |
| Total | 121 | 100 | |

Field survey, 2017

SUMMARY

The result revealed that majority the respondents belonged to the age group of 41-60 years. These age groups could be regarded as the middle age group. Similarly, majority (46%) of the respondents had secondary years of schooling which implies that there was the possibility of understanding the of the rules and regulations of cooperative societies and the more active the farmers were, the more they benefit from the cooperatives. The study also revealed that, majority (53%) of the respondents had been in farming for 6-10 years with about 52.9%, no extension visits and many years of cooperative memberships. The study revealed that farmers got information majorly from cooperatives, benefited a lot from being members of cooperative societies and constrained majorly with insufficient credit facilities. In general, the cooperative society had greatly contributed to the agricultural development of study area based on the findings.

CONCLUSION

The result of this findings revealed that cooperative members comprised of middle age farmers, literate with many years of farming experience in cooperative business, had no contacts with extension agents and belonged to one cooperative society or another. More so, the cooperative society contributed immensely to agricultural development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Farmers should utilize their membership of cooperative societies effectively by contributing money together in order to assist themselves financially.
- ii. Government should provide the farmers with grants to enable them improve their farming activities.
- iii. Government should carry out sensitization programmes to cooperative farmers on how to effectively control pests and diseases.
- iv. Since, extension visits was the least source of information to farmers, government should recruit enough agricultural extension personnel to improve on the number of visits to farmers on issues regarding cooperative societies.

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