

ASSESSMENT OF LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES OF RURAL FARMERS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to assess the livelihood diversification of the rural farmers in Kwara State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample communities from which a total of 160 households were randomly selected for the study. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to collect data for the study. The quantitative technique involved the use of questionnaire while the qualitative involved the use of PRA tools. The study found that 47.3% of the sampled farmers are in the age range of 56 years and above. There are more adults 37-55 years (38%) than youths 19-36 years (14.7%) in the study area. The males (51.2%) outnumber the females (48.8%) while educational levels are relatively low among the population as 38% of the sample had no formal education. Of the total households facilitated during PRA, 53% were considered "asset poor," the major occupation for income generation in the communities was trading on non-farm produce (39.8%). Household size ranged from 5-8 (34.9%), 8 and above (33.3%) and 1-4 (31.8%). The study found that access to credit facilities was the major interest of the communities and existing groups were not strong enough to control market or operate as pressure group to influence access to credit facilities. Thus, the study recommends that a simple and functional micro-credit delivery system that will enable them to access loans should be introduced by stakeholders in order to increase and strengthen their economic activities. Furthermore, business advisory services should be provided for the enterprise groups to help achieve these goals.

Key Words: Poverty, Diversification, Households, Food insecurity, Income, Assets.

Introduction

Rural Nigeria is characterized by agrarian livelihood as well as other primary production activities such as animal husbandry and fishery activities. Studies have shown that agricultural-based

livelihood in rural Nigeria has a higher level of poverty than other occupational groups. Rural agriculture is subjected to local variations in weather conditions, and thus expected variations in income levels and access to food (Omonona, 2009).

Therefore, there is need to diversify sources of income into multiple agricultural and/or non-agricultural income-based livelihood systems. Livelihood systems are at the heart of poverty reduction and food security issues in different policy environments. According to Baro (2002), livelihood systems encompass means, relations, and processes of production, as well as household management strategies. The resources and values of specific physical and social environments determine the character of livelihood system components. Food security is not the only goal of rural populace; the need for a sustainable livelihood is more central since it reflects the ability to take hold of other issues like good nutrition and housing which guarantee an improved life. Ayantoye *et al.* (2011) stated that there is a nexus between poverty levels in rural Nigeria and the level of food security.

A key issue in poverty and food security is livelihood and income diversification potential of households. It may be noted that treating the issue of food security without consideration of the attendant security of the livelihood of the individual/household in question may be inadequate to making appropriate policy recommendations. Olarinde and Kuponiyi (2005) showed, with respect to livelihood patterns, that farmers who produce for consumption alone are likely to fall into deeper food insecurity as a result of low income, reduced levels of productive resources and poverty. In Nigeria, however, there is limited literature that seeks to understand the livelihood dimension to food security. In view of the fact that livelihood security and food security are linked in ways that are relevant to development and human well-being, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature on food security, and livelihood on an aggregate scale, which has been less

studied in Nigeria, with a view to bringing out country-wide policy implications.

Livelihoods are ‘means of making a living’, the various activities and resources that allow people to live. Different people have different lifestyles and ways of meeting their needs. Similarly, households perform various activities to gain and maintain their livelihoods. The nature of these livelihood activities depends on the availability of assets, resources, labour, skills, education, social capital, seasonality, agro-climate/agro-ecology, and gender (Pasteur, 2002; Alli, 2005; Okali, 2006; Porter *et al.*, 2007; Akinwale, 2010).

Livelihood and income diversification have been studied extensively over the years, (Reardon *et al.*, 2007 Okali, 2006; Adekoya, 2009; Akinwale, 2010). Despite the fact that rural areas are agrarian in nature, there is an increasing level of income and livelihood diversification especially to non-agricultural income generating activities (Oluwatayo, 2009). Diversification into non-farm income generating activities has been found to improve food access and nutrition (Babatunde and Qaim, 2010). The need for income diversification in rural areas includes higher pay, lower risks, worsening terms of trade in agriculture, change in environmental resource base, climatic change, and natural disasters (Reardon *et al.*, 2006; Porter *et al.*, 2007; Akinwale, 2010). This study will provide value addition to literature base of rural livelihood, since it will provide empirical evidence of the likely link between livelihood and income diversification at grassroot level. The main objective of this study is to find out the livelihood diversification of the rural farmers in Kwara State. Thus, the study assessed the livelihood activities of the respondents, their livelihood diversification strategies, the resources available to them, and the

constraints faced by the farmers in diversifying their livelihood.

Methodology

Study Area

Kwara State is one of the states in North Central Political Zone of Nigeria. It is situated between parallels 8° and 10° north latitudes and 3° and 6° east longitudes covering an area of about 32,500 Sq/km (KSMANR, 2010). The climate of the State is characterized by wet and dry seasons, each lasting for about six months. The rainy season begins at about the end of March and lasts till October, while the dry season begins in November and ends early in March. The total annual rainfall range in

the state is between 1000mm to 1,500mm. The minimum temperature ranges between 21.1°C and 25.0°C while maximum temperature ranges between 30°C and 35°C. The vegetation of the state is derived guinea savanna with large expanse of arable land and rich fertile soils (KWSMANR, 2010). Agricultural production is largely peasant and small scale, relying on the use of manual labour, crude implements, fertilizers, mechanical implement, improved seeds and agrochemicals are also used to some extent. Land holding in the state is very small and most of the households have less than two hectares of land for farming.

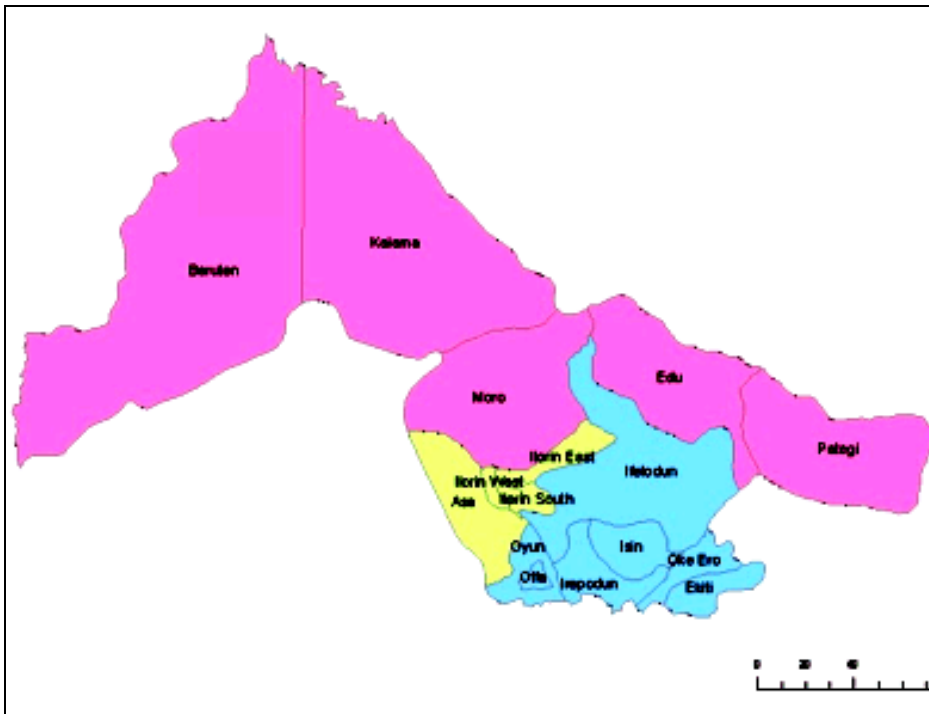


Figure 1: Map of Kwara State, Nigeria

Sampling

Purposive sampling technique was used to select two Local Government Areas (Ifelodun and Ilorin South LGAs) for the study as a result of large number of farmers and convenience for the researchers. Two communities were randomly selected from

each LGA making a total of four communities. Forty households were selected from each community using simple random technique and this resulted in one hundred and sixty (160) households out of which a total of one hundred and twenty-nine (129) actually participated.

The quantitative data was gathered using household livelihood questionnaire while participatory rural appraisal tools were used to collect qualitative data. Observation, focus group discussions, and structured interview were used to obtain data. The PRA tools consisted of wealth ranking and seasonal calendar. The tools were used to complement data generated through the questionnaire. The PRA tools were used to elicit information on constraints at both the enterprise and group levels. The wealth ranking tool provided information on the socio-economic characteristics of the communities and encouraged the communities to proffer solutions to the constraints. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Graphs, tables and maps were also used to describe the findings of the PRA tools.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 describes the basic socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. From the population sampled, about 47.3% were 56 years and above. There are, however, more adults 37-55 years (38%) than youths 19-36 years (14.7%) in the sampled population. It could be that most of the youths in the study area had migrated to urban cities in search of better living as reported by some of the elderly respondents. However, the qualitative data revealed that community members are ready to take agriculture as a business if their capacity is strengthened. This could encourage youths and unemployed graduates to return to their communities to engage in farming as a lucrative business. There are more males (51.2%) than females (48.8%) in the entire

population sampled and educational levels were relatively low among the population.

Overall, 52.7% of them have no formal education. It is likely that those who have migrated to urban cities are the more educated while the less educated are left with not many choices to cope with their livelihood. The result showed that the majority of households are within 5-8 (34.9%) people in size, this is followed by houses with 8 or more people (33.3%). There were also households with 1-4 (31.8%) people in size. This could be interpreted to mean that a typical household size of rural farmers in this study is larger than five people.

Table 1 further shows that trading (39.8%) was the major source of funding for agricultural enterprises in the study while sales of farm produce was the next (35.9%). This is followed by salary/pension (13.3%), property lease (8%), artisan (7%) and others (3.1%). Access to credit for agriculture was a major problem for the farmers as the analysis signifies that no external assistance for credit facilities was available. The data showed trading (44.1%) was the major occupation in the study followed by crop farming (43.2%), livestock farming (10.2%), others (2.5%). However, aggregating crop and livestock farming together (53.4%) shows agricultural business is the major enterprise in the study. These results suggest that access to funding for agricultural enterprises is more than likely to promote farmers' productivity thereby resulting in higher incomes for the people. The result also confirms the assertion that peasant farmers concentrate on food crop production to ensure a household improvement and income generation.

Table 1: Selected socio-economic activities of the respondents (n = 129)

	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Age	19 – 36	19	14.7
	37 – 55	49	38.0
	56 and above	61	47.3
Sex	Male	66	51.2
	Female	63	48.8
Educational status	No formal education	49	38.0
	Quranic education	19	14.7
	Adult education	5	3.9
	Primary education	29	22.5
	Secondary education	16	12.4
	Tertiary education	11	8.5
Household size	1 – 4	41	31.8
	5 – 8	45	34.9
	More than 8	43	33.3
Main source of Income	Salary/pension	17	13.2
	Sales of farm produce	46	35.7
	Lease of property	1	0.8
	Trading of non-farm produce	51	39.5
	Artisan	9	7.0
	Others (labour)	4	3.1
	No response	1	0.8
Main livelihood Activity	Crop	51	39.5
	Livestock	12	9.3
	Trading	52	40.3
	Others (labour)	3	2.3
	No response	11	8.5
Reasons for diversification of Livelihood	Maximizing potentials/profit	56	43.4
	Food security	45	34.9
	Income stability	20	15.5
	Others (family welfare)	1	8
	No response	7	5.4
	Total	129	100

A wealth ranking was carried out for the farmers in the study and the result is presented in Table 2. It was shown that there are more female headed households (FHH) (57%) than male headed households (MHH) (43%) in the study area. This is somewhat surprising given that there are more males in the study than females.

Notwithstanding, the wealth ranking exercises also showed that very few of the community members are large scale farmers and fare better than other community members. Again, the table also showed the poverty status of the communities.

Table 2: Wealth ranking of rural farmers

Characteristics	Food secured	Moderately food secured	Food insecure
Farm size:	5 ha	2-3 ha	1 ha
Fertilizer:	Use 5-10 bags of fertilizer/year	Use 2 bags of fertilizer/year	cannot afford a bag of fertilizer
Food:	3 meals per day with meat	Twice per day at times with meat	1 meal per day without meat
House:	Cemented houses.	Non cemented houses	Mud houses
Children's education:	Secondary education.	Arabic education	Don't train child
Land:	Inherited	Inherited	Inherited
Household size:	2-3 wives with many children.	1-2 wives with many children.	1 wife with many children.
Social group:	Yam/cassava associations	Cassava/maize associations	No other association.
Other source of income:	Pension from retirement/sales of farm produce	Local thrift arrangement	None
FHH = 57%		MHH = 47%	
	Food secured	Moderately food secured	Food insecure
THH	19%	50%	31%
FHH	36%	51%	13%
MHH	30%	47%	23%

However, the communities determined the level of poverty by the sizes of farms cultivated, ability to raise collateral for loans from social groups and the timeliness of re-payment of such loans. Surprisingly, majority of the food in-secured households from the sampled population were male headed households (MHH). This indicates that Shea butter processing which is the major occupation (Table 3) of women in the study might have contributed to the increase in their incomes.

The seasonal calendar (Table 3) confirms the other enterprises (vulcanizing, commercial business, basket making, and carpentry) that serve as other sources of livelihood for people in the study area. The qualitative data also showed that men are

more engaged in wet season farming while women are engaged in dry season farming. The results also showed that women were involved in off-farm enterprises while men were involved in non-farm enterprises. This corroborates reports that rural households engage in multiple enterprises as a strategy for addressing business risks.

It was further observed that shea butter processing was the leading enterprise most women in the study area do. The seasonal calendar also showed the gender differential roles, which were complimentary. The implication is that agriculture and rural development intervention programmes are targeted at both men and women equally.

Table 3: Seasonal calendar tool

Months	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Rainfall Pattern	*	*	*	*	*	*						
Activities												
1. Production												
Land Clearing (M)	*											
Planting (M&F)	*											
Weeding (M)		*										
Fertilization (M&F)			*	*								
Harvesting (M&F)				*								
2 Irrigation Farming: (vegetables, okra)												
Land clearing (W)								*				
Planting (W)								*				
3 Off-farm Activities												
Threshing/dehusking (M&F)							*					
Storage/preservation (W)								*				
Shea butter processing(F)			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
4. Marketing (M&W)									*	*		
5. Non-farm Activities												
i. vulcanizing (M)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
ii. Okada business(M)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
iii. Basket making(M)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
iv. carpentry (M)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
v. Welding (M)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
vi. Trading (M)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
6. Income			*	*	*	*	*	*	*			
Expenditure	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
7. Diseases Period												
i. termite	*	*	*	*								
ii. insects	*	*	*	*								
iii rodents		*	*									
8 Livestock Disease												
Meningitis		*	*	*								
Dysentery		*	*	*								
Scabies/rashes		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
9. Food shortages (hunger period)		*	*									
10. Labour Peak												
For Men	*	*	*	*		*	*	*				
For Women		*		*				*	*	*		

* indicates months of occurrence.

The study analysed the constraints militating against livelihood diversification for rural farmers in the study. It was found that inaccessibility to credit facilities (62.1%) was a major factor affecting livelihood diversification (Table 4). This implies that the savings and micro credit programmes will help these people to achieve their livelihood development and

diversification goals. Consequently, it will keep them in their jobs and they could be able to expand their business base over time. This can also facilitate the generation of employment in their localities. Old age is also a factor affecting livelihood diversification in the study (Table 4). This confirms that the aged and adults constitute the majority in the study.

Table 4: Limitations, marketing options, groups and extension activities in the study area

Variables	Distribution	Frequency	percentage
	Drought	5	3.9
Factors limiting	Old age	15	11.6
Expansion of	Sickness & disease	7	5.4
Livelihood activity	Inadequate credit facilities	72	55.8
	Conflict	10	7.8
	Marketing problems	6	4.7
	Others	1	0.8
	No response	13	10.1
	Total	129	100
Marketing farm	Itinerant traders	16	12.4
options for	Open market	83	64.3
Produce	processing factories	1	0.8
	Consumption	2	1.6
	No response	27	20.9
	Total	129	100
Groups/association	Yes	87	67.4
In this community	No	32	24.8
	No response	10	7.8
	Total	129	100
Types of groups	Fadama	4	3.1
	Cooperative	12	9.3
	Social	19	14.7
	Agric society	27	20.9
	None	4	6.2
	No response	74	57.4
	Total	129	100
Access to	Yes	101	78.3
Extension	No	23	17.8
Supports	No response	5	3.9
	Total	129	100
Communication	Interpersonal	110	85.5
	Radio and television	8	6.3
	GSM and others	11	8.6
	Total	129	100

If the capacity of people in the study area is built to take agriculture as a business while creating enabling environment for farming to be practiced at a reduced cost, youths and other marginalized groups will be encouraged to take farming as a lucrative business. Other limiting factors include conflict between pastoralist and crop farmers (8.6%), sickness and disease (6%), marketing problem (5.2%), drought and natural disaster (4.3%).

The results in Table 1 showed maximization of profit (45.9%) as one of the goals for livelihood diversification. However, this goal is not being achieved as a result of the factors identified in Table 4. Food security (36.9%) was the next reason by the farmers for establishing enterprises followed by income stability (16.4%). It was evidently shown that farmers (81.4%) prefer to sell their produce in the open market while only 1% prefer selling to

processors and 2% would rather have it consumed (Table 4). Thus, value addition is not a common practice by people in the study area as only 1% of farm produce is sold to processors.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It was found that the population of the rural area has a direct relationship with their ages. The aged (old) has the highest population and this population decreases as the age decreases. The level of literacy is low as majority of the population do not have basic education. Their main source of livelihood is agriculture mainly bordering around crop production and marketing while the majority of the samples have a household size between 5 to 8 persons. The main reasons for livelihood diversification in the area are to maximize profit, increase income and secure food for the family.

The wealth ranking analysis, shows that majority of the households are female headed and this set of people are more food secured than their male counterpart. The seasonal calendar also revealed that females are more engaged in post-harvest activities while the men are involved in off-farm activities. Women also do more of dry season (irrigation) farming while the men take the lead in rainy season farming. Inadequate credit facilities and old age are the major challenges identified as limiting factors to livelihood diversification in the study. Although farmers have access to market, they do not have marketing groups or union that can influence their bargaining power to make more profit thus the wealth ranking revealed that agricultural production is high but their income level is low.

Based on findings and conclusion, the study therefore recommends that a simple and functional micro credit delivery system that will enable farmers to access loans

should be introduced in order to increase and strengthen their economic activities. Moreover, business advisory services should be provided for the enterprise groups to help achieve their goals and ensure employment creation. Furthermore, all rural enterprise groups should be trained on importance of groups in business enterprises, enjoy economy of scale through joint venture participation, entrepreneurial skills and effective group management techniques. The training will improve group goal attainment and boost the gains accruable to the group members.

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