



ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED CAUSES OF CONFLICTS AMONG YAM FARMERS IN CROSS RIVER STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the causes of conflicts among yam farmers in Cross River State. The major objectives of the study were to; identify the socio-economic characteristics of yam farmers in the study area, identify the type of conflicts prevalent in the study area and assessed the causes of conflicts among yam farmers in the study area. A well structured questionnaire was used to elicit data from respondents. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to obtain information for the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data obtained from respondents. The results of the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents revealed that a large number of the respondents had formal education, were married (58.0%), were aged between 20 to 40 years (49.0%), had household size 1-7 (75.0%) and were mostly farmers (60.0%). It was equally observed that conflicts were of many types across the zone namely; intergroup conflicts (\bar{X} =2.04), family conflict (\bar{X} =2.02), communal conflicts (\bar{X} =2.05) and Tribal conflicts (\bar{X} =1.99) among many others. The main causes of conflict among yam farmers were; land encroachment (\bar{X} =2.83), Disagreement among family members on land issues (\bar{X} =2.75), straying of cattle into yam farms (\bar{X} =2.66) and land disagreement among traditional authorities (\bar{X} =2.62) among very many others. The study recommend that land boundaries should be properly delineated and garsseted from time to time by traditional rulers in conjunction with the government of the day. This will help curb some cases of land conflicts in the study area.

KEYWORDS: Analysis, conflicts, Cross River, Perceived, Farmers, Yam

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts have become a consistent occurrence across the different Local Government Areas of Cross River State, Nigeria (Effiong, Effiong and Udo, 2015). Conflicts affect agricultural, urban and rural economy in various ways, it may cause recession, loss of farm lands, infrastructures, health facilities, loss of educational institutions, assets and livestock. It can reduce employment opportunities and diminish social protection mechanism. Above all, it destroy assets, lead to the displacement of population from their land and triggers food insecurity through the collapse of local staple markets and compromise food storage mechanism (Effiong and Asikong, 2013), (Effiong, 2013a), (Effiong, 2013b).

Ogoja Agricultural zone has experienced conflicts of different dimensions, examples of such conflicts are the Ogbeche land conflict, the Afrike and Njua-bano resource conflicts, the Ogoja and Boki Land boundary conflicts of February 2011, the Mbock and Nkonfab Family conflicts of 2012 and the land resource conflicts of Ogoja in 2014 (Effiong, Effiong, 2015).

Yam (*Dioscorea species*) is the second most important tuber crop produced in the whole world after cassava (IITA, 2013) Nigeria's yam production data was reported to be 46,912,650 tons in June, 2019. These figure increased from the previous record of 45,409,800 tons of June, 2018. Nigeria accounts for 60% of global yam supply (Effiong, Aboh and Aya, 2021).

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Yam production in Nigeria is practiced in the derived savanna, southern guinea savanna and the forest ecological zones. This is due to its ability to thrive under a variety of environmental conditions owing to the difference in ecological conditions and requirements of the species. Yam production is therefore concentrated in the forest ecological zone. (Ijioma, Effiong, Ogbonna and Onwuamaoka, 2014), (Effiong, Ijioma and Okolo, 2015). The most important areas for yam production in Cross River State with over sixty percent cultivated land under yam crop are, Ogoja, Ikom and Obubra.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study was conducted in Ogoja Agricultural zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. The zone lies between latitudes 6°39'17" and 7°.34" North of the equator and longitudes 8°.47" 51" East of the Greenwich meridian. The climate is tropical and manifest two distinct seasons – the raining season from April to October and dry season from November to March. The area is rich in fertile soils. The people of the zone are mostly farmers growing varieties of crops such as yam, oil palm, cassava, and rice among others (Effiong and Effiong, 2015).

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Stage one involved a random selection of five areas in the zone (Odajie, Ndok, Ibil, Ishibori and Ekajuk). Stage two involved a purposive selection of a community in each of the five areas in the zone. Stage three was a random selection of twenty (20) yam farmers from each of the farm communities giving a total of 100 yam farmers in the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 showed that majority (71.0%) of the respondents were males, while (29.0%) of them were females. The result indicated that yam production in the study area were mostly practiced by the male folks. This may be attributed to the fact that males are responsible for major production decision and the fact that yam production is labour intensive (Effiong and Effiong 2015). The result also revealed that majority (70.0%) had one form of education or the other. This implied that the respondents were educated. Increase yam production is a function of level of education of the farmers in Cross River State (Effiong and Aboh, 2018). The result showed that a 49.0% of the respondents were between the ages of 20-40 years, 36% were between the ages of 41-60 years. These showed that most of the respondents were strong and agile to participate in yam cultivation activities. This is in tandem with the findings of Effiong (2012b) who stated that young and middle aged people were the most active in yam production activities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The results of the marital status of respondents indicated that a good number 58.0% were married, 30.0% were single, 10.0% were divorced and 2.0% were widowed.

According to Effiong and Effiong (2015), the higher the number of married respondents in an agricultural enterprise, the higher the number of family labour for the enterprise. This assertion is true for yam farmers in the study area, thus making more hands available for productive activities in the respondent's yam farm enterprise.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to Socio-economic characteristics:

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 71 | 71.0 |
| Female | 29 | 29.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Age | | |
| 20-40 | 49 | 49.0 |
| 41-60 | 36 | 36.0 |
| 61 & above | 15 | 15.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 30 | 30.0 |
| Married | 58 | 58.0 |
| Divorced | 10 | 10.0 |
| Widowed | 2 | 2.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Household size | | |
| 1-6 | 75 | 75.0 |
| 7 & Above | 25 | 25.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Educational Status | | |
| No formal education | 25 | 25.0 |
| Primary education | 50 | 50.0 |
| secondary education | 20 | 20.0 |
| Tertiary education | 5 | 5.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Primary Occupation | | |
| Farming | 60 | 60.0 |
| Trading | 15 | 15.0 |
| Business | 12 | 12.0 |
| Civil Servant | 10 | 10.0 |
| Others | 3 | 3.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2021

Type of conflicts in Ogoja Agricultural Zone

The result in Table 02 showed the mean distribution of the respondents based on the type of conflicts in the study area. The result revealed that all the variables recorded mean scores above the decision rule of 1.50 except interpersonal conflicts ($\bar{X}=1.20$) and conflicts during cultivation ($\bar{X}=1.30$). Specifically, the study noted that conflicts in the study area were; family conflicts ($\bar{X}=2.02$), intergroup conflicts ($\bar{X}=2.04$), intrapersonal conflicts ($\bar{X}=1.92$), communal conflicts ($\bar{X}=2.05$), land conflicts ($\bar{X}=1.95$), tribal conflicts ($\bar{X}=1.99$) and boundary conflicts ($\bar{X}=1.85$) among many others.

The implication of this is that yam farmers in the study area have experienced different conflicts in various dimensions caused by tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic and cultural sentiments. Some humans are in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable group because those groups are pursuing incompatible goals and aspirations. This is in agreement with Effiong (2012a) which stated that conflicts, though an element of social interaction could sometimes begin with mere misunderstanding and degenerate into destructive quarrels between individuals, couples, groups/communities and sometimes lead to fights among them.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on type of conflicts:

| S/n | Type of conflicts | Mean (x) | Sd |
|-----|----------------------------------|----------|------|
| 1. | Interpersonal conflicts | 1.20 | 0.57 |
| 2. | Conflicts during yam cultivation | 1.30 | 0.90 |
| 3. | Family conflicts | 2.02 | 0.87 |
| 4. | Intergroup conflicts | 2.04 | 0.89 |
| 5. | Intrapersonal conflicts | 1.92 | 0.83 |
| 6. | Communal conflicts | 2.05 | 0.84 |
| 7. | Land conflicts | 1.95 | 0.73 |
| 8. | Tribal conflicts | 1.99 | 0.71 |
| 9. | Boundary conflicts | 1.85 | 0.86 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021.

Causes of conflicts among yam farmers in the study area

The result in table 3 showed the distribution of the respondents based on the causes of conflicts in the study area. The result revealed that all the variables identified (except two) recorded means scores above the cut-off mean of 2.50 which suggests that the respondents identified with all the causes of conflicts. Specifically, the study observed that yam farmers in the study area experienced various degrees of conflicts. Notably, encroachment into other people's land ($\bar{X}=2.83$), disagreement between communities in land boundary ($\bar{X}=2.62$), disagreement among family members on land issues ($\bar{X}=2.75$), increased business activities in the area ($\bar{X}=2.72$), upgrade from peasant to commercial farming ($\bar{X}=2.83$), straying of cattle into yam farms ($\bar{X}=2.66$), land disagreements among traditional authorities ($\bar{X}=2.62$), indiscriminate bush burning ($\bar{X}=1.71$),

destruction of yam barns by straying animals ($\bar{X}=2.50$), overgrazing of lands ($\bar{X}=2.34$). These result implied that issues of farm boundary and disputes among family members, communities and individuals are the most probable causes of conflicts among yam farmers in the study area. This results agreed with the submissions of (Effiong, Ijioma and Ikolo, 2015) and (Effiong and Aboh, 2018) that though land is abundant in Africa than in any other part of the world, most Africans have very small plots for agricultural production. These results also agreed with Effiong and Effiong (2015) who noted that conflicts can be attributed to a number of factors such as family roles, expectations and role conflicts. Others are political discrimination, poverty, inequality, cultural and religious differences. The rapid population growth in African contributes to increasing scarcity of land as inherited plot becomes smaller year by year.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on causes of conflicts

| S/n | Causes of conflicts | Mean (\bar{x}) | SD |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| 1. | Land encroachment | 2.83 | 0.77 |
| 2. | Disagreement among family members on land issues | 2.75 | 0.84 |
| 3. | Increased business activities in the area | 2.72 | 0.16 |
| 4. | Upgrade from peasant to commercial farming | 2.83 | 0.84 |
| 5. | Straying of cattle into yam farms | 2.66 | 0.18 |
| 6. | Land disagreement among traditional authority | 2.62 | 0.48 |
| 7. | Indiscriminate bush burning | 1.71 | 0.16 |
| 8. | Destruction of yam barns by straying animals | 2.50 | 0.46 |
| 9. | Overgrazing of lands | 2.34 | 0.63 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021: Cut-off =>2.50

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

- 1) Yam business is dominated predominantly by male farmers in the study area, women farmers should form cooperative societies with a view to embracing yam business venture in the area.
- 2) The government of Cross River State should set up an independent panel of inquiry to review the immediate and remote causes of conflicts in Ogoja agricultural zone in particular and the state in general.
- 3) Land boundaries should be properly delineated and garssetted from time to time by the traditional rulers in conjunction with the Government of the day. This will help curb some of the causes of conflicts among yam farmers in the study area.

CONCLUSION:

The major determinant and perhaps most powerful cause of conflict is a disagreement among family members, communities, village, ethnic and religious groups among very many others. But poverty which is manifested in unemployment and deterioration of infrastructure provide the bedrock for ethnic conflicts. Conflicts have great negative effect on yam production in Ogoja Agricultural zone, ranging from lack of land for cultivation, land disputes, destruction of yam barns, tribal conflicts interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts resulting in low production of this important crop. The study has therefore recommended a periodic land delineation and gassetting by traditional rulers in conjunction with the state government. This is therefore very necessary to avoid all forms of conflicts and its attendant effects on yam production in Ogoja Agricultural Zone, Cross

River State.

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