



**ASSESSMENT OF YOUTHS' ATTITUDE TO AGRICULTURE AS A CAREER: A
CASE STUDY OF TANGAZA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF SOKOTO
STATE, NIGERIA**

H. Shuaibu, A. Umar and B. Z. Abubakar.

Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Faculty of
Agriculture, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, P.M.B. 2346, Sokoto, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The study surveyed the attitude of youths towards agriculture in Tangaza Local Government Area of Sokoto State in Nigeria. Eighty respondents were selected using simple random technique. Respondents were interviewed using structured a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square test. Results showed that majority (51.25%) of the respondents were in the age group of 21-30 years, 57.50% were females, 82.50% were married, 65.00% had primary education, and majority were either students or commercial motorcyclists. The respondents had an unfavourable attitude towards agriculture (Mean=4.16) and majority (53.00%) attested that parents or guardians influenced their career decisions. The most militating problems faced by the respondents in agriculture were low capital and credit facilities (95.00%), limited land (89.00%), and inadequate agricultural extension services (84.00%). A test of significance of factors influencing career choice showed a chi-square value of 110.38, which was highly significant ($P < 0.01$). Thus, effort should be made to enlighten youths and parents or guardians on the importance of agriculture to self and nation building, poverty alleviation and sustainable food security.

Key words: Attitude; Youths; Agriculture; Career decisions

INTRODUCTION

In most developing countries like Nigeria, agriculture dominates the economy. Currently, over 70% of the population is actively involved in farming at different levels (Njoku, 1999; Sabo *et al.*, 2007). Nigerian agriculture structure is composed of the small-holder farms and the middle scale farms. From the structure, it is evident that the family small-scale farm, which employs over 82% of all agricultural workforces, and produces about 85% of Nigeria food supply, is the backbone of Nigerian agriculture (Onuekwusi and Okorie, 2008). The rapid increase in population growth, decline in the cultivatable land area, ageing of the farmers, and poor farm yield among others threaten the fragile food security in Nigeria (Sabo *et al.*, 2007). With the population of Nigeria well over 140 million (NPC, 2006), there is a serious need to meet the manpower need for farm activities. The low performance can be attributed to a number of factors among which are lack of youths trained in agriculture to take up farming as a career to replace the old and the ageing

farmers and the near total absence of basic infrastructural facilities in the rural areas which has exacerbated rural urban migration (Olusanya, 1990).

Youth is a state or time of being young, a transition between childhood and adulthood. This stage is characterized by energy, intelligence and hope attributes that enable youths to improve their knowledge and capabilities for development and which partly compensate the seeming handicaps of limited access to economic assets such as land. The United Nations identified a youth as person between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, Perez-Morales (1996) had noted that in some developing countries, this range goes up to 30 years of age. The author stressed that no matter what the age range may be, the point is that any time we talk of youths it implies a group of young people in the society who have a lot of energy, new ideas and new ways to see life. Attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like and dislike for an item. Most attitudes are the results of either direct experience or observational learning from the environment. Attitude can be changed through persuasion. In Nigeria, and the world in general, the agricultural sector has been unable to attract young persons into agriculture. Traditional agriculture, based on hoe and cutlass, naturally has little appeal to the Nigerian youths. They have preference for 'white-collar' jobs which they consider more dignifying, better paying and less labourious, thus, their high rate of migration to cities. Youth empowerment through effective support that will enable the sector to play a dynamic role in the development of the nation's economy is urgently required to achieve food security and a source of rising income for most Nigerians.

The decline in the number of young people entering farming and the agriculture industry has been a concern for all those involved in the agricultural sector for many years. This is a threat and the concern about the future of this industry and its attractiveness as a worth while career for young people need to be pursued vigorously. Therefore, an understanding of the attitude of youths towards agriculture and the factors that influence their career decisions is imperative as its outcome could provide vital information for youth development.

Hence, the study assessed the attitude of youths towards agriculture. Specifically, the study described the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, ascertained the attitude of youths towards agriculture, determined the factors that influence youth's choice of career, and finally identified the problems that militate them against agriculture.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study Area

The study was conducted in Tangaza Local Government Area of Sokoto State. The State lies between latitudes 10015' - 13050'N and longitudes 3030' - 14030'E in the semi-arid northern Nigeria. Subsistence agriculture, with particular emphasis on agro-pastoralism is the major economic activity within the region.

Data Collection

Two districts (Gidan Madi and Tangaza) were randomly selected from the local government and, out of each district, four villages were also randomly selected. The villages are Saraku, Falali, Gidan Madi and Badegi from Gidan Madi and Sanyinna, Baidi, Sabro and Gurame from Tangaza. From each village, 10 respondents were also randomly selected to give a total of 80 respondents. Data were collected using structured

questionnaire administered to the respondents. For the purpose of this study, any individual between the age of 10 and 35 years was classified as youth and was interviewed.

Data Analysis

The attitude of youths towards agriculture was measured by summing up the positive, negative and neutral responses to a list of questions that seek the attitude of the youths towards agriculture. A self-constructed scale of nine questions was developed. Responses were anchored on a five point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA, 5), Agreed (A, 4), Undecided (U, 3), Disagreed (D, 2), and Strongly Disagreed (SD, 1) as used by Jibowo (1973). For each statement, the number of respondents that choose any level (that is SA, S, U, D, and SD) in the scale is multiplied by the corresponding number of that level and the total divided by the total number of the respondents to give the mean response of the respondents to that particular statement. If the mean was below three (3) it means that the respondents disagreed with the statement, if above three they agreed with the statement and if exactly three they were indifferent to the statement.

Factors that influenced youths' career choice were analysed with chi-square and socio-economic characteristics and factors that militate youths against agriculture were analysed using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-economic characteristics play significant role in the lives of individuals, in that they influence their attitude to life in general. The socio-economic characteristics studied were age, gender, marital status, education and occupation (Table 1). About 33.75% were in age group of 11-20 years, 51.25% were 21-30 years and 10.00% were above 30 years. The implication of this is that these groups of respondents were at their most unstable stage of development, thus extra-care needs to be taken when dealing with them. Also, the Federal Office of Statistics (1996) report shows that youth of these age groups had higher unemployment rate of 6.7 per cent while it was less than one percent for higher age groups. The results also show that there were more female respondents (57.50%) than male respondents (42.50%). Most (82.50%) of the interviewed respondents were married. The result is also similar to that of Sabo *et al.* (2007) who also observed that 87% of youths in Adamawa State were married. Quranic education is considered compulsory in an Islamic society. Thus, 100% of the respondents had this type of education. About 65.00% attended primary school, 26.25% had secondary school education and only 3.75% had one form of tertiary education or the other. This shows the need for government to put in place policies and programmes that would absorb youths with limited education in the society.

The results (Table 1) further revealed that 33.75 and 25.00% were students and commercial motorcyclists, respectively. Only 7.50% and 3.75% were involved in farming and fishing, respectively. This shows that only few respondents were directly involved in agricultural activities. However, with adequate motivation and counselling through formal education, the high proportion of respondents that are students could be exposed to opportunities opened to them in agriculture.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
< 20	31	38.75
21-30	41	51.25
>30	8	10.00
Gender		
Male	34	42.50
Female	46	57.50
Marital Status		
Single	10	12.50
Married	66	82.50
Divorced	2	2.50
Widow	2	2.50
Educational level		
Quranic	80	100.00
Primary	52	65.00
Secondary	21	26.25
Tertiary	3	3.75
Occupation*		
Student	27	33.75
Farming	6	7.50
Trading	14	17.50
Commercial Motorcyclist	20	25.00
Fishing	3	3.75
Civil Servant	10	12.50

Source: Field Survey, (2008); n=80; *Total percentage not equal to 100% due to multiple responses

Attitudinal Responses of Youths towards Agriculture

As seen in Table 2, youths generally have unfavourable (Mean > 3.00) attitude to agriculture because they agreed (M >3.00) on negative statements pertaining to agriculture. Such statements relate to poverty, stress, low income, poor health and dirty job. The aggregate mean of attitude towards agriculture was 4.16, indicating that the attitude of youths towards agriculture was generally unfavourable. This unfavourable attitude of youths to agriculture could continue to impact negatively on food production and food security of the country as attitude, norm and value are important determinants of human behaviors and performance. In long run, attitudes become especially important because they provide direction and purpose to behaviours and performance (Hyytia and Kola, 2005). Furthermore, Aphunu *et al.* (2009) stated that attitude like knowledge and skill determines the use of innovations.

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Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Attitude towards Farming

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
Farmers are poor	60	11	7	1	1	4.60*
Farming hard and stressful	49	21	8	1	1	4.45*
Uncertainty of disease	42	18	12	5	3	4.14*
Dirty work	23	31	4	12	10	3.56*
Farming provides low income	52	8	12	4	4	4.25*
Farming involves working long hours	37	19	14	2	8	3.94*
Farming dependent on weather	62	1	4	6	7	4.31*
Farming too boring	55	6	3	4	12	4.10*
Farm inputs too expensive	33	26	14	6	1	4.05*

Source: Field Survey, (2008); n=80; Aggregate Mean = 4.16; *Agreed (M > 3.00)

Influence on Career Choice of Youths

Career choice of youths is a decision that is influenced not only by their development but also by the context in which they live in (Chen, 1997). Table 3 indicates that 66.25% of the youths rated their parents or guardians as the most important influence on their career decision. This is more likely to be because parents are usually closer to youths than any other individual in the environment. This was followed by other family members (15.00%), friends (10.00%) and then teachers and career guidance and counselling. These findings agree with those of Emerole and Onuekwusi (2001) and Onuekwusi and Okorie (2008) that parents have important influence on their children's career decision. The implication of this is that parents need to be enlightened on the importance of agriculture for self and nation building. This could help in changing the negative attitude of youths towards agriculture.

Table 3: Factors that Influence Youth's Career Choice

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Parent or Guardian	53	66.25
Family	12	15.00
Friends	8	10.00
Teacher	5	6.25
Career Guidance and counseling	2	2.50

Source: Field Survey, 2008; df=4; $\chi^2 = 110.38$ (P<0.01)

Factors that Militate Youths against Agriculture

The youths highlighted several factors that constraint them against agriculture (Table 4). These include inadequate farm input, low capital or credit facilities, limited agricultural extension services, parental restriction, and drudgery among others. However, low capital and credit facilities ranked first (95%) as major impediments to the youths' involvement in agriculture, followed by inadequate land (89%), while market instability

was the least. This agrees with the findings of Emerole and Onuekwusi (2001) that youths in Ikwuano L.G.A of Abia State were handicapped by limited access to economic assets such as land for farming and limited capital. These could be due to the present economic situation of the nation.

Table 4: Factors that Militate Youths against Agriculture

Problem	Rank	Percentage*
Limited land	2nd	88.75
Low capital and credit facilities	1st	95.00
Inadequate agricultural extension services	3rd	83.75
Parental restriction	4th	75.00
Market price instability	8th	40.00
Lack of social amenities	7th	53.75
Drudgery	5th	64.75
Risk	6th	58.75

*Total percentage not equal to 100% due to multiple responses

CONCLUSION

From this study, it could be concluded that youths in the study area had unfavourable attitude towards agriculture due to parent or guardians who constituted the most important factor that influenced their career choice. Thus, effort should be made to enlighten youths and parents or guardians on the importance of agriculture to self and nation building, poverty alleviation and sustainable food security. Also, factors like land tenure system, micro-credit facilities and extension contact should be improved so that they could serve as opportunity to change the youths' attitude towards agriculture.

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