

Community-Based Organizations and the Provision of Agricultural Inputs for Rural Development in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

With the rapid growth in Nigeria's population, there has also been an increase in the demand for food. A major way of ensuring that food supply does not exceed demand is to invest in agriculture. Successive Nigerian governments have placed emphasis on agriculture as a means of ensuring food security. However, the extent to which this has translated into practice is debatable. Therefore, other agencies, of necessity, have begun to contribute to agricultural development. Such agencies include non-governmental organizations and community-based associations. This study therefore examined the role of such associations in rural development through the provision of agricultural inputs. The study sample was 807 accidentally selected samples of associates of community based associations in Cross River State, Nigeria. Data collection was done through a structured questionnaire, while the analysis was done using the simple regression statistical technique. The result showed that there is a strong positive relationship between the activities of community based associations in the provision of agricultural input and rural development.

Keywords: Community-based Associations, agricultural input, rural development, food production, population

Introduction

Provision of sufficient food for the growing population of the world puts agriculture at the center of current growth and development issues, especially in developing countries. This is because the level of population grow in most developing countries is far more than the level of agricultural production and growth. Malthusian theory of population growth is becoming true in these countries hence, the need to grow and develop agriculture to meet the food requirement of the people is very important. Looking at the Malthusian theory, if food supply fail to meet demand, then food prices will rise. This will also have effect on workers' wages and subsequently affect industrial profits, investment

and overall economic growth development in the society (Uniamikogbo, 2007).

On the supply of raw materials to the industrial sector, agriculture has been seen as the major requirement for industrial growth and development because of the sector's role in providing the necessary raw materials for industries (Child, 2008; Uniamikogob, 2007 and Abayomi, 2006). As a result of this, the need for increasing agricultural productivity has to be considered. There is the need therefore to put more emphasis on increasing domestic output rather than focusing more on the expansion of export to finance growing food export. This means that, agriculture is the most influential sector in developing countries. It should then make a significant contribution to the overall investment requirements needed by the industrial sector such as lowering the amount of raw materials supplied from abroad by increasing the output produced locally.

Agriculture involves the cultivation of the land for the purpose of producing food for man, feed for animals and fibre or raw materials for our industries. It also includes the processing and marketing of crops. Agricultural activities include all the farming practices and operations necessary; for the improvement of agricultural production in the communities. It includes activities such as procuring farmland, provision of seedlings, fertilizer and chemicals, provision of farm machineries, harvesting and storage facilities etc.

Community-based associations activities in agriculture include livelihood skills training are provided by community-based associations through flexible learning arrangements to enable people to improve the quantity and quality of what they are already doing or learning new skills in:

1. Diversification of livestock, shifting away from cattle to sheep, goats, piggery, poultry and crop production.
2. Value addition to agricultural and animal products such as skins, and milk and processing of cereals.
3. Environmentally sound exploitation of natural resources including tree planting and beekeeping.

4. Provision of improved quality products and services such as transport, local security, repair of bicycles, boreholes and oxen ploughs, beads and ornaments and knives (Osaji, 2012).

Given the extent to which these programmes are applicable, they have helped in improving the capacity of young adults. They also have helped in reducing poverty among rural dwellers and the nation at large. Bello (2014), in his study of trade and investment in agriculture, found that land and labour are major inputs used in the production by an overwhelming majority of small farmers. The need for modern farm inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds plants protection chemicals, feed and mechanization equipment or tools, and farming skills training becomes absolutely imperative in this situation, he sees training operationalized as teaching so as to be fitted, qualified and skill proficient. The purpose is to impact knowledge and skills to an individual so that he or she can perform some desirable tasks.

Idowu (2009) carried out the study on the activities of community-based association on the implementation of rural development in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. One of the variables examined by the researcher was the contribution of agricultural activities to rural development. A sample of 400 respondents was used for the study. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique and questionnaire was also used as instrument for data collection. Population t-test was used to analyse the data. The finding shows that agricultural projects such as growing of food crops have contributed significantly in promoting rural development in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross State. In another similar study carried out by Ebong (2009) on the contribution of non-governmental organization in rural development projects in Odukpani and Calabar South in Cross River State, Nigeria. A sample of 500 respondents was used for the study. The researcher used systematic random sampling technique and questionnaire was also used as an instrument for data collection. Population t-test was used to analyse the data. The finding show that agricultural activities have contributed significantly in promoting rural development in Odukpani Local Government Area.

Agriculture has been the main stay of the Nigerian economy providing employment and source of livelihood for the teeming population. It contributes with over half of the GDP of the Nigerian economy during much of post-independence in the country. Nonetheless, the role it plays in the economic growth and development of the country has reduced over the years due to the overwhelming and dominant role of the crude oil sector in the economy, on which the country extensively depends. With the high food demand in Nigeria, the country has to make use of its abundant natural resources and to take advantage of its current democracy to increase the volume of crop production. This will ensure food security in the country (Enoma, 2010). Therefore, agriculture can be characterized as the source of national wealth and economic growth and development in Nigeria.

Agriculture employs nearly three-quarters of Nigeria's work force, as is the case in most of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Agriculture is the principal source of food and livelihood in Nigeria, thereby, making it a critical component of programs that seek to reduce poverty and attainment of food security in Nigeria. Interest, in changing agricultural productivity stems from the knowledge that income growth comes from productivity growth and from savings-supported investment. Agricultural productivity estimates for Nigeria showed a decline in productivity growth from the 1960s to the 1980s. Nigeria has witnessed strong economic growth in the past few years, averaging 8.8 percent real annual GDP growth from 2000 to 2007. However, the agriculture sector has lagged behind GDP growth, growing at 3.7 percent in 2007. Reviewing the production and postharvest constraints affecting agricultural productivity in Nigeria is an important step in formulating policies to reverse these trends in the future.

Agricultural development economists have researched significantly on how agriculture can best contribute to overall economic growth and development. Looking at Lewis theory of development, Todar and Smith (2003) indicated that the underdeveloped economy consists of two sectors, which are the ancient and tradition agricultural sector characterised by zero marginal labour productivity and the modern industrial sector. In this historical approach to the process of economic growth and development, Rostow (1960) distinguishes five stages of economic growth and development, which are: Traditional society, pre-

conditions for take-off, drive to maturity and age of high mass consumption. According to Bostow (2012), the take off stage is the most important figure in the life of a society when growth becomes its normal condition. The significance and importance of the traditional society make a decisive break through and a multiple interest gests built into the society structure with agriculture playing significant role at this stage. From this theory, it is evident that agriculture plays a significant role in the first three stages of economic growth and development (traditional society, pre-conditions for take-off and take-off stages). The agricultural sector greatly influences industrial and economic backbone from which a country's economic growth and development can take-off. Therefore, beyond measurable doubt, agricultural activities are usually concentrated and more practiced in the less-developed countries where there is an urgent need for rural transformation, redistribution, poverty alleviation and socio-economic growth and development (Steward, 2000). Indeed, agriculture has a significant role in an economy, without it a country will surely depend on importation from other countries to feed its population. The essential contribution of agriculture to economic growth and development has been an on-going subject of debate among development economists.

Eze (2010) carried out a study on agricultural financing policies and rural development in Nigeria. The study found that though the government has made serious efforts at making good agricultural policies through schemes, programmes and institutions, it has not been able to back them up with adequate budgetary allocation and financing coupled with corruption in the execution of the policies.

In another study on development evaluation of Lesotho agricultural input subsidy policy based on rural households' food security and access to inputs: evidence from Mohale's Hoek District by Thapelo (2016). The study was a qualitative study that posited that the prevalence of poverty in Lesotho is a pressing issues raising concern in terms of rural households' food security and welfare. In that regard, this study attempts to establish or identify the determinants of farmers' access to inputs via the government. The second part of the study incorporated the use of subsidized inputs and measure the impact of the government input subsidy program on food security. The motive

behind this study is to fill a gap in the economics literature in this area, which often does not assess the impacts of agricultural input subsidy programs (despite their widespread prevalence) and its impact on food security. The Combination of econometric approaches was applied to a selected sample of rural households actively engaged in maize production, and the findings revealed the determinants of farmers' access to inputs as being cropland allocation, type of fertilizer and ecological zones. The vast majority of rural households doesn't receive or get subsidized inputs and out of that small portion of the recipients, half of them don't use their inputs (chemical fertilizers). This phenomenon is due to the fact that, rural households may not be in a position to use their inputs because of late delivery, or to use optimally because they do not perceive the benefits.

Kasu (2010) carried out another study on analysis of agricultural input supply system: the case of Dale Woreda, Southern Nations, Nationalities and peoples' region. This study was intended to analyze the agricultural input demand–supply system of the study area in order to map the actors and their linkages. It also sought to determine the knowledge and information flows, to identify influential factors for the smooth functioning of the system and to explore the influence of policy in providing an enabling environment in relation to the input demand-supply system in Dale Woreda, Sidama Zone, SNNPR.

The major output of the study indicates that the system is highly characterized by relatively poor linkage and inefficient knowledge flow between actors and farmers in the study area. Moreover, input demand-supply index was significantly influenced by household head age, active labor force of the family, access to market, extension contact and type of road used.

The researcher noted that the farming sub-sector of Ethiopia is characterized by traditional rainfall and low techniques of production and thus, is prone to the recurrent natural calamity of drought, which leaves famine and death in its wake. Today, farmers in Ethiopia have difficulties in feeding their households on their increasingly fragmenting land, using traditional and backward techniques of production. Hence the drastic need to improve agricultural productivity and production through the adoption and adaptation of improved

agricultural technologies and techniques is apparent. For modernize agriculture, a strong support system involving input supplies and other services like marketing, transport, storage, processing etc. are inevitable. In addition to this, from the supply sector factors like organizational mandatory clarity, sufficient and irrigable seed farm, skilled man power, delay of temporary loan settlement by users, policy environment, storage facilities at grass root level. Other factors include efficient marketing system, timely demand claims from users, clearly defined role and responsibilities of each partner. In addition are availability of improved seeds in terms of their germination, viability and adaptability, research centers cooperation and willingness to share resources including knowledge, farmers willingness to take risks and demand for improved crop varieties were some of mentioned factors that influence the system positively and/or negatively.

As to the enabling policy environment, pitfalls identified were; inflexibility of rules and regulations, lack of strong quarantine measures on imported seeds and prolonged time given for variety release and registration were amongst all. Therefore, it is recommended that, the existing extension service should be strengthened in a way that working in harmony with relevant actors to bring about change for efficient and effective delivery of agricultural inputs/services. Likewise, policy should account the flexibility of rules on credit provision and organization of small farmers groups in addressing resource poor farmers to ensure food self sufficiency of rural community in particular and the nation at large.

Community-based associations either singly or in groups are involved in creating awareness in several agricultural activities such as land clearing, land tilling, planting, weeding, fertilizers or manure application harvesting, food process, threshing, winnowing, milling, transportation and marketing. They also help schools and private farmers in raising livestock such as chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, turkey etc on a modest scale (Ekwe, 2003). These domestic animals yield a lot of meat and cash for local and foreign consumption. In the same vein, Bisong (2000) asserted that in most developing countries such as Nigeria, community-based organizations are largely involved an agricultural activity. They empower farm to produce food, stockbreeders, supply fuel wood and even provide water for irrigation

where necessary. Brender and Cain (2001) observed that in most countries of the world, farmers are encouraged to do most of the work both large and small. Alam (2007) also affirmed that non-governmental associations have contributed significantly to the agricultural development of the societies.

In the same vein, Nwanyi (2003) asserted that non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations including international NGOs and association both in rural and urban areas contribute to agriculture as well as socio-economic development of their communities and individuals for the up keep of their families. For instances, in a study on execution of family responsibilities by non-governmental organization in changing Nigerian society, 200 families in Odukpani Local Government Areas regardless of their religious, ethnic and educational background were interviewed. Using simple percentages of data, the result portrayed that 105 (52%) of the total respondents revealed that virtually all feeding, health and educational requirements are being solved with money from agriculture.

In addition, Welland (2003) asserted that community-based association participates extensively in forestry and agro-forestry development activities in rural areas. They provide materials for planting, conduct seminars on nursery and wood let establishment and management; and also carryout research on agro-forestry, wood surveys on indigenous tree knowledge. According to Akinbode (2007), the activities of non-governmental association in Calabar South and Odukpani Local Government Areas of Cross River State actually educated farmers and other members of the communities on proper methods of food production, processing; preserving and marketing. Participants sit in group and teach each other on the easiest way through which cassava, grains such as rice, maize and millet can be processed in flour and melon seeds, palm nuts and groundnut into oils for both domestic consumption and for sale. With the help of much campaign by community-based associations, farmers now have access to agricultural improved seedlings and agricultural extension services.

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Methodology

The study was an ex-post facto design. Data were collected using a questionnaire which was administered to 807 members of community-based organizations selected from local government areas in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study tested the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis:

Activities of community based associations in the provision of agricultural input do not significantly influences rural development. The independent variable is provision of agricultural facilities while the dependent variable is rural development measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, the simple regression analysis was used and the result showed the correlation coefficient of the variable as .688. It implied that there is a strong relationship between provision of agricultural facilities and rural development. Also, the result as presented in Table 1 showed the $\text{Adj } R^2 = .473$ which implies that the variation in the dependent variable (rural development) can be accounted for by 47.3% of provision of agricultural facilities. From Table 1, the analysis of variance shows a result of ($F=724.592$, $p<.000$). This implies that even though the percentage contribution is moderate, the provision of agricultural facilities significantly influences rural development.

Table 1

Simple regression analysis on the influence of community based association activities in terms of provision of agricultural facilities on rural development

Variables	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error	
Provision of agricultural facilities	.688	.474	.473	5.25304	
Source of variations	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19994.743	1	19994.743	724.595	.000 ^b
Residual	22213.475	805	27.594		
Total	42208.218	806			

Discussion of findings

Data analysis showed that there is a significant influence of provision of agricultural facilities by community based association on rural development. The findings of the study were in line with that of Idowu (2009) whose study was on the activities of community based association in the implementation of community development in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. One of the variables examined by the researcher was the contribution of agricultural activities to community development. A sample of 400 respondents were used for the study. The finding shows that agricultural projects such as growing of food crops have contributed significantly in promoting community development in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross State. Similarly, the findings collaborates that of Ebong (2009) on the contribution of non-governmental organizations in community development projects in Odukpani and Calabar South in Cross River State, Nigeria. This could be due to the fact that there were inputs like fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals that could help farmers in improving their agricultural yields. This must have increased the income of rural dwellers and consequently helped in the development of the area.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study showed that the provision of agricultural inputs like fertilizers, improved seedlings, pesticides, and so on to rural farmers by community based association has a significant role to play in rural

development. As farmers' yield increase, their income is also likely to increase. And as income increases, community members are likely to be able to fund self-help projects that could enhance the quality of their lives and their communities.

Therefore, it is recommended that government encourage community-based organizations to invest in agricultural development through the provision of agricultural inputs to rural dwellers. Government should also subsidize such inputs to reduce their costs. In addition, rural dwellers should maximize such inputs for better crop yields. It is further recommended that for the government agricultural financing policies to achieve its target of rural development, Nigeria will need an adequate level of strategically targeted investment in agriculture, upgrade rural infrastructure, boost productivity, and increase competitiveness of the farm output, in addition to fighting corruption.

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