



**Socio-Economic Lives of Rural Farmers: An Empirical
Study of Cocoa Production in Etung and Ikom Communities
of Cross River State, Nigeria**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of cocoa production in the socio-economic transformation of the lives of Etung and Ikom rural farmers and producers. Data for the study were collected from a scientifically designed questionnaire and representative size of 400 respondents in eight (8) rural communities of Etung and Ikom local government areas. One hypothesis was formulated to test for socio-economic lives of cocoa and non-cocoa producers/farmers and also their personal status. Independent t – test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that though the socio-economic lives of cocoa and non-cocoa producers/farmers improved significantly, because of farming, the socio-economic lives of cocoa producers/farmers were better or improved over their non-cocoa farmers/producers. Our contention is that the agricultural sector in general, and cocoa production, in particular can serve as a catalyst for improved socio-economic lives of rural farmers.

Keywords: Cocoa productions, socio-economic, farmers, rural development.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of cocoa as a cash crop in Nigeria at about 1874 led to the emergence of the first crop of cocoa farmers, and by 1890 the country entered the world cocoa market with an export of 0.304 tons, (Ayorinde, 1966). From this noble beginning, cocoa production increased over the years

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and to a peak of about 310,000 tons in 1965. From this time on, Nigeria became a major cocoa producer. However, the concentration was in the old western region (now Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos States) where cocoa growth and development had tremendous impact in their economy and general development of the region.

The product of these experiences and those of recent years, have underlined the fact that economic development does not depend on capital alone although it is a necessary factor. Development demands and produces far reaching changes in societies; the fabric of social life becomes altered, social attitudes change. More than anything else it is the human factor that is most underdeveloped, and it is upon improvement in the quality and condition of the human factor that, in the first instance, development depends, (Mountjoy, 1975). According to (Moshuer 1972; Todaro 1995; Ohiorhenuan, 2003) development means the improvement of living conditions of rural areas through increased production in agriculture and related enterprises, such as, the production of cocoa. It has to do with such things as rural industrialization, public works, community development projects, availability and accessibility to health facilities and education.

In Nigeria, different development strategies and approaches have been pursued by governments at the local, state and federal levels. The emphasis has been on agricultural development and industrialization, that is, on the cultivation of such cash crops as palm produce, rubber, groundnuts, cocoa and others in commercial quantities and the establishment of agro-based industries to use the by-product of the cash crops mentioned above.

However, over the years researches have shown that in spite of government emphasis in developing the agricultural sector and specifically cash crop development, real efforts in actualizing these laudable ideals were not intensified, even when it was realized that meaningful industrial development in most Third World societies depended heavily on the production of the crops. Mountjoy, (1975); Todaro, (1995) and Ering, Nwagbara and Ushie (2006), have all argued that much of the poverty in the less developed countries is not due to lack of manufacturing industry, but rather to traditional, inefficient and poorly productive agriculture. The contention here is that, efforts to develop the industrial sector must rely upon increased productivity from agriculture to feed the increasing population and to feed the growing urban-industrial population. Against the backdrop of the world-wide food scarcity and increasing food prices, increase agricultural productivity will decrease the need for food imports and where possible to provide surpluses for export and the earning of foreign exchange, and above all to increase farm incomes and create an expanding market for new industries or agro-allied industries.

Since the evolution of cocoa in Etung and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State of Nigeria, a number of developmental changes have taken place. The argument is that this wave of changes witnessed across some of the major cocoa producing communities of Etung and Ikom Local Government Areas are attributed to cocoa production. This study seeks a

careful examination of cocoa production and socio-economic status/lives of rural producers/farmers in Etung and Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specifically, the study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- (i) To assess the impact of cocoa production/farming in the socio-economic lives of cocoa producers/farmers
- (ii) To analyse the role of cocoa in the general development of Ikom and Etung Local Government Areas of Cross River State.

METHODOLOGY

For this study we adopted the descriptive research design. The design is favoured among a variety of other good designs because of the ability to capture the diverse characteristics of respondents that were considered for the study. Best (1970) observed that the descriptive design is concerned with conditions or relationship that exist, practices that prevail; beliefs point of view and attitudes that are held, processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. The design allows for easier tabulation and description of data derived and makes for meaningful analyses and generalizations for the advancement of knowledge.

The design involved selecting two Local Government Areas Etung and Ikom that are major cocoa producing areas out of seven other cocoa producing local government areas of Cross River State, Nigeria. (Obubra, Akamkpa, Boki, Ogoja, Obudu, Biase and Obanliku). Within these two Local Government Areas, eight cocoa and non-cocoa producing rural communities were purposively selected for the study. These communities are shown in table one below.

Table 1: Showing the distribution of cocoa and non-cocoa producing communities selected for the study.

Etung Local Government Area		Ikom Local Government Area	
Cocoa producing communities	Non-cocoa Producing Communities	Cocoa Producing Communities	Non-cocoa producing Communities
Bendeghe – Ekim Etomi	Agbaragba Okangha Nkpansi	Akparabong Ikom-Town	Edor Nde

The selection of four cocoa producing and four non-cocoa producing communities each allowed for comparison and provided data for the measurement of variables involved in the study.

A combination of two sampling procedures was used in selecting the Local Government Areas, communities and the actual respondents for the study. The purposive sampling procedure was used to choose two Local Government Areas, Etung and Ikom and the 8 (eight) (four cocoa and four non-cocoa) producing communities for the study. The reasons for the choice of these two Local Government Areas are first, they are major cocoa

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producing Local Government Area in the State, and secondly, the two Local Government Areas are leading cocoa producing circle and highest producers in Cross River State (Okang, 2004). The same sampling procedure was used in selecting the communities in the two Local Government Areas that produce cocoa in very large quantity, that is, Ikom-town, Akparabong, Bendeghe-Ekim and Etomi for cocoa producing and also for non-cocoa producing communities: Agbaragba, Okangha-Nkpasi, Edor and Nde.

On the other hand, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 respondents from the eight (8) communities and given questionnaires. That is 50 respondents were selected from each of the eight (8) communities both cocoa and non cocoa producing/farming. The sample size of 400 was drawn by ballot and the sample without replacement method was used to draw the sample size. Data were collected through a carefully designed questionnaire. In the questionnaire method, both open-ended and close-ended (structured, questions, which had fixed alternatives were used. The questions were designed to measure variables relating to the objective and hypothesis of the study. The variables include:

1. The socio-economic lives of cocoa producers and non-producers or farmers.
2. The satisfaction from incomes generated and type of farming.

The only hypothesis formulated for this study was tested through the use of independent t-test and at .05 level of significance. The procedure used was as follows: the Independent t-test was used to test for satisfaction from incomes with type of farming.

Hypothesis: Cocoa and non-cocoa farmers do not differ significantly in terms of satisfaction from incomes generated from type of farming.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

There is little consensus as to a precise definition or meaning of rural development or as to how it is measured. Increasingly the simple dichotomy of urban-rural is less relevant as the boundaries between rural and urban are blurred. Hoggart (1999) proposed 'to do away with rural' because it causes more confusion than clarity in social enquiry. Similarly, a generally accepted definition of development remains illusive. The reality, however, is that rural area still exists but the nature of rural life is evolving. A number of national policies have been formulated with rural as a perspective and rural development as a goal, therefore the concept remains at the heart of research and development in these areas.

Lauer (1982) has contended that defining "development" or "change" in the strict sense of word would just "cover the water front". In this sense, development or social change has been defined as "variations or modifications in any aspect of social process, patterns, or form" and as any modifications in established patterns of inter-human relationships and standards of conducts". For Lauer, social change is normal and continual in a

society. It involves the alterations in social phenomena at various levels of human life from the individual to global.

Todaro (1995) and Todaro and Smith, (2005) define development as a process of improving the quality of all human lives. The aspects of such improvement include, raising peoples living levels in terms of income, consumption, education, medical services, through relevant economic growth processes. Moore (1963) defines it as the significant alteration of social structures". By social structure is implied "patterns of social action and interaction". Included in Moores' (1963) definition are norms, values and cultural phenomena. Peil (1977) maintains that development in the society means that attitudes, behaviours, technology or social institutions are different from what they were yesterday. For Moshuer (1972), development means the improvement of living conditions of the rural areas through increased production in agricultural and related enterprises, example the production of cocoa. The contention is, economic development required not merely capital and technology, it is concerned with shaping of attitudes and the creation of forcibly or otherwise workable institutional structures. It demands the possession of new shields, new habits, new institutions all of which require far reaching social change.

Ajaegbu (1976), Whang (1981) have argued that the development of society especially the rural areas can only be achieved when the agricultural sector is transformed to produce more for export and to feed local industries. Development especially in Third World Societies would be based on increased agricultural incomes. He said that in Korea, the prime mover of development (rural development) has been the increase in agricultural incomes. The growth of village economy depends on the expansion of the market for village products as well as availability of necessary technical and financial inputs. The exploitation of new markets and additional demand for rural products has helped to energize the whole system of rural communities. Market expansion also influences the re-organization of the community in terms of the mode of people's participation in community decision-making, the pattern of cooperation among village people, positive demand for specific government assistance and support. However, Todaro and Smith (2005) and Ering, Nwagbara and Ushie (2006) have argued that development in the society may not depend on the development of agricultural sector or component alone, rather it represents the total transformation of economic and social structures, institutional relationships and processes in the rural areas. Correspondingly, change or development in the society will involve equitable distribution of rural income, of narrowing rural-urban growth in terms of housing, health, education, nutrition and a number of social services. It further involves the ability of the rural communities to sustain and transcend these improvements.

Weiner (1966), Inkeles (1969) and Ering (2000) maintain that development in the society has to start from the individual. In other words for change to take place in a society, it is the character of the individual and not the society. The argument is that attitudinal and value changes are

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important pre-requisite for creating a modern society, political and economic systems.

Similarly, Long (1977), McClelland (1961) contend that some degree of achievement orientation or ambition for personal betterment and for the acquisition of education and skills or the right type of socialization, must exist in social factors. These attitudes, they claim will later be diffused more widely in the society and help to sustain growth.

Cocoa as a cash crop scholars (Gill & Duflus 1979) have argued has made important contribution to the development of rural area especially in Western Nigeria, and the other cocoa growing areas of Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire. It was the contention of the scholars that before the advent of petroleum in the 70s, cocoa was the leading foreign exchange earner amidst all the western Nigeria agricultural commodities, (Unguhart, 1956, Oni, 1970, Essang, 1972, Are, 1974 and FAO, 1985).

Other researches have shown that the workers of the old Western State (Now Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti and Ondo states, which essentially are areas where cocoa is grown, were one of the highest paid in the country during the pre-independence and early independence eras when there was boom in cocoa production (Iloje, 1971, Adegbola 1972, Ajobo, 1985). Alawode, (1972). Alawode, and Jacob, (1972) supports the contention above and maintained that cocoa constituted the back-bone of the economy of states of western Nigeria, at least for over ten decades before the prospects of its contribution to the economy were seriously threatened in the 70s by the rise of petro-dollar. He added that cocoa in the west has been of immense benefit to farmers/producers in terms of socio-economic provision. The contribution of cocoa to the trading surpluses of western states was much and these were utilized for various developmental programmes. The import of the argument is that development and socio-economic transformation of society could result if the agricultural sector is vigorously improved.

Jhingan (2000) argues that a rise in rural purchasing power as a result of the increased agricultural surplus is a great stimulus to industrial development. More so, agriculture helps to expand and diversity employment opportunities in rural areas. As agricultural productivity and farm income increase, non-farm rural employment expands and diversifies.

Finally, Agbor (2004) maintains that the agricultural sector if revolutionized could act as a catalyst for the industrial development of Cross River State and the country as a whole. According to him, some development economists have argued that the best approach to developing the industrial sector particularly in Third World societies where more than seventy-five per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture, is to first of all develop the agricultural sector because agriculture provides the raw materials needed by industries and specifically agro-allied industries. And in turn increase agricultural incomes would exacerbate the demand for manufactured goods.

Two theoretical models provide the basis and guide for this study. The first is Weiner's (1966) "Change as enactment of values model of development".

The theory notes that for many scholars, the starting point of any definition of development is not the character of the society but the character of the individuals. He observes that attitudinal and value changes are the prerequisite to creating a modern society, economy and political system. Unlike other theoretical models, this model is essentially explanatory. The search in this case is for those “mental viruses” (McClelland, 1967, Changing the “Spirit” Inkeles, 1969), of men so that they come to adopt and promote a modern society. The value-enactment model perhaps best describes the changes that are taking place in Ikom and Etung rural communities. The values attached to achievement and altitudinal change has helped to change the lives of the people (rural farmer) in very many significant ways. Though critics have noted that the theory neglected international economic and political linkages, our argument is that the model has enhanced our understanding of development processes in society and particularly in Ikom and Etung rural communities.

The other is Smelser’s (1966) “Structural transformation model of development”. He contends that development of the society has to do with structural changes and the adoption of favoural changes in the family, and the re-organization of the kinship structures, pattern of social status, the political system, religion institution and the economy. In his view, change in the society does not only mean modernization of technology, which leads to change from simple traditionalized techniques to the application of scientific knowledge, but that it also has to do with the commercialization of agriculture, which is characterized by the move from subsistence to commercial farming, leading to a specialization in cash crop production and the development of wage labour and patterns of relations to the environment.

Generally, from the two theoretical models of development examined above, we can conclude that both adequately capture the essence of changes taking place in Etung and Ikom rural communities and these are as a result of cocoa production or farming.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data gathered from the field were appropriately cleaned, edited and coded in order to generate adequate data to test the hypothesis drawn for the study.

Cocoa production and socio-economic lives/status of cocoa producers/farmers

Data from the study show that farming generally and cocoa farming in particular, has significantly affected the socio-economic lives of farmers for the better. The result of the analysis in table 2 shows that the satisfaction derived from incomes generated from farming is significant among farmers. The implication of the findings show that cocoa farming has led to increased incomes and this has consequently affected other aspects of the socio-economic lives of the people. Such aspects include, improvement in

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economic positions, the building of better, more comfortable and more durable roads, able to trained own children in higher institutions, purchase of better household items (furniture, houses with corrugated roofs, electronics gadgets) and changes in individuals attitudes.

Table 2: Independent t-test of significance in satisfaction from income between cocoa and non-cocoa farmers.

Type of farmer	N	X	SD	df	T
Cocoa farmer	217	28.42	5.46		
				398	16.53*
Non-cocoa farmer	183	18.28	5.55		

* $P > .05$; $df = 398$, $t_{critical} = 1.96$

Table 3: Monthly graded figure and revenue for cocoa in Ikom and Etung for 2003.

Month	IKOM		ETUNG	
	MT	REVENUE (₦)	MT	₦
JAN.	114.50	343,00	133.75	401,250
FEB.	53.25	159,750	57.50	172,500
MAR.	21.875	65,625	20	60,000
APR.	38.25	234,50	37.90	113,700
MAY	78.25	234,750	69.50	208,500
JUNE	43.125	126,375	35.	105,000
JULY	144.875	434,625	187.50	562,500
AUG.	156	469,500	165.	495,000
SEPT.	81.75	245,250	90	270,000
OCT.	278	834,000	370	1,110,000
NOV.	276.75	830,250	365.50	1,096,500
DEC.	233.50	700,500	440	1,320,000

Source: Department of Produce and inspection Services, Calabar, 2004).

*16 bags = 1 metric ton

*Each ton is N136,000 by grading fee at N8,500 per bag

*This however is not obtainable in the field as each farmer has the latitude to see at a fee acceptable to him/her.

*Months where figures are not available are shown by a dash sign (-).

Table 3 gives a cleaner picture of the quantity of monthly graded cocoa and income for Etung and Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State in 2003. It shows that the months of July to November are considered the peak periods in cocoa production. This correspondingly affects positively the tempo of socio-economic activities in the two Local Government Areas

Furthermore, the tests show that cocoa farmers differ significantly in the satisfaction they derive from the income they generate from cocoa production/farming. The outcome indicates that cocoa farmers derive more satisfaction with income generated from farming than their non-cocoa counterparts. The predictive relevance of the findings above shows that the type of farming to a large extent, affects the level of satisfaction of the farmers. It has led to the emergence of new practices among the farmers, such as the widespread acceptance of fertilizers, a few new crops especially corn and plantain, the use of rented tractors, the increased dependence on paid labour, and the development of larger commercial farms.

Cocoa cultivation or farming has increasingly led to the emergence of a new phenomenon – the rise of “part-time farmers” (absentee city based farmers). These are mostly civil servants, politicians and others engaged in other businesses but because of the increasing incomes from cocoa have also taken to cocoa farming. These absentee city based farmers have also started to buy up agricultural land. This result is in agreement with Epstein (1962) “change within traditional systems, and Smelser (1966) “model of structural transformation”. Both scholars have argued that crops farming have led to a number of other changes in the society. These are changes in the patterns of social and political relations, pattern of social status and even religious institutions that have been modified to meet with changing times.

The research findings further strengthened the postulates of other modernization theorists, like Inkeles, (1969) “attitudinal change”; Weiner (1966) “value change” and McClelland (1963) “achievement oriented personality”. The results also confirm the contention by Smelser (1966); Rocher (1972); and Lauer (1982) that modernization or social change in the society has to do with structural change in the pattern of social status, the family, kinship, social institutions and the economy of the people.

Similarly, there are changes in the pattern of social stratification where in these Ikom and Etung rural communities, recruitment in political, social and religious positions tend to be based on achievement criteria rather than ascription. Also, social life and economic activities are organized on a new footing, that is, through the participation in capitalist or modern cooperative type enterprises.

More interestingly, there seems to exist a mutual or curvilinear relationship between cocoa farming and the cultivation of other food crops (yam, rice, cocoyam, banana and plantain and maize). The higher incomes from cocoa farming have created a higher demand for other food crops thereby increasing the tempo of socio-economic activities in the two local government areas of the study. Cocoa farming and non-cocoa farming therefore exercise a compelling influence on each other with cocoa incomes

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making for a higher demand of food crops and higher social status and food crops further stimulating the growth and production of cocoa.

Policy implications

The findings of the study suggest the need for the establishment of cooperative cocoa processing plants in order to ease the problem of cocoa processing. The research shows that farmers carry out all the processing operations relating to their crop: pod breaking, fermentation, drying and sometimes transport to the buyers. This has many disadvantages:

- (a) The labour used for these operations would have been used more profitably for harvesting
- (b) Fermentation difficulties crop in even with small lot especially during the light crop period which coincides with the rainy season.
- (c) Difficulties in drying during the light crop period.
- (d) The heterogeneous nature of different lots of beans, as each farmer operates under different conditions, and
- (e) Results in the total loss of by product (cocoa beans).

The minimal rural market and the traditional hold on land inhibit extensive acquisition of land for increased planning of new cocoa farms, even if the individual has some funds for its development. In order to alleviate this problem of land fragmentation brought about by land inheritance, government should vigorously pursue the 1978 Land Use Act which suggested public acquisition of land by government, and of course a complete revision of a number of ambiguities that have bedeviled the Land Use Act, Ering (2005).

A considerable proportion of the existing cocoa trees have long passed the economic life of this crop which is put at about 30 years, this leads to declining productivity. There is need to encourage farmers in replanting and the establishment of new farms. This should be done by introducing high yielding, disease resistant, and fast yielding varieties of cocoa. Government could give farmers incentives such as uprooting bonuses at rates fixed by government per each tree uprooted. This would go along way in making a good number of farmers who are not ready to engage in the replanting exercise to do so.

The findings of the study show that Cross River State is blessed with abundant and high quality cocoa beans; these can comfortably support the establishment of agro-allied industries that would use primary processed cocoa as finished products. Cross River State with her long history of cocoa production cannot boast of a single processing industry, instead what is obtainable are a plethora of cocoa processing companies engaged only in the buying and sun drying of cocoa beans. The establishment of agro-allied industries in Ikom or Etung Local Government Area comes with it a number of advantages. Apart from making use of the numerous raw materials that

exist, they could stimulate the rate of economic activities in the area. The industries would create job opportunities and therefore absorb the teeming unemployed youths that abound in the area and the state. For the farmers, it could further lead to increased cocoa production because of the higher demands for their products and consequently enhanced farmers income. These activities would also increase the rate of socio-economic development of Etung and Ikom rural communities.

Teriba (1972) has asserted that rural credits can play a role in inducing development through helping to finance innovations. He contended that the provision of credit is not only of providing the facilities to meet the existing needs but also providing new credit needs. It may serve as the basis of partnership between the government, which may provide the credit, and the farmer to whom this is provided. It may also, serve as a means of income redistribution and of guiding the allocation of resources.

A number of Commercial Bank exists and others also like the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank (NACB) and the Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC), these banks provide avenues for farmers to take loans and promote agricultural production. However, the conditions attached to such loans have made it difficult for individual farmers to take loans. Farmers resort to the non-institutional traditional sources of credit, which have grown to become major feature of rural credit. Government should as a matter of deliberate policy and in order to promote increased cocoa production in particular and agricultural production in general enact policies that would make it easier for banks to give out loans to farmers with lower interest rate and better gestation period of the loans before repayment. In doing so, government must create the necessary machinery to identify political farmers from the real farmers with regard to subsidies.

CONCLUSION

The study and its findings provide us with some evidence to reach some specific conclusions. It has shown that cocoa production has improved significantly the socio-economic lives of cocoa farmers and the general transformation of Etung and Ikom rural communities. The understanding here is that the agricultural sector if properly developed could help transform the vast rural poor communities and put them on the path of growth and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the findings of the study have shown that there exist a mutual or symbiotic relationship between cocoa farming and the cultivation of other food crops like yam, cassava, rice, banana, and plantain, maize and others. The higher incomes from cocoa farming has created a higher demand for other food crops, and food crops in turn further stimulating the growth and production of cocoa. The interplay of these socio-economic forces have increased the momentum of socio-economic activities in the two Local Government Areas of study.

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Generally, the results of the study show that there is a nexus between cocoa production and the socio-economic lives of rural farmers. It further shows that though cocoa farming has positively influenced the lives of those engaged in its production, it also has a exponential effect on those that are not directly engaged in its production such as traders, artisans, masons, transporters and other form of businesses.

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