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SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RICE FARMERS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study explored the socio economic characteristics of rice farmers in Nigeria. Related literatures and research reports on rice production, rice farmers' socio economic characteries were reviewed. The study revealed that a greater proportion of rice farmers in Nigeria are between the ages of 31 and 40 years majority of the rice farmers are female and the like. The study recommend among others that male farmers should be encouraged into rice farming and rice production interest should be instilled into the youths of Nigeria by way of rice production in order to sustain rice availability in the country.

Keywords: Socio-Economic; Characteristics; Rice Farmers

Introduction
Rice is the seed of the grass species *Oryza sativa* (Asian rice) or Oryza glaberrima (African rice). As a cereal grain, it is the most widely consumed staple food for a large part of the world's human population (Fukagawa and Ziska, 2019). In 2014, it was the agricultural commodity with the third-highest worldwide production (741.5 million tonnes), after sugarcane (1.9 billion tonnes) and maize (1.0 billion tonnes) (Food and Agriculture Organization Statistical Database (FAOSTAT), 2014). To an average Nigerian, it needs no introduction because it has become One of the most important foods in the country, consumed by both wealthy and the poor (Dayo, Olumuyiwa, Yarma and Fatunbi, 2018). This position was attained largely on the account of its steady demand by the Nigerian populace for both domestic and commercial consumption.

Remarkably, Nigeria, which is the principal producer of rice in West Africa and the third in Africa after Egypt and Madagascar producing about 3 million metric tonnes on the average annually, falls short of meeting its local demand which is placed at about S million tonnes (Oladimeji, 2017) had to resort to massive importation over the years. This particular statistics makes Nigeria the highest consumer of rice in the West African sub region and the second largest importer in the world, buying at least 2 million tons annually.

International Trade Administration (2020) notes that Nigerian government had

announced that the country would be self-sufficient in rice production by 2018. However, the high cost of paddy rice, as well as high operational costs has continue to hamper large-scale/integrated rice mills from producing at competitive prices; imports continue to half of the country's rice demand. On the average, Nigeria spends 1 billion Naira on rice importation daily (accruing 365 billion Naira annually) (Olaoluwa, 2019; Akinwumi, 2011). Rice has become a very expensive commodity in Nigeria owing to new government policies on importation of food. However, in an attempt to boost local rice production and reduce the market prices, Nigerian government has in the past initiated and implemented series of programmes, projects and policies such as the Presidential Initiative on rice production of 2000, Growth Enhancement Support Scheme of 2010, Fadama III – Additional Financing of 2011, Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) of 2009 and the recently launched Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) of 2016, this study explores the social economic characteristics of rice farmers in Nigeria.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Rice Farmers in Nigeria

Balarabe and Muhammed (2019) in socio economic characteristics of rice farmers in Sokoto State. reported that farmers were not formally educated and are of middle age with household size of 6-10 members. The further indicated that majority of the respondents had over 16 years of experience in ice production and were engaged in different occupation such farming, Trading, civil service, but farming as their main occupation, The results also indicated that more than a half of the rice farmers in the study area are neither members of any cooperative society nor ever contacted by extension agents throughout their rice production season. According to Samarpitha, Varudev and Suhasini (2016) in socio-economic characteristics of rice farmers in the combined States of Andhra and Pradesh, reported that the average age, education and experience of the sampled farmers were 46.04,7.54 and 22.16 years respectively. Majority of the rice farmers owned small (54.44%) and medium sized (41.11%) farming area, 68.61% are from nuclear families, 99.44% had agriculture as their primary occupation, 71.94% cultivated rice in their own lands, 71.11% sourced water from canals as major source of irrigation, 40% owned buftaloes.67.22% had contact with extension agencies and 81.11% had access to credit facilities.

In economic assessment of rice processing in Bassa Local Government area of Kogi State Nigeria, Ibitoye, ldoko and Shaibu (2014)1 revealed that females constitutes majority of the respondents, having (84.4%) while males involved in the enterprise were (15.6%). Majority of the respondents (76.6%) falls within the age range of 2l-45 years, 71% of the sample rice processors were married, and 48.9 had no formal education while 51.1% can read and write considering their various level of educational attainment. The authors also reported that 87.8% of the respondents had a household size off 10 members and below, majority (35.6%) of the respondents had spent between I1-15 years in rice processing, 26.6% had stayed between 6-10years, and 21.19% had spent 1-5 years. Whereas, 16.7% had spent over 15 years in

the enterprise, 68.9% are full time rice processors while 14.5%, 11.1% and 5.6% of the respondents combine rice processing with artisan, trading and civil service respectively.

According to Tiku, Sanusi, Adedeyi and Ebira (2017) who reported in a study of factors affecting local rice production in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, 78.0% of the respondents were males while 22% were females, The age of the respondents fell between 21-30 years (40.7%) which was ranked the highest and about 55.0% had an average farming experience of 10 years. The findings of the study further indicated that rice production in the study area was profitable. On the other hand, Adam, Bidoli, Ammani and Oduehie (2018) in a study titled gender participation in rice processing value chain in Kebbi and Sokoto State, Nigeria, stated that majority (55.3%) of the respondents had no formal education, most (57.8%) of the beneficiaries were males, and 42.2% were females, Similarly, majority (48.1%) were within the age bracket of 3 1-40 years of age and l0.4% were within the age bracket of between 31-40 years of age and have been in rice processing for between 10 to 14 years (41. 59%).

In a research, on the adoption of improved agricultural technologies among rice farmers in Ghana, Donkoh, Azumah and Awumi (2019) revealed that male farmers (83%) participated more in rice production as compared to their female counterparts. On the average, a farmer had in to A 0s wears of formal causation. The results revealed that rice farmers in the study area were very experienced as the average Tamer possessed more than a decade of knowledge in rice production, 64% of the respondents were members of the farmers' groups and the average household size was found to be 9.35 persons, Similarly, in a study conducted by Adiel, Ejemebi and Jiriko (2019), on the effects of socio-economic and technological characteristics on discontinuance of adoption of improved rice production 1echnologies in Nasarawa and Plateau States, Nigeria, it was reported that majority (82.s886) of the respondents were male with a mean age value of 45.10 years. Majority (80.32%) were married, 79.03% had primary education while majority (60.56%) and (66.15%) in the study areas had family size of more than six persons and mean rice income of above ₦198 000 and most (88.89%) and (93.85%) of the respondents belonged to farmers association or cooperative society.

Okeke, Nwoye and Osegbue (2019) on adoption level of improved rice production technologies among rural women rice producers in Ayamelum local government area of Anambra state, Nigeria, reported that (58%) of the rural women rice farmers were between 19 and 48 years of age with mean age of 54.6 years, majority (829%) were married, (56%) had secondary education while 649% had household size of between 6 and 10 persons with mean years of farming experience of 10.1 years. Also, Onyeneke (2017) in determinants of adoption of improved technologies in rice production in Imo state, Nigeria, reported that majority (60.74%) of the rice farmers within the age bracket of 41-50 years. The mean age of the farmers was 46 veers, majority (66.67%) were males, 76.30% were married and the

average household size of the farmers was 10 persons. The authors also stated that the majority (69.63%) of the rice famers had secondary education and the average rice farming experience in the area was 18 years while majority (74.07) were found to be members of cooperative societies In the analysis of FARO44 rice technologies adoption among farmers in Nigeria by Mohammed (2019), it was reported that majority of the male farmers were With the active age of 19- 36 years with farming experience of 16-20 years. Tondo (2017) stated that the modern rice processing was dominated (74.6%) by males while the traditional rice processing was dominated (75 48%) by female.

According to Rashid, Rony, Mahalder and Goswani (2019), who conducted a survey on the adoption of improved production practices in low land rice production through community training, it was revealed that among the trained farming members, majority were in the age of 40-59 years (51.49%), and followed by the ground of 25-39 years (47.59%). The farmers aged between 60 years and above were only 1.1% while most (46.3%) and (42.9%) of the farmers attended primary and secondary schools respectively. Maximum of the adopters had the farming experience of 6 to 20 years (63.9%) only 11.39% of the respondents have farming experience of 5 years and above. 9.69% had 21- 25 years of farming experience. The research on adoption of Sawah eco-technology in rice production by farm households in Kebbi state, Nigeria by Alarima, Awotunde, Adamu, Akerele, Masunaga, Wakatsuki (2018), stated that respondents were predominantly male, married and had no formal education. The mean age of the adopters in the study area was 48.13 years with mean household size value of14 persons.

Joblaew, Sirisunyaluck, Kanjiní, Chalermphol and Prom-u-thai (2019) on factors affecting farmers adoption in rice production technology from the collaborative farming projects in Phrae province, Thailand reported that (57.4%) of the farmers were females, and nearly (506) were aged between 51-60 years, with an average age of 55.7 years. A majority (71.79%) of the famers completed their study at the primary education level, the farmers had four household members on average, while a large number of them (64.9%) had two agricultural labourers in their household.

In factors influencing adoption of improved rice production technologies under Ancbor Borrowers Programme (ABP) in Kebbi State, Nigeria, Cmar, Hali and Bunza (2019), reported that 35 89% of the farmers fall between age ranges between 41-50 years, Household size responses indicates that (28.396) and (23.3%) of the respondents had between 6--10 and 16-20 persons respectively. On level of education, the study indicated that majority (47.3%) of the respondents had secondary education, while (17.5%) bad primary education. Danjuma, Oruonye and Ahmed (2016) indicated that Fadama III project in Jalingo LGA was dominated by male and most of the beneficiaries were middle-aced people. The beneficiary were dominated by married

persons and most of whom were farmers while greater proportion of the beneficiaries attended one form of formal education or the other, though, only about Few attained tertiary education level. The findings of this study show that women were underrepresented in Fadama III programme in the area. The under-representation was attributed to the inability of the women to pay their counterpart fund for participation in the project. Whereas, some of the female beneficiaries in the study area deliberately avoided some agricultural activities because they regard it to be stressful and time consuming activity.

However, Ike (2012) reported that most of the beneficiaries in Fadama III programme in Delta state, Nigeria were middle-aged people who were in their active years; as such, it is of great advantage for the programme since majority of beneficiaries (farmers) would be physically and mentally alert in learning new ideas and technologies aimed at improving productivity.

Oladipo, Daudu, Bolarin, Bello, Aliyu and Orire (2016), in their study on the assessment of gender participation in Fadama III project among smallholder crop farmers in Kwara State, Nigeria, reported that majority of male and female respondents were above 50 years of age and were married. This suggests that majority of the smallholder arable crop farmers were married and this corroborates the findings of Daudu, Matanmi, Oladipo, Aliyu and Olatinwo (2015) who reported that married household beads tended to be more involved in agriculture and further suggestion that male respondents are more educated than their female counterpart in the study are Also Girei, Saingbe, Bitrus and Bassey (2017) in the impact of Fadama III projects on the income Level of beneficiaries in Plateau state, Nigeria, reported that the men age value of the farmers is 41 years, while majority of the respondents were male and 39%, were females.

In the effects of International Fund for Agricultural Development value chain Development programme on economic welfare of smallholder rice and cassava producers in Anambra State, Nigeria by Funmilola, et al., (2018), it was reported that the male respondents ranged between the ages of 25 years to 70 years with mean age value of45.5 years while female respondents ranges between 25 years to 69 years with mean age value of 41.8 years. The mean age of all respondents is 43.8 years which implies that the respondents were in the active and productive age range. The study further indicated that 53.9% of the programme beneficiaries are male while 56.1% of the beneficiaries are female. About 88.5% of beneficiaries are married, most have completed primary (30.7%) and secondary (49.49%) school education while 13.4% of the respondents had completed tertiary education. Similarly, Adi, et al (2020), in impact of Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) on farmers in Ardo-kola local government area of Taraba State, Nigeria, reported that majorities (96.7%) of the respondents were youth, 77.8% were men and 72.2% were married. Most (94.40) of the farmers attended one form of education or the other while majorities (77.8%) were small

scale farmers and 83.4% has house hold size of below 11 persons.

According to Obiora (2023), on the evaluation of value chain development programme on paddy rice production in Anambra State Nigeria revealed that a greater proportion (43.33%) of the farmers were between the age ranges of 31 and 40 years the majority (56.25%) of the programme beneficiaries Were females, while 43.75% were mules. The result further shows that 144 out of the total simple Size of the respondents accounting for 60% were married, followed by a greater proportion 42.08% of the rice farmers who completed their secondary school and 26.67% of the respondents who attained tertiary education. The rice farmers (48.75%) had household size of 6-10, followed by 40.42% of the rice farmers who had household size of between 1-5 and 10.83% who had household size of 11 and above with mean household size of 8.51 persons. The result of the analysis shows that a greater proportion (59.58%) of (the rice farmers had 1 -10 years of paddy rice production experience, 70.83% of the farmers cultivated between 2.0-3.0 hectares. while 45.0oP% of the respondents sourced used communal land for the Value Chain Development Programme (VCD). A greater proportion (43.33%) of the programme beneficiaries used hired paid labour during the production season, while 33.75% and 22.92%% of the farmers used farmers used labour and family and hired labour, respectively. The majority (56.25%) of the paddy rice farmers sourced agro input from the market/agro-input dealers, while 43.759% of the rice farmers sourced agro-inputs from the Value Chain Development Programme. Meanwhile, the results shows that a majority (50.84%) of the paddy rice farmers funded their enterprise with funds sourced from commercial banks/cooperative. Also, 28.33% and 20.83% of the beneficiaries sourced funds through their personal savings, friends and relations, respectively. A greater proportion (54.17%) of the rice farmers were full time rice farmers, while 22.92% were civil servants. Meanwhile 15.83 and 07.08% are into trading and artisanship, respectively.

Suggestions

1. Youth should be trained and engaged in rice farming through formal and non-formal education.
2. Government through the ministry of agriculture and communities should earmark area of land solely for rice farming.
3. Commercial banks should grant special financial assistance to rice farmers. Rice production inputs should be made available through at major rice farm settlements.
4. Male farmers should be encouraged to get involved in rice farming by providing incentives to them by way of financial stipends and other social amenities.
5. Machines and other sophisticated rice production equipment should be made available to the farmers.

Conclusion

The study showed that most of the rice farmers in Nigeria are between the ages of 31-40 years, females and married. The

farmers acquired secondary education with no special education in rice farming. Most of them have a large household size with maximum of 10 years off rice farming experience and cultivate between 2.0-3.0 haters of land per year. They hire paid labour, obtain agro inputs from market and source finance from commercial banks, their occupation is mainly farming.

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