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Willingness to Participate in Group Marketing of Farm Produce among Maize Farmers in Oyo State of Nigeria

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Abstract – **The study assessed the willingness of maize farmers to participate in group marketing of farm produce in Oyo State, Nigeria. Random sampling technique was employed in the selection of 200 respondents from the study area. Data were collected through the use of structured interview schedule from the sampled respondents. The data collected were analyzed with the use of frequency distribution tables, percentages and mean as the main descriptive statistical tools. Logistic statistics was employed to establish relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and willingness to participate in group marketing of farm produce. The mean age of the respondents was 45.27 years. Sixty four percent (64%) of them were married while the average household size was 7.49. The average number of years spent in school was 8.07 while average farm size was 4.196 hectares. The study discovered that 62% of the respondents are willing to participate in group marketing. Result of inferential statistics revealed that significant relationship exists between educational status of respondents, farm size, revenue generated and willingness to participate in produce group marketing. The study concluded that weak marketing plans, poor dissemination of information, high transaction costs, cheating among members, disagreement within the group and lack of adequate credit facilities are challenges facing marketing groups activities in the study area. It was therefore recommended that the communication channels employed should be made very effective and the use of mobile phones are also encouraged to ensure timely dissemination of marketing information among members.**

Keywords – **Marketing, Cooperatives, Farm Produce, Maize Farmers.**

I. INTRODUCTION

It had been observed that food marketing is a very important but rather neglected aspect of agricultural consideration on how to distribute the food produced efficiently and in a manner that will enhance increased productivity. The food security problem has been an issue of concern for both developed and developing countries. Food security is jointly determined by availability of food and accessibility to the food. The food produced must be distributed efficiently at minimum costs in order to guarantee continuous availability of the food. Availability of food is a function of food production, stock holding and food marketing [1].

The focus on maize farmers derives from the fact that maize is one of the important grains in Nigeria both on the basis of the number of farmers who engaged in its cultivation, and also in its economic value. Maize is a multipurpose crop because every part of its plant has economic value. The grain, leaves, stalk, tassel and cob can all be used to produce a large variety of food and non food products [2]. As a result of competition for maize by both man and animal, there is the need to increase the supply level of the grain. Studies in maize production in different parts of Nigeria have shown an increasing importance of the crop amidst growing utilization by food processing industries and livestock feed mills [3], [4] .

Most Nigerian farmers work comparatively small plots of land and cannot therefore produce large volumes of surplus goods for sale. Their inability to produce large volumes of crops means that they receive much lower prices from traders who would pay for bigger quantities. This is understandable because the traders who buy these small quantities have to bear the cost of sorting and grading each parcel in order to match it with parcels of similar quality goods. They may also have to weigh and re-pack the product and transfer it to another market [5]. The obvious solution to this is for group of farmers to gather their produce together and market all their products collectively. Each individual farmer may only produce one bag of maize but if 100 farmers gather together all their bags of maize in one location, there will be enough to make it possible to hire a truck and sell the 100 bags at higher bulk price. This can only be done of course, if the farmers take on the responsibility of sorting and grading all the bags into one or a few batches which will have the same quality. This will be more easily accomplished if farmers agree to plant the same variety of crop, to sow it at the same time, and to adopt the same growing, harvesting and post-harvesting techniques.

It should be noted that it is one thing to produce farm maize; it is another thing to make it available to the consumers that are scattered all over the country, so that price can be stabilized and the benefits of the items are appreciated because maize is a perishable produce. This effort cannot be sustained by an individual. It needs pooling of resources by farmers. The government realized this long time, and established the marketing boards that would ensure the buying, selling, grading and fixing of prices of agricultural products such as palm kernels, groundnut, cocoa, etc. The efforts of the marketing boards were complemented by the co-operative produce marketing societies. When the marketing boards were scrapped, the produce marketing co-operative society should be a forefront organization in the marketing of cash crops and take over the responsibilities of the marketing boards [6].

Origin of agricultural cooperatives could be traced back to Europe in the 17th century in the military frontier where the wives and children of the border guards lived together in organized agricultural co-operatives next to a fun fair or a public bath. The first civil agricultural co-operatives were also created in Europe in the second half of the 19th century. They later spread to North America and other continents. Agricultural cooperatives have become one of

the tools of agricultural development in emerging countries. Farmers also co-operated to form mutual farm insurance societies [7]. The major types of agricultural co-operatives include the Indigenous/Traditional Co-operative, Agricultural Production Co-operatives [8], Service Co-operatives, Group/Joint Farming Cooperation and the Produce Marketing Cooperatives [6].The later is the area of focus for this study.

Produce marketing cooperatives are cooperative business owned by farmers to undertake transformation, packaging, distribution and marketing of farm produce [9].The main objective of establishing a produce marketing cooperative is to encourage the intelligent and orderly marketing of agricultural produced to eliminate speculation and waste to make distribution of agricultural product between producer and consumers as direct as can be efficiently done to stabilized the marketing of agricultural production. A produce marketing cooperative is thus to store, transport, process the farm goods in the form, at the time and at the place that the consumers desire [10].

Marketing co-operative is a business organization owned by farmers to collectively sell their products. It aims at allowing the producer to accomplish collectively the functions they could not have achieved on their own. Most agricultural producers have relatively little power or influence with large agribusiness or food companies that purchase their commodities. Joining with other producers in a co-operative can give them greater power in the market place. In addition, co-operatives can give producers more control over their products as they make their way to consumers by allowing them to by-pass one or more that would otherwise go to others [11]. The most successful strategies for collective marketing include co-operation with the task of selling the goods at a higher degree of collective activity right through the farming processes. Improving economies of scale implies a division of labour to make the whole operation more efficient. If a group of farmers decide to adopt this strategy, a small group of individuals belonging to the group need to take the responsibility of selling the goods, keeping accurate records, dividing the proceeds among the individual members of the group, and organizing production and collection [5].

The classification of marketing co-operatives is based on membership affiliation, control and often area covered. There are three major types of organizational structures which are: Centralized, Federated and Mixed Structures. Centralized co-operatives usually serve a local area or community. Their functions are often limited to the first few steps in marketing such as assembling and grading. A few centralized co-operatives operate in several states and provide more complex functions such as food manufacturing. Federated co-operatives are often quite larger and cover wide geographical areas. Control rests with the local co-operatives that make up the federation. The federation at times acts only as sales agent for its members [11]

Collective marketing can be an effective tool for food industrial companies and farmers to improve their position within the vertical agri-food chains. Some of the benefits of cooperative marketing structure had been identified as follow: reduction of the malpractices existing in marketing system, reduction of prize-spread by the middleman between the producers and the consumers, as well as performance of functions of assembly, grading, processing, storage, transportation, insurance, financing, to mention a few. Other benefits include improving the economic conditions of the producers by strengthening their bargaining power as well as serve as an essential perquisite for large scale expansion of cooperative credit. In addition, cooperative marketing would educate the cultivator on how to make sufficient grading possible and bring the Nigerian producer into direct contact with export market. Despite the relative importance of collective marketing in developed and developing countries, both theoretical and empirical research on this topic is limited [12]. This study therefore sought answers to questions relating to the socio-economic characteristics of maize farmers in the study area, the existing marketing groups and their activities in the study area, extent of maize farmers' willingness to participate in group marketing in the study area, the factors affecting maize farmers' willingness to participate in group/collective marketing and the challenges associated with group/ collective marketing in the study area. The general objective of the study is to assess maize farmers' willingness to participate in the group marketing of their produce in Oyo State of Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

- Describe the socio-economic characteristics of maize farmers in the study area
- Identify existing marketing groups and activities performed in the study area
- Investigate respondents' willingness to participate in group marketing
- Identify factors affecting respondents' willingness to participate in group marketing in the study area
- Identify the challenges associated with group marketing in the study area.

The hypothesis of the study stated in the null form is as follow:

There is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of respondents and willingness to participate in group marketing of produce.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Oyo State of Nigeria. Oyo State is located in the South-Western part of Nigeria. It is located between latitudes $7^0 3^l$ and $9^0 12^l$ north of the equator and longitudes $2^0 47^l$ and $4^0 23^l$ east of the Meridian. It is bounded on the West by Republic of Benin, on the North by Kwara State, on the East by Osun State and on the South by Ogun State. The population of Oyo State in 2006 was 5,591,589 by National Population Commission. The state is made up of 33 local government areas. The State Capital is Ibadan. The States covers a land area of 27, 000sq.kilometres.There are two distinct seasons namely wet and dry seasons. The rainfall pattern is

remarkably constant ranging between 1,211mm in the far North and 1,264mm at Ibadan in the South over the past two decades. The average annual rainfall is estimated at between 1,194mm in the North and 1,278mm in the South. Mean temperature is 27^{O}C. The area with high relative humidity favours the cultivation of tree crops such as cocoa, kola, citrus and oil palm as well as arable crops like maize, cassava, yam and rice. Oyo State Agricultural Development Project has divided the state into four agricultural zones and twenty-eight (28) blocks. The agricultural zones are Ibadan/Ibarapa (9 blocks), Ogbomoso (5 blocks), Oyo (5 blocks) and Saki (9 blocks). Multi-stage random sampling technique was employed to select the farmers. In the first stage two blocks were randomly selected from each of Ogbomoso and Oyo agricultural zones while four blocks each were randomly selected from Ibadan/Ibarapa and Saki zones (40 % of the blocks from each of the four agricultural zones), making a total of twelve blocks to be sampled. Each block comprised eight cells. The sampling procedure further involves random selection of 25 percent of the cells (2) in each block making a total of 24 cells for the study. In the 3rd stage, 20 percent of the farmers' groups were selected at random. Finally, 10 percent of the maize farmers in each group were randomly sampled for the study. A total of 200 maize farmers formed the sample of the study from Oyo state.

The dependent variable of this study is willingness to participate in group (collective) marketing of maize among maize producers. The independent variables include the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers, which are sex, age, marital status, educational level, farming experience, farm size, household size, source of finance and revenue per hectare. Both the descriptive and inferential statistics analytical tools were employed. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The descriptive analysis made use of statistical tools like frequency distribution, mean and percentage. The logit model (Inferential statistics) was employed to establish relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and willingness to participate in group marketing. The logit model takes the following functional form:

$$y_i = x_i\beta + \varepsilon_i$$

Where y = 1for willingness to participate or y = 0 for non-willingness to participate in group marketing. The variable y_i is the observed contingent valuation bid by individual I, y_i is a latent measure, and xi denotes the independent variables. β is a vector of parameters and E_i the error term distributed as independent normal with zero mean and constant variance (0^2). The explanatory variables in the regression model are a set of variables dealing with socio-economic characteristics.

The model was specified as:

Y=Willingness to participate in group marketing (Yes=1, No=0)
X_1=Age (in years)
X_2=Sex (dummy: male=1, female=0)
X_3=Educational Status (years spent in school)
X_4= Marital Status (Married=1, otherwise=0)
X_5= Household Size (actual)
X_6= Farm Size (hectares)
X_7 =Revenue/Ha (#)
X_8 =Source of Finance (Personal savings=1, otherwise=0)
X_9 =Farming Experience (years)

III. Presentation and Discussion of Results

A. Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Fifty nine percent (59%) of the respondents are male while 41% are female. The average age for respondents was 45.27 years. This reveals that most of the respondents are in their active stage of life. The frequency distribution shows that 10% of the farmers are 30 years of age or less, 31% are between 31-40 years of age, 32% are between 41-50 years of age 17% are between 51-60 years of age and 12% are between 61-70 years of age. From the table, only 9% of the farmers are single, 64% are married, 5% are divorced, 15% are widowed and 7% are separated (living apart) from their spouses. This showed that majority of the maize farmers in this area are married, with the implication that they have responsibilities toward dependent family members. Data presented in table 1 further revealed that 21% of the respondents had no formal education, 31% had primary education, 26% had secondary education, 20% had tertiary education and only 2% had adult literacy education. The average number of years spent in school by the farmers is 8.07. According to result of data analysis, 36% of the respondents spent 5 years or less in school, 28% spent between 6-10 years, 21% spent between 11-15 years while 15 % spent between 16-20 years. This revealed that both literate and illiterate individuals are found in the farming business.

The distribution of respondents according to household size indicated that 34% of them have between 1-5 individuals within the household, 51% have between 6-10, 9% have between 11-15, 2% have between 16-20 while 4% have between 21-25 household size. The average household size was 7.49 which are found within the highest frequency. According to figures in the table 1, 41% of the farmers claimed to cultivate maize on less than 2 hectares of land, 34% have between 2-4 hectares, 7% have between 5-7 hectares, 9% cultivate between 8-10 hectares while the same percentage (9%) claimed to possess maize farm greater than 10 hectares. The average farm size was found to be 4.196 hectares. This study opined that majority cultivate maize crops on relatively small sized farms. As shown in table 1, 45% of the respondents have finance their maize production and marketing activities from personal savings, 13% borrowed from friends and relatives, 34% depended on cooperative loans and 8% claimed to obtain loans from banks. This finding revealed that most of the farmers depended on personal savings as a means of financing their activities. According to the table below, 29% of the respondents have been maize farmers for ≤10 years while 18% claimed to have been maize farmers for 30 years and above. The

average was 19.86 years. This shows that most of the respondents could be categorized as experienced farmers.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics Distribution of Respondents, n=200

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	118	59.0
Female	82	41.0
Age		
≤30	20	10.0
31-40	49	29.0
41-50	64	32.0
51-60	34	17.0
61-70	24	12.0
Marital Status		
Single	18	9.0
Married	128	64.0
Divorced	10	5.0
Widowed	30	15.0
Separated	14	7.0
Level of Education		
No Formal Education	42	21.0
Primary Education	62	31.0
Secondary Education	52	26.0
Tertiary Education	40	20.0
Adult Literacy Education	4	2.0
Years spent in school		
≤5	72	36.0
6-10	56	28.0
11-15	42	21.0
16-20	30	15.0
Household Size		
1-5	68	34.0
6-10	102	51.0
11-15	18	9.0
16-20	4	2.0
21-25	8	4.0
Maize farm size (ha)		
<2	82	41.0
2-4	68	34.0
5-7	14	7.0
8-10	18	9.0
>10	18	9.0
Main Source of Finance		
Personal Savings	90	45.0
Friends and Relatives	26	13.0
Cooperative loans	68	34.0
Bank loans	16	8.0
Years of Experience		
≤10	29	29.0
11-20	40	40.0
21-30	13	13.0
>30	18	18.0

Source: Field Survey, 2012

B. Marketing Groups and Activities performed in the Study Area

Analysis of data revealed that all the respondents claimed to be aware of existence of marketing groups in the community. Most of them also claimed to have full knowledge of the activities that such groups perform. Respondents were asked to mention the names of such groups (as many as each of them could identify) in the study area. In all, the study came up with ten (10) produce marketing groups in the study area. Data were also collected concerning understanding of respondents about activities performed by the mentioned groups. Results of the findings were presented in tables 2 and 3.

According to result of data analysis, 40%of the respondents identified the existence of Mojere marketers' group in the study area, 36% identified Jenriyin, 29% identified Agbegbemi, 46% identified Agbeloba, 37% identified Ifelodun, 33% identified Itesiwaju, 43% identified Young farmers, 41% identified Profit marketers, 28% identified Agbelere and 30% identified Ifesowapo marketers' group. This shows that the three most popular marketing groups in the study area include Agbeloba, Young Farmers and Mojere, while the less popular one is Agbelere marketing group. According to the respondents, Agbeloba marketing group is one dominated in number by elderly people in the study area, Young farmers' group consists of young men and women mostly below 50 years of age while Mojere is dominated by women in the study area.

According to table 3, 50% of the respondents submitted that supply of loans or credit to farmers is an activity carried out by the marketing groups, 95% opined that assistance in produce marketing is an activity carried out by the marketing groups, 54% of the respondents said that organization of contributions (ajo) is carried out in these groups, 22% were of the opinion that supply of subsidized inputs is an activity the marketing groups carry out, 23% attested that bulk purchase of agricultural inputs is a major activity the groups performs. Data analysis revealed that 28% said that organization of seminars for farmers is performed by the groups, 52% submitted that the groups supply marketing information to farmers, 64% claimed that the groups control produce prices, 23% were of the opinion that the groups take up the activity of supplying information on new innovations to farmers, 17% claimed that the groups attract government support. Findings further revealed that 26% said that the group provides extension services to farmers while 57% agreed that mobilization of savings among farmers is carried out in these marketing groups. This study revealed that the major activity performed by these groups is assisting the farmers to market their produce (95%) while the control of produce price is another major activity these groups undertake (64%). The least of the activities such groups undertake is the attraction of government support. Respondents claimed that the government rarely supports them in cash or in kind.

Table 2: Marketing Groups Identified in the Study Area

Marketing Group	*Frequency	Percentage
Mojere	80	40.0
Jenriyin	72	36.0
Agbegbemi	58	29.0
Agbeloba	92	46.0
Ifelodun	74	37.0
Itesiwaju	66	33.0
Young Farmers	86	43.0
Profit Marketers	62	31.0
Agbelere	56	28.0
Ifesowapo	60	30.0

* Multiple responses
Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table 3: Activities performed by the Marketing Groups

Activities performed	*Frequency	Percentage
Supply of loans and credit to farmers	100	50.0
Assistance in Produce Marketing	190	95.0
Organizing contributions among members	108	54.0
Supply of Subsidized Inputs	44	22.0
Bulk Purchase of Agricultural Inputs	46	23.0
Organizing Seminars for Farmers	56	28.0
Supply of Marketing Information to Farmers	104	52.0
Control of Produce Price	128	64.0
Supply of Information about New Innovations to Farmers	46	23.0
Attraction of Government Support	34	17.0
Provision of Extension Services to Farmers	52	26.0
Mobilization of Savings among Farmers	114	57.0

* Multiple responses
Source: Field Survey, 2012

C. Willingness to Participate in Group Marketing Among Respondents

Table 4 shows that 62% of the respondents are members of one marketing group or the other. These constitute the willing respondents. The remaining 38% claimed not to be members of any marketing group, and therefore constitute the non-willing respondents. This reveals that more than half of the respondents belong to one or more marketing group. According to the table, 56.45% of the member respondents were of the opinion that joining a marketing group makes marketing easier, 17.74% joined because they have good knowledge about group marketing, 61.29% joined because they believed that they were able to make more profit through the marketing group, 67.74% joined because of the notion that it reduces marketing risks. Analysis of data revealed that 61.29% claimed to market part of their produce while 38.71% claimed to market all their produce through the marketing groups. This study shows that many (more than half) of the member respondents still keep part of their produce for personal transaction.

According to the information volunteered by the non-member respondents, reasons for not joining any marketing group include lack of interest, lack of knowledge about procedures that entail joining the group, lack of understanding about objectives and practices of the marketing groups. Other reasons include lack of trust in the groups, high membership cost, weak marketing plans and poor dissemination of information. Further investigation revealed that 63.16% of non-member respondents market their produce through self-effort while 36.84% claimed to transact their produce through the use of marketing agents.

D. Challenges Encountered By the Marketing Groups

Information supplied by respondents revealed that challenges being faced by marketing group operations include weak marketing plans, poor dissemination of information, high transaction costs, cheating among members, disagreement within the group and lack of adequate credit facilities.

E. Test of Hypothesis

The logit regression model was employed to establish the relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and willingness to join a marketing group. Data analysis revealed that at10% level of significance, years spent in school was inversely related to willingness to participate in group marketing. This is contrary to a prior expectation as more knowledge gained through formal education was expected to favour participation in group activities for income generation. However the negative relationship according to information volunteered by educated respondents is due to the fact that there are some modifications expected to be seen in the marketing group operations before they can consider participation in the group marketing. According to their submission, most of the groups still employ outdated principles of operation. At 5% level of significance, revenue was positively related to willingness to participate in group marketing. This means that the more revenue farmers generated from the group activities, the more willing they are to participate. At 10% level of significant, farm size was negatively related to willingness to participate in group marketing. This inferred that as farm size gets bigger, farmers get more unwilling to participate in group marketing. This may be attached to fear of being cheated.

Table 4: Respondents' Willingness to Participate in Group Marketing

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Membership		
Non-Member	76	38.0
Member	124	62.0
Total	200	100.0
***Motivational Factor For Joining the Group**		
It makes marketing easier	70	56.45
Have good knowledge about it	22	17.74
It increases profit	76	61.29
It reduces marketing risks	84	67.74
Proportion of Produce Transacted Through Marketing Group by Member respondents (n = 124)		
Part	76	61.29
All	48	38.71

*Multiple response
Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table 5: Result of Logit Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	t-ratio	P>/t/
Constant	4.675	1.093	4.276	0.000
Age	0.322	0.233	1.383	0.167
Sex	-0.430	0.394	-1.090	0.276
Years of education	-0.107	0.437	-2.451**	0.014
Marital status	0.449	0.839	0.535	0.593
Household size	0.240	0.922	0.260	0.795
Farm size	-0.118	0.708	-1.660*	0.097
Revenue/Ha	0.823	0.477	1.726*	0.084
Source of finance	-0.836	0.626	-1.337	0.181
Experience	-0.166	0.461	-0.359	0.720

* Significant at 10% level; ** Significant at 5% level
Number of observation = 200; Log likelihood function = -259.552
Source: Data Analysis, 2012

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that:

- Functional produce marketing groups exist in the study area
- Weak marketing plans, poor dissemination of information, high transaction costs, cheating among members, disagreement within the group and lack of adequate credit facilities are challenges facing marketing groups activities in the study area.
- Number of years spent in school, Farm size and revenue generated per hectare were variables influencing farmers' willingness to participate in group marketing of farm produce in the study area.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Operational method within the marketers' groups should be constantly reviewed and appropriate new marketing innovations adopted. This action will attract and encourage many potential members to join and participate in group marketing activities.
- There should be no exploitation of new members by long standing members and all the benefits of these groups should be appropriately enjoyed by every member of the groups.
- Financial institutions should also support these groups by granting them adequate and timely credit needed for marketing activities.
- Communication channels should be very effective and the use of mobile phones are also encouraged to ensure timely dissemination of marketing information among members

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