

CONSTRAINTS TO YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN COCOA PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Youth involvement in Cocoa farming in Nigeria can be a panacea to increasing the low level of production based on their dynamism, energy, and optimism. These qualities are much evident in West Africa sub-region where their activities have resulted in increase in production. However, about 65% of the country's population is in the youth age bracket of 16-40 years old, out of which only 35% are in agriculture while 65% between the ages of 15-60 years are unemployed. This study examines the constraints to youth involvement in cocoa production in Nigeria. A total of one hundred and fifty respondents were selected using a multistage cluster random sampling technique in five cocoa producing states in Nigeria. The major constraints affecting youth participation in cocoa production include: inadequate credit, low profitability of investment, lack of access to necessary inputs, and difficulty in land acquisition. There is a relationship between the constraints and farming knowledge. It is concluded that the youth should be mainstreamed into cocoa production through the establishment of business incubation platform across the producing states with provision made for credit and necessary inputs. This intervention will motivate youth in accepting Cocoa farming as a business like any other works of life.

Keywords: cocoa, constraints, youth, incubation platform

INTRODUCTION

The dynamism, energy and innovative potential of young people are important resources to meet the challenges in an agricultural system. Young people bring energy, vitality and innovation into the work force and when their willingness to contribute is matched with opportunity: they can have a transformative impact on economic growth and social development. These qualities are much evident in West Africa sub-region where their activities have resulted in increased production. In West Africa, the regions' agricultural export grew by 6.2% per year on average during the 1996-2000 to 2006-10 periods. West African exports have grown faster than those of the rest of the world. Cocoa has a remarkable success story and the region has retained its dominant world market share. However, it is to be noted that the population is increasing by 2.7% annually with 44% below the age of 15 (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2015). With an abundance supply of youthful labour, policy makers should be able to redirect and provide the skills and knowledge needed for the youth labour force to engage in productive, ecologically sustainable agriculture. In Nigeria, about 65% of the country's population is in the youth age bracket of 16-40 years old, out of which only 35% are in agriculture while 65% between the ages of 15-60 years are unemployed. According to Meiga et. al (2015). 27.1% of youth (16-34years) participates in Agriculture,. The Nigerian youth have the lowest probability of working in Agriculture with only 27.1 % probability and regional disparity exists. In Northern Nigeria the probability that youth are working in Agriculture is higher (36,5%) than in the Southern Nigeria (17.8%). McMillian and Hartgen (2014) gave higher estimates of 33.8% versus 32%. Despite government efforts in providing incentives for youth in rural areas and the expanding markets for primary and secondary agricultural commodities, the involvement of the youth in agricultural activities has steadily declined in recent years (Adekunle et al. 2009). In spite of the high current youth unemployment rate, and abundance of agricultural jobs available evidence suggests an ageing farming population in Nigeria, with an average age of 47 years and life expectancy at 47-50 years in 2008 (National Bureau of Statistic (NBS) 2008, Oboh et al., 2009). In 2009, the national unemployment rate was 19.7 per cent with the youth accounting for more than 75 per cent (NBS, 2010). Increased involvement of youth in agricultural activities will help reduce the problems of; ageing farm population, increasing youth unemployment (Akpan 2010), declining productivity of the cocoa farms and national output due to old age of farmers and ageing trees. There is the growing need for young farmers and young tree in order to boost production. A study of the constraints faced by youths in cocoa farming is therefore essential. This study thus seeks to provide answers to some important research questions.

- (1) What are the extents of youth participation in cocoa activities?
- (2) What are the constraints affecting youth participation in cocoa production?

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to identify the constraints to youth involvement in cocoa production.

METHODOLOGY

A total of one hundred and fifty respondents were selected using a multistage cluster random sampling technique in five cocoa producing states in Nigeria, namely Ondo, Abia, Cross-Rivers, Kwara and Taraba States. Ten respondents were selected from three Local Government Area of each state making a total of thirty respondents in each of the five states. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Descriptive statistics involving frequency percentages, means scores and ranking order were used.

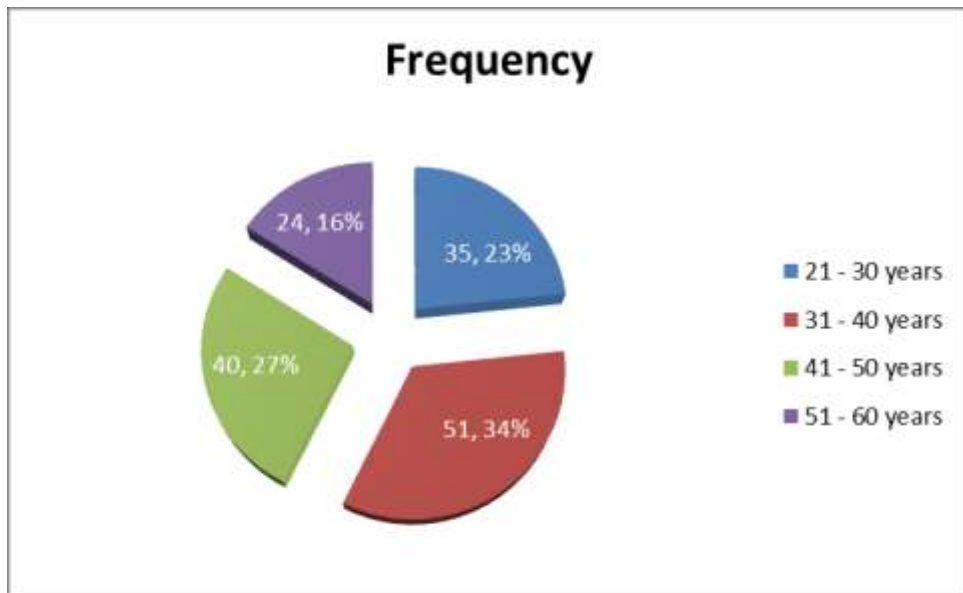
Measurement of Variables

Age of respondents was measured in years while respondents were asked to state their level of education. Involvement in Cocoa production was measured by active participation in the following Cocoa farming practices: land preparation, nursery, transplanting, weeding, pruning, pest control, fertilizer application, processing, harvesting, storage and marketing. The activities were ranked according to the levels or frequency of participation. Eight reasons for involvement and 17 constraints affecting their involvement were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from very high, high, undecided, low and very low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Age and Educational levels of Respondents

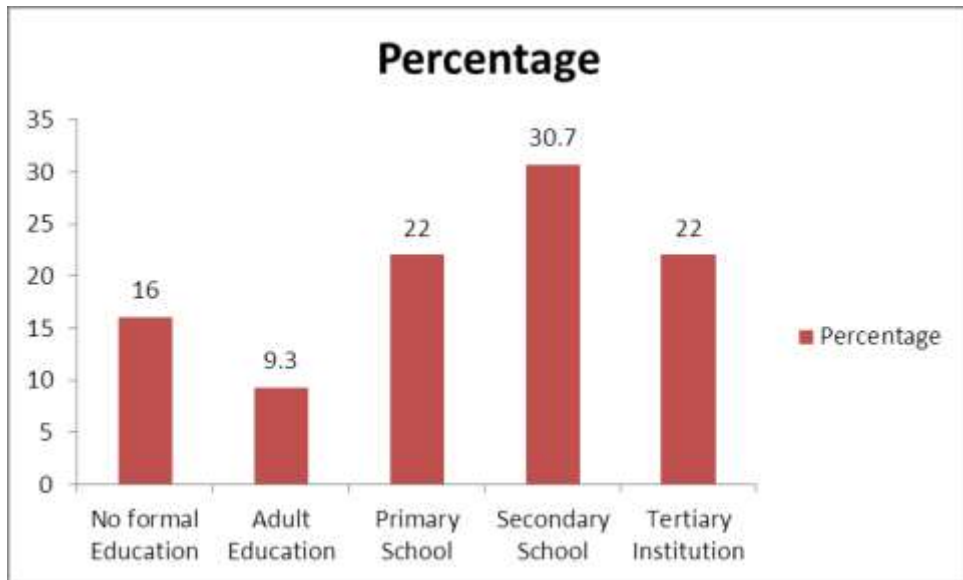
As shown in Fig 1, 34% were between the ages of 31-40 years, while 27% were between the ages of 41- 50 years, 23% were between 21-30 years and 16% were between 51-60 years. The active youth of 20 - 40 years constitutes a total of 57%. This is because the youth were targeted in the survey exercise going by the Africa Union 2011 age bracket of 18- 35 as youth.



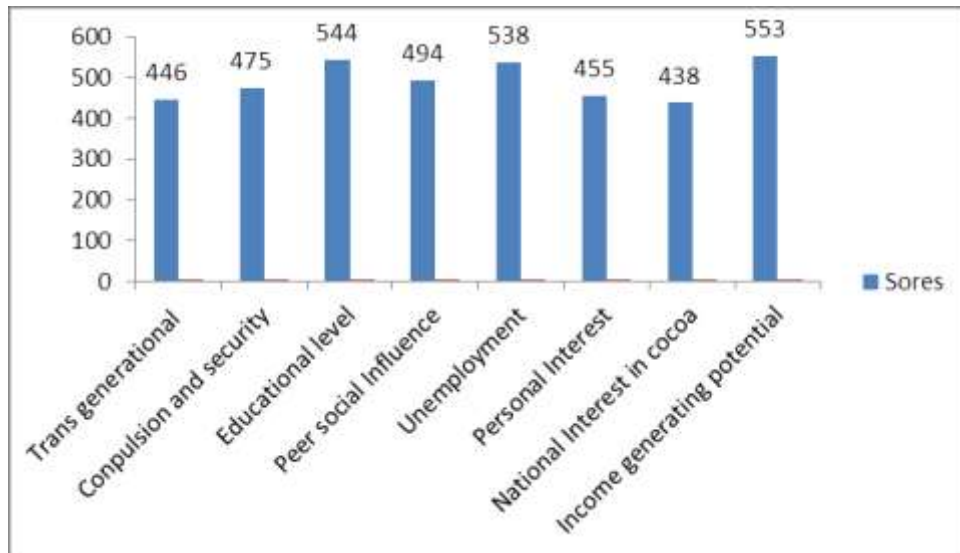
Source: Field study, 2016

Fig 1: Age of Respondents

Fig 2 also shows the distribution of the educational levels of the respondents. The study shows that, 30.7% had secondary education, while primary and tertiary education had 22% respectively. Those with no formal education were 16% while those that have undergone adult education were 9.3%. The level of education of the respondents is important to their knowledge of involvement and constraints in Cocoa production. Those with higher level of education are involved in cocoa farming because of lack of white collar job while those with low educational qualification had nowhere to go but to continue in farming activities. It is also evident that more youth are having primary and secondary education.



Source: Field study, 2016
 Fig 2: Educational level of Respondents



Source: Field study, 2016
 Fig 3: Reasons for Youth involvement in Cocoa Production

Fig 3, shows the reason for youth involvement in Cocoa production, it can be seen that majority are in cocoa farming because of the income generating potential. However, educational level and unemployment are also very important in the decision to be engaged in cocoa farming by the youth. Peer Social influence and compulsion becomes important in the absence of alternatives. National Interest on cocoa had the lowest score.

It is also to be noted that personal interest ranked 6th amongst the reasons for getting involved in cocoa farming, therefore the youth may not put all efforts into the work. Youths know that agriculture can earn them a living but they only consider it as the last resort when they have tried everything else and they have failed. Youth are **impatient for speedy returns** and farming is not the desirable ‘quick fix’ which agriculture cannot offer and for many young people farming is seen to be the last option.

Extent of involvement by youth in cocoa production activities by respondents

Table 1 shows the ranking of activities on cocoa production for which they are mostly involved. The most important is the land preparation, followed by transplanting of seedlings, weeding and harvesting. These are major activities on the farm that requires strength, energy and money. The need for able men becomes imperative due to ageing of the older farmers, hence the need for paid labor or contract workers. Nursery activities, pruning, pest control and storage are not of a continuous basis and may not provide steady

income for the youth. However, the youth can provide this service at a cost to the farmer. The youth can be involved in the provision of certified seedlings of improved varieties collected from a research Centre. Similarly, opportunity exists for pest and disease control services. Encouragement can be given to youth along these areas. Processing activities are regarded as women work while marketing will involve much money which they cannot afford.

Table 1: Extent involvement by Youth in Cocoa Production Activities by Rank

Activities involved	Scores	Mean	Rank
Land Preparation	551	0.73	1
Transplanting	537	0.72	2
Weeding	543	0.72	2
Harvesting	540	0.72	2
Nursery	529	0.71	5
Agricultural Practices	534	0.71	5
Storage	533	0.71	5
Pruning	526	0.70	8
Pest Control	526	0.70	8
Fertilizer Application	518	0.69	10
Processing	520	0.69	10
Marketing	510	0.68	12

Source: Field Survey 2016

Perceived Constraints to involvement in cocoa production among respondents

Table 2 shows the ranking of the various constraints to youth involvement in cocoa production in Nigeria, the major constraint is access to land, the land is controlled by old people and inheritance practices tend to result in fragmentation of holdings or restrict benefit to perhaps the oldest, while the other children have to move out or scramble for small lots of land; female youth may lose even minimal access if they marry an outsider. Young people have to wait for their fathers to die before they can inherit the land or practice any innovation on the land. The land use decree is not working and in some cases because of poverty, some parents have sold their land thereby plunging the young ones into untold hardship. Another critical constraint is access to credit; the youth have no track record which banks can trust and no collateral to back up loans; Youth empowerment scheme must help them to acquire land legally and also improve and manage the land. Farm technology and productivity training should be given to them to enhance profitability and a reliable income. Another major constraint is the income which could be low due to rising cost of inputs, labor and old age of trees. Young farmers should plant new improved seedlings of low gestation period that have high yielding potentials. Furthermore young people perception of farming is a constraint. They perceive that agriculture is for the uneducated, poor and old people. The essence of schooling is to get a better job whereas education is to make them a better manager on the farm. They are not ready to compete with aged farmers hence this was ranked lowest among the constraints.

On access to technology, the extension services goes to the elderly farmers who own the land; Messages about government and other efforts to support youth are rarely well enough targeted at youth for them to access the help;

Relationship between respondents' involvement and constraints

Table 3 summarizes the results of the chi-square analysis on the relationship between the respondent involvement in cocoa production activities and the perceived constraints. From the table nearly all the constraints had significant relationship with the level of involvement in cocoa production activities, only family influences and competition with aged farmers are not significant. This was earlier observed in the ranking of the constraints, however other constraints affects the level of involvement of youth significantly. Therefore for increased involvement of youth in cocoa production, these constraints must be removed or minimized. Increased investments in modern agriculture are opening new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth along the Cocoa value chain. We need a clearer understanding of how we can benefit from the available youth assets under the dimension of demographic, economic and social forces. The forces that created the challenges may as well be creating opportunities and potential pathways towards better life for

Table 2: Constraints to Youth involvement in Cocoa Activities

Constraints	Scores	Mean	Rank
Lack of rural infrastructure (Land)	638	0.85	1
Lack of access to credit	633	0.84	2
Low income	607	0.81	3
Hazards involved in some activities	577	0.77	4
Low yield	568	0.76	5
Labour intensity	537	0.72	6
Low prestige of agriculture	535	0.71	7
Lack of post-harvest and storage facilities	525	0.7	8
Untimely supply of inputs	514	0.69	9
Long gestation of cocoa	496	0.66	10
Government Policies	484	0.65	11
Drudgery	491	0.65	11
Climatic conditions	482	0.64	13
Lack of technical know-how/extension	424	0.57	14
Family influence	425	0.57	15
Lack of access to market	386	0.51	16
Competition with aged farmers	364	0.49	17

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 3: Chi-square test for relationship between respondents' involvement and constraints

Constraints	Chi Square Value	Probability	Decision
Lack of access to Land	6.38	0.00	S
Lack of access to credit	6.33	0.00	S
Low profitability of investment	2.51	0.00	S
Hazards involved in some activities	5.77	0.00	S
Low yield	5.68	0.00	S
Labour intensity	5.37	0.00	S
Low prestige of agriculture	2.35	0.00	S
Lack of post-harvest and storage facilities	2.25	0.00	S
Untimely supply of inputs	2.14	0.00	S
Long gestation of cocoa	3.96	0.00	S
Government Policies	4.84	0.00	S
Drudgery	2.91	0.00	S
Climatic conditions	4.82	0.00	S
Lack of technical know-how/extension	6.24	0.00	S
Family influence	0.21	0.75	NS
Lack of access to market	3.86	0.00	S
Competition with aged farmers	0.64	0.80	NS

Source: Field study, 2016

S = Significant; NS = Not Significant. Significant level = 0.05

Source: Field Survey, 2016

young people and better prospect for the country. It is recommended that youth empowerment programs should be embarked upon by cocoa producing states looking at various business opportunities along the value chain. Currently, CRIN is embarking on incubation platform for youth on cocoa and cashew. Information and experiences among young entrepreneurs will be shared. Furthermore, mentoring, training and linkages with markets and financial institutions for credit will also be facilitated. Partnership with other agencies and private sector is being sought. CRIN recently trained 100 youth (men and women) in Cross Rivers State of Nigeria on value added products (wine, soap, bread) with support from the World Bank. In Nigeria, the Nigeria Incentive-based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) is working with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to deploy a USD300 Million Enable Youth Program that will catalyze youth's involvement in agri-business and enterprise development. Under this partnership, NIRSAL will deploy its leverage factor that makes the initial funds revolving and scalable to new sets of green field youth enterprises while mainstreaming the matured youth enterprises into a sustainable and permanent commercial relationship with the finance industry as well as downstream markets. The net effect is to make agriculture/agribusiness an economically viable means of livelihood to the youths. Under the partnership, NIRSAL will package different levels of guarantees for financing along the following stages along the agricultural value chain.

CONCLUSION

The major constraints affecting youth participation in cocoa production include: inadequate credit, low profitability of investment, lack of access to necessary input, and difficulty in land acquisition. There is a relationship between the constraints and farming knowledge. *“What the youth may require is a cocoa business enterprise with short gestation period or that bring ‘quick money’ with minimal labour intensity and assured markets”*. It is concluded that the youth should be mainstreamed into cocoa production through the establishment of business incubation platform across the producing states with provision made for credit and necessary inputs. This intervention will motivate youth in accepting Cocoa farming as a business like any other works of life.

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