

Assessment of Benefits Derived by Cocoa Farmers from Cocoa Development Unit Activities of Oyo State

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ABSTRACT The study was carried out to assess the benefits derived by Cocoa farmers from Cocoa Development Unit (CDU) of Oyo state. Structured and validated interview schedule was used to collect relevant information from Sixty Cocoa farmers randomly selected from four major cocoa producing areas. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Correlation was used as inferential statistical tool. Evidence from the data analyzed, the respondents had benefited from CDU activities ranging from skill improvement in cocoa production and economic gains. Empirically, age ($r = -0.269$), marital status ($r = -0.298$) shows negative and significant relationship with benefits from CDU activities while sex ($r = 0.018$) shows negative but non significant relationship. Education ($r = 0.331$) had positive and significant relationship with benefits derived from CDU activities and farming experience ($r = 0.022$) shows positive but non significant relationship with benefits derived from CDU activities. Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore recommended that training should be organized for Cocoa farmers in the state on various cocoa processing methods in order to have high quality grade of cocoa for export.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is an important sector in the economy of Nigeria. An important feature of Nigerian agricultural economy is the production of food crops as well as cash crops. The production of cash crops such as Cocoa, Coffee, Tea, Rubber etc. are mainly for exportation. Post independent years have witnessed a boom in Cocoa production, sales and exports. From years past, agriculture has served domestic and industrial needs (CRIN, 2000).

Cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) was introduced to Nigeria from the American continent in 1874 and was first planted in Cross river State but commercial planting began when the crop was introduced into Western Nigeria between 1889 and 1890 (Are et al., 1973). Cocoa cultivation gained prominence rapidly in Nigeria in 1965, then Nigeria became the second largest producer of Cocoa in the world. Cocoa production in Nigeria is known to perform the following economic roles, which include the following. Provision of raw materials for cocoa industries, Provision of revenue for the government, it contributes to the aggregate export earnings and source of income to farmers who engaged in Cocoa production. Also, cocoa farming, processing and marketing provided employment for about 40% of the inhabitants in cocoa

producing zones of Nigeria. (Oladosu and Sanusi, 2004).

In 1994, Cocoa production statistics showed that Nigeria was sixth largest Cocoa producer with 135,000 tonnes. The decline in Cocoa production was attributed to the discovery and exploitation of petroleum. Nigeria has over emphasized the exploitation of crude oil as a main source of foreign exchange earnings. The country thus neglected cocoa, a versatile, renewable, and sustainable avenue for generating foreign exchange and employment (Akinwumi, 1995).

Among other factors responsible for the declining production of cocoa in Nigeria is the vacuum created by the abolition of the Nigerian cocoa marketing board, old age of the farmers, massive migration from rural areas, scarcity and high cost of agricultural labour, incidence of pests and diseases, lack of credit facilities to cocoa farmers and indiscriminate bush burning that affect cocoa plantation (CDU, 2003; CRIN, 2003).

In an attempt to boost cocoa production, Oyo state Government established Cocoa Development Unit (CDU) which was charged with the responsibility of general development and improvement of Cocoa as an economic crop in the state. Through the established Cocoa Development Unit, various programmes was

initiated by the present administration in order to facilities the development of Cocoa production. Among such programmes are Cocoa seedling production where Cocoa seedling are raised and sell to the farmers at subsidized rate, Young Graduate Farmers poverty alleviation scheme where young agricultural graduates are encouraged to establish an hectare of Cocoa plantation and Tree Crops Farmers poverty Alleviation Scheme (CDU, 2004).

It is against this background that the study was intended to provide answers to the following pertinent research questions:

- (i) What are the activities of Cocoa Development Unit in Oyo state?
- (ii) What are the benefits derived by Cocoa farmers from Cocoa Development Unit Activities?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to assess the benefits derived by cocoa farmers from Cocoa Development Unit (CDU) of Oyo state.

Specific Objectives are to:

- (i) Describe the personal characteristics of the respondents,
- (ii) Determine the activities of the CDU in Oyo state
- (iii) Determine the benefits gained by Cocoa farmers from CDU of Oyo state.
- (iv) Establish relationship between personal characteristics of the respondents and Benefit derived from CDU.

METHODOLOGY

This study area was Oyo state. Oyo state was located between 7°3'N and 9°12' North of the equator and longitudes 2°47' and 4°23' East of the Meridian. The state is known to have three repetational zones. These are forest, Savannah and derived savannah. The forest zone with high 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.

This empirical exercise was conducted in 4 major producing areas out of seven of Oyo state. These areas include Ona-Ara, Oluyole, Iddo, Akinyele, Lagelu, Egbeda and Afijio Local Government Areas of Oyo state. The 4 areas were purposively selected based on high population of cocoa farmers. The areas selected are: Ona Ara,

Oluyole, Akinyele and Iddo Local Government Areas. The table below shows the total number of registered Cocoa farmers in the study area and the number selected for the study. 30% of the farmers were randomly selected making a total sample size of 60 Cocoa farmers. Primary data from sixty respondents were therefore collected through an interview schedule. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and correlation as inferential statistical tool.

Table 1: Number of registered farmers and number selected

<i>Local Government Areas</i>	<i>Number of farmers</i>	<i>No selected</i>
Ona-Ara	60	18
Oluyole	51	15
Ido	48	14
Akinyele	43	13
Total	202	60

Source: Field survey, 2004.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evidence from the data collected revealed that about half (53.3%) of the respondents have their age above 50 years, 28.3% are between the ages of 41 and 50 years, while 11.7% of them have their age range between 31 and 40 years and few (6.7%) have their age falls between 21 and 30 years (Table 2). It could be inferred from this finding that majority of the respondents are older Cocoa farmers. It is further revealed that majority (93.0%) of the respondents are male while others (7.0%) are female, this implies that it is mostly men that are actively involved in Cocoa production, though the female ones have their role to play especially in the processing of cocoa.

More so, in terms of marital status of the respondents, majority (83.3%) are married while others (11.7%) are either single or widowed. Another section of the table show the level of education of the respondents. It was revealed that more than 1/3rd (41.7%) of the respondents attended primary schools, 23.3% of them attended adult education classes while 11.7% are OND/HND holders and 3.3% of the respondents holds Bachelor Degree. It could be inferred that the cocoa farmers in the study are literate who can read and write.

The result of the analysis shows that 38.3% of the sampled cocoa farmers have their farming

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to personal characteristics N = 60

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age (years)</i>		
21-30	4	6.67
31-40	7	11.7
41-50	17	28.3
51 and above	33	53.3
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	56	93.3
Female	4	6.70
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	53	88.3
Single	4	6.7
Widowed	3	5.0
<i>Education</i>		
Adult literacy	14	23.3
Primary education	25	41.7
Secondary education	12	20.0
OND/HND	7	11.7
B. Sc	2	3.3
<i>Farming Experience</i>		
1-10	19	31.7
11-20	18	30.0
21 and above	23	38.3

Source: Field survey, 2004.

experience as more than 21 years, while 32.0% have their farming experience between 11 and 20 years and others (29.7%) had been farming between 1 and 10 years.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents according to CDU activities. The result of the analysis revealed that the activities of CDU to cocoa farmers as follows: provision of technical advise to cocoa farmers on cultural practices (83.3%); rehabilitation of old productive cocoa trees (75.0%); provision of hybrid, disease

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to CDU activities

CDU activities	Frequency	Percentage
1. Provision of hybrid seedlings	60*	100.0
2. Rehabilitation of old productive cocoa tree	45*	75.0
3. Distribution of chemicals and other farm equipment at subsidized rate	35*	58.3
4. Provision of technical advise to cocoa farmers on pre planting, planting and post planting operations.	50*	83.3
5. Visitation to Cocoa farmers for adequate farm maintenance	30*	50.0

Source: Field survey, 2004.
*indicate multiple Responses.

and pest resistant seedlings (100%); distribution of chemicals and farm equipments at subsidized rate (58.3%) and visitation of CDU to cocoa farmers for adequate farm maintenance (50.0%). This findings implies that the CDU's activities is majorly to encourage cocoa farmers to be productive and acquire inputs (information and skills) that will enhance good yield of cocoa.

Table 4 shows the distribution of cocoa farmers according to the benefits derived from CDU activities. It was revealed that 30.0% of the respondents claimed to have had improved knowledge of cocoa production, 28.3% claimed better application of input such as chemical application on cocoa tree, 16.7% of indicated their benefit as increased level of production; 15.0% of the sampled cocoa farmers claimed increased income as benefit derived from CDU activities and 10.0% indicated higher yield of cocoa as the benefit derived from CDU activities. It could therefore be inferred that cocoa farmers in the study area had benefited from CDU activities which reflected in terms of improved knowledge and skill acquisition in cocoa production as well as economic gains interms of yield and income.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to benefit derived from CDU

Benefits	Freq- uency	Perce- ntage
Increased production	10	16.7
Increased income	9	15.0
Higher yield of Cocoa	6	10.0
Better application of inputs	17	28.3
Improved knowledge of cocoa production	18	30.0

Source: Field survey, 2004.

N = 60

Table 5 shows the correlation analysis results between farmers personal characteristics and benefits derived from CDU. The result of the

Table 5: Result of correlation analysis between personal characteristics and benefits derived from CDU

Variables	r
Age	-0.269*
Sex	-0.018
Marital status	-0.298*
Education	0.331*
Farming experience	0.022

P ≤ 0.05.

analysis shows that there is positive and non significant relationship between sex ($r = 0.018$), farming experience ($r = 0.022$) and benefits of CDU while age ($r = -0.269$), marital status ($r = -0.298$) shows negative and significant relationships with benefit of CDU and education ($r = 0.331$) show positive and significant relationship with benefits derived from CDU activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has been on the assement of benefits derived from CDU activities by Cocoa farmers in Oyo state. The findings of this study has shown that cocoa farmers had benefited from the CDU activities in the study area in terms of improved knowledge and skills acquisition in cocoa production as well as economic gains.

It is therefore recommended that CDU should intensity their activities to Cocoa farmers in order to boost the production level of Cocoa which is an important export crop, that the foreign exchange earning of the country may improve . Also, training on various processing methods of Cocoa should be organized for the farmers by the

Government through CDU in order to have high quality grade cocoa processed for exports. Finally, youths should be encouraged to take up farming aspecially cocoa production in the study area.

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