

Analysis Of Effect Of Integrated Farmers' Scheme Project On Beneficiaries Income In Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study was designed to analyse the effect of Integrated Farmers Scheme project on the beneficiaries' income in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Multi-stage Random Sampling Technique was used in selecting 184 respondents that provided the data used for the study. The primary data were collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire administered through personal interview and observation to elicit the required information from the respondents. The findings of the study indicated that the mean ages of the beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries stood at 36.59 and 36.64 respectively and they were mostly singles indicating that they were in their active and productive ages. It also showed that the respondents were small scale farmers with few years of farming experience but majority of them had one form of education or the other and a reasonable percentage (83.7%) of the beneficiaries belonged to cooperative associations. z-test analysis revealed that the income of the beneficiaries increased appreciably more than that of the non-beneficiaries by N194,727.17 and was significant at one percent level of probability with z-test value (7.852) indicating increased income for the beneficiaries. It was recommended that the IFS and government should review upwards the empowerment packages to be able to attract more unemployed youths into the scheme.

Keywords: Effect, IFSP, Beneficiaries, Income

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development is the foundation for economic development. It has also been described as the natural engine room for economic development and a reliable key to industrialization for developing countries of the world (Igbochi, 2000 and Olagunju, 2005). It provides primary means of employment for Nigerians and accounts for more than one-third of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and labour force (FAO, 2003). It is for these reasons that the government, be it federal, state or local do initiate one form of agricultural intervention programme or the other from time to time to cushion the effect of unemployment and associated challenges. Some of these intervention programmes are the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF), River Basin Development Authority (RBDAs), Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) etc. Unemployment refers to a situation whereby people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment Fajana (2000). It is one of the macro-economic problems which every responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate because the higher the rate of unemployment in an economy, the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges. Attempts at reducing poverty levels through job creation and youth empowerment in Nigeria generally, and especially in rural areas by successive government and international donor agencies, have not been successful.

Government often initiate projects that are suppose to benefit the youths and the rural communities, only to discover that communities would prefer some other projects to those initiated by the government (Fajana 2000). However, in an attempt to alleviate poverty among the youth and rural Nigerians in general, and also to increase income and productivity of these group of people as an approach of meeting up with the Millennium development Goals (MDGs) of food sufficiency and poverty eradication. The Akwa Ibom State government under the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources established the Integrated Farmers' Scheme by an edict in 1998, and subsequently signed into law by the state assembly in 2003. The Integrated Farmers' Scheme is a body set up by the Akwa Ibom State government of Nigeria to work out strategies for dealing with the mass unemployment in the state, especially among school leavers and college graduates from the state. The philosophy that guides the establishment of the IFS is eradication of poverty and unemployment at the grass root. Thus the unique assignment of the IFS is to empower the youth with emphasis on self reliance and agricultural sustainability. However, the main objective of the programme is to sustainably increase the income of IFS beneficiaries. By increasing their income, the programme will reduce rural poverty, create jobs for the unemployed, increase food security and contribute to the achievement of a key Millennium Development Goal, and also sustaining the increase of income of IFS beneficiaries by directly delivering resources to the beneficiary rural communities, efficiently and effectively and empowering them to decide on how resources are allocated and managed for a sustainable livelihood. From the fore-going, it is therefore indispensable to evaluate the effect of IFS project on the beneficiaries' income. The broad objective of this study is to analyze the effect of IFS on the income of the beneficiaries in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study will examine the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents; determine the difference in income between IFS beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in the study area.

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METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The state is made up of thirty-one (31) Local Government Areas. The state is bounded on the north by Abia, the south by Atlantic Ocean, the East by Cross River and the West by Rivers state. The state lies between latitudes 4° 33' and 5° 35' North and Longitudes 7° 35' and 8° 35' East. According to the 2006 Population Census result, Akwa Ibom State had a population of 7,245,935 and 75 percent of this population lives in the rural areas and are farmers. The state is divided into six agricultural zones, which are Uyo, Eket, Abak, Ikot Ekpene, Oron and Etinan. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select 184 respondents involving 92 IFS beneficiaries and 92 non-beneficiaries. The first stage involved the selection of the six agricultural zones. The second stage involved random selection of two local governments each from the agricultural zones, and the third stage involved random selection of eight respondents each of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries from each of the twelve local government area. Data was sourced from both primary and secondary means. A set of well structured questionnaire was used to collect information on age, marital status, household size, gender, farm size, farming experience, educational level, cooperative membership, income etc. Analytical tools employed in the study included: descriptive statistics involving simple percentages (for objective one); and z-test (for objective two).

The Z-test model is stated as follows,

$$Z_{cal} = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S^2X_1 + S^2X_2}{n_1 + n_2}}}$$

Where,

\bar{X}_1 = mean income of the beneficiaries

\bar{X}_2 = mean income of the non-beneficiaries

S^2X_1 = squared standard deviation for income of the beneficiaries.

S^2X_2 = squared standard deviation for income of the non-beneficiaries

n_1 = number of sampled beneficiaries

n_2 = number of sampled non-beneficiaries

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic profiles

The result of analysis on age as shown in table 1 indicated that the mean ages of both beneficiary and non-beneficiary youth were 36.59 and 36.64 respectively. This result showed no significant difference in the ages of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary youth. The findings showed that majority of the youth were in their productive ages, where their energies could be harnessed and utilized for productive ventures in agriculture, like those in the Integrated Farmers Scheme. The table reveals that 60.9% of the beneficiary youth and 50% of the non-beneficiary youth were single, whereas, 39.1% of the beneficiary and

50% of non-beneficiary youth were married. Since most of the respondents were single, the implication is that they could have more time to learn new skills to make agricultural production more efficient. The results in table 1 further indicated that 54.3% and 62.0% of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary youth respectively, had a household size range of between 1-3 persons, with a mean household size for both households of about 3 persons per household. The implication of this result is that the farmers may have to supplement most of their farm labour with hired labour rather than complement it. The study also revealed that most (84.4%) of the beneficiary youth and (75%) of the non-beneficiary youth were males while 15.2% of the beneficiary youths and 25% of the non-beneficiary youths were females. This is in line with Simonyan (2009) who reported 85% beneficiary farmers and 87% non-beneficiary farmers of Fadama II projects as males. However, Oladeji *et al* (2005), observed that it is generally believed that males are often more energetic and could readily be available for energy demanding jobs which is usually associated with farming. The low percentage of female participating in the Integrated Farmer Scheme could be attributed to the fact that females in the study area were involved in less strenuous task outside farming like food vendor, hair dressing, tailoring etc. The mean hectareage cultivated by the two groups of youth were 0.91 and 0.44 respectively. Going by Ojuekaiye (2001), classification of farm size of 0.1 hectare to 5.9 hectares as small farms, it then implies that all the respondents were small scale farmers. Table 1 also shows that the youths were reasonably inexperienced in farming; this is evident in their 4.35 and 4.65 years of mean farming for the beneficiaries and non beneficiaries respectively. For increased productivity, Abdullahi (2006) opined that farmers rely on their farming experience rather than their educational attainment. With the above farming experience of the respondents, it can be concluded that the youth are still very new in the system and should be trained well in the different areas of agriculture to enable them stabilize and master the field in order to make them take sound decision as regards resource allocation and management of their farms. Moreover, there was high literacy rate among both groups of respondents that is the beneficiary and non-beneficiary youth as over 95% of them had one form of education or the other. Acquisition of education is a measure of skills which enhances the recipient's chances of success in any chosen field. It increases people's accessibility to institutionally related services such as extension or credit facilities. Ibeagwa (2011) also posits that educated individuals and households are better positioned to take advantage of new techniques and technologies that could lead to increased agricultural output. Majority (83.7%) of the beneficiary belonged to cooperative while (16%) did not and (37%) of the non-beneficiaries belonged to cooperative and majority (63%) did not. It can be deduced from here that majority of the youth in the beneficiary group belonged to one cooperative or the other, while majority of non-beneficiary did not belong to any cooperative. Membership of cooperative is expected to favour agricultural production because the members are assumed to have more access to information, knowledge, credit and other important input needed in production process as well as more enhanced ability to adopt innovation (Ironkwe, 2005).

Table 2 Comparison of the income of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of IFS Programme.

Table 2 revealed the income of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of IFS from both farming and non farming activities. As indicated on the table, the mean income in naira value earned by IFS beneficiaries was N442, 941.30 while the mean income of the non-beneficiaries earned was N248, 212.13 for last season. This result implied that the beneficiary income increased appreciably by N194, 724.17 more than that of the non-beneficiary and was significant at one percent level of probability, z-test value (7.852). This result supported the influence of close supervision, monitoring and training of the farmers (youths) by the IFS operatives and probably loan disbursement as a sine-qua-non for the increase in income. The reverse was however observed for the non-beneficiary farmers who recorded a reduction in their total income.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of the study indicated that since the beneficiaries were youths, they were in their productive and active ages and were mostly singles with males dominating the scheme. They operated small scale farm holdings and had few years of farming experience but majority of them had one form of education or the other. In addition, the study also revealed that the income of the beneficiaries increased appreciably more than that of the non-beneficiaries and was significant at one percent level of probability. This could be as a result of their participation in the empowerment scheme.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to their Socio Economic Characteristics.

Socioeconomic variables		Beneficiaries		Non-Beneficiaries	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 – 30	15	16.3	15	16.3
	31- 40	59	64.1	51	55.4
	41- 50	18	19.6	26	28.3
	Total	92	100.0	92	100.0
	Mean	36.59		36.64	
Marital status	Single	56	60.9	46	50.0
	Married	36	39.1	46	50.0
	Total	92	100.0	92	100.0
Household size	1 – 3	50	54.3	57	62.0

	4 – 6	40	43.5	30	32.6
	7 – 9	2	2.2	1	1.1
	10 – 12	-	-	4	4.3
	Total	92	100.0	92	100.0
	Mean	3.57		3.24	
Gender	Male	78	84.8	23	25.0
	Female	14	15.2	69	75.0
	Total	92	100	92	100.0
Farm size	0.1 – 1.0	71	77.2	85	92.4
	1.1 – 2.0	20	21.7	4	4.3
	2.1 – 3.0	1	1.1	3	3.3
	Total	92	100.0	92	100.0
	Mean	0.91		0.44	
Farming experience	1 -5	62	67.4	72	78.3
	6 – 10	30	32.6	15	16.3
	11 – 15	-	-	1	1.1
	16 -20	-	-	1	1.1
	21 – 25	-	-	1	1.1
	26-30	-	-	1	1.1
	31 – 35	-	-	1	1.1
	Total	92	100.0	92	100.0
	Mean	4.35		4.65	
Educational level	No formal education	-	-	1	1.1
	Primary education	-	-	3	3.3
	Secondary education	3	3.3	3	3.3
	NCE/OND	38	41.3	33	35.9
	B.Sc, B.Agric, HND	43	46.7	49	53.3
	M.Sc/Ph.D	8	8.7	3	3.3
	Total	92	100.0	92	100.0
Cooperative membership	Yes	77	83.7	34	37.0
	No	15	16.3	58	63.0
	Total	92	100	92	100.0

Table 2 Comparison of the Income of the Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries of IFS Programme.

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean	Degree of Freedom ≤ 0.01	P	Z – cal.
Income of beneficiaries ^a	442941.30	211205.013	22019.645			
Income of Non-beneficiary ^b	248214.13	119027.210	12409.444			
Difference (a – b)	194727.17	237856.097	24798.212	91		7.852***

Source: Field survey, 2014. *** = significant at 1 % level.