



Research Article

Impact of Farmers' Cooperative on Agricultural Productivity in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the impact of farmer's cooperative on Agricultural productivity in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Multistage random sampling technique was used to select three local Government Areas from which two villages were selected. Ten cooperator farmers were selected randomly and ten non-cooperator farmers were purposively selected from each village to make one hundred and twenty respondents. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive analytical tools, T-test and correlation analysis to determine the impact of cooperative on farmers' productivity. The findings revealed that 72.5% of the respondents were male and 46.7 years as the mean age of farmers. The study also revealed that 65% of the respondents were full time farmers and that farmers' cooperative was their main source of agricultural information. The result of t-test and correlation analysis on the relationship between the socio-economic characteristic of farmers and productivity were significant at 1% and 5% levels of significance. Age ($r = 0.190$, $p = 0.037$), Nature of farming ($X^2 = 4.779$, $p = 0.051$), Years of farming ($r = 184.738$, $p = 0.012$).

Keywords:

Impact, Farmers' Cooperative, Agricultural Productivity and Food Security

INTRODUCTION

Cooperative as a business organization is owned and operated by a group of individuals for their mutual benefits. A cooperative may be owned and controlled equally by the people who use its service or by the people who work with cooperative enterprise.

Agriculture in the post independent years was the main stay of Nigeria economy but suffered serious neglect due to the oil boom in 1970's. Agricultural production which then contributed about 80% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined to less than 3% in the 1990's and 2000's. In order to redirect the situation, multitudes of programmes were initiated which were not able to meet the objective for which they were designed to achieve. This scenario was further constrained by the nation's agricultural sector which is characterized by small farm holdings (Olayide, 1980). He stated further that the peasant farmers produce over 90% of the food crop grown in Nigeria using traditional method coupled with obsolete farming implements. Olayemi et al. (1980) opined that structural transformation of the present agricultural economy is inevitable for Nigeria to be food secured in future. This needed transformation could only be achieved through virile extension services because of its vital link between research stations and farmers.

Olayide and Ogunfeditimi (1980), suggested agricultural cooperative as a means to shorten the gap as well as rural transformation of agricultural sector as part of dynamic social order. In addition, Mc Bride (1986), was of the opinion that education of the cooperative members and leadership development are important for the viability of the cooperative society since extension service have not been able to reach out to all rural farmers, hence the need to use agricultural cooperative to complement the effort of extension workers in conventional agricultural development and

bring about increase innovativeness in the farmers. In line with the above, Oshuntogun (1980) is of the view that cooperative will enable the removal of element of old social order which impede development and bring about increase in food production among the small holding farmers. There is need therefore to assess impact of farmers' cooperative on their productivity as this can enhance increase in food production which can lead to national food security. This study was designed to identify farming activities of farmers, determine sources of agricultural information and ascertain farmers' productivity.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Ekiti State. A multistage sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. Random sampling procedure was used to select three out of sixteen Local Government Areas in the state. Two villages were selected from each of the Local Government Area through simple random sampling and then 10 farmers cooperator were randomly selected from the list of farmer's cooperatives and 10 non cooperators respondents were purposively selected from each village making a sample size of one hundred and twenty respondents.

The data used for this study is mainly from primary sources using a set of structured questionnaire assisted with interview schedules.

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, frequency, percentage and standard deviation to determine the socio-economic characteristic of respondents and sources of agricultural information available to farmers while t-test and correlation analysis were used for inferential analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Summary statistics of socio economic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age of Respondents in years		
20 – 30	14	11.6
31 – 40	26	21.7
41 – 50	34	28.4
51 – 60	28	23.3
61 – 70	14	11.6
Above 70	4	3.4
Gender		
Male	87	72.5
Female	33	27.5
Marital Status		
Single	23	19.2
Married	79	65.8
Divorced	8	6.7
Widow	10	8.3
Education of Respondents		
No formal Education	19	15.8
Primary Education	22	18.3
Secondary Education	59	49.2
Post secondary education	20	16.7
Household Size		
1 – 5	61	50.9
5 – 10	46	38.4
11 – 15	12	9.9
Above 15	1	0.8
Nature of Farm Job		
Full - Time	78	65.0
Part – Time	42	35.0
Farming Experience (years)		
1 -10	42	35.0
11 – 20	33	27.5
21 -30	18	15.0
31 – 40	20	16.7
41 – 50	5	4.2
Above 50	2	1.6
Awareness of farmers' Cooperative	115	95.8
Yes	5	4.2
No		

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

The study revealed mean age of 46.7 years and about 38% of the respondents falling above 50 years old indicating that most of the farmers are still in their production and active capacity. There is dominance of men in agriculture in the study area as 72.5% were men. The marital status of the respondents revealed that 65.8% of them were married hence had family

responsibility. The farmers were literate with about 66.0% of them had secondary education and above.

From the table, it revealed that 50.9% of the respondents had between 1 – 5 household size and the remaining 49.1% had family size above 5 members. The participation of household member in agriculture may increase their agricultural productivity but may also shrink the loan given to farmers as a result of high

commitment on the need of the household members and their children education since only 27.5% were female farmers.

The nature of farm job revealed that 65.0% of the respondents were full time farmers while 35.0% farm on part time basis. The observed trend may be due to the fact that half of the beneficiaries are literate; hence, they may have other sources of income apart from farming.

The farming experience of respondents indicated that 65.0% of respondents had more than ten

years of farming experience with the mean farming experience years as 19.3 years revealing that they are not novice in farming activities.

From the table 1, level of awareness was revealed by the result of this study which shows that over 95.0% of the respondents were aware of farmers cooperative. This level of awareness may be due to the advantage that has been derived from the activities of farmers cooperative.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by farming activities.

Activity	Coop Members Frequency (%)	Non Members Frequency (%)
Cash Crop		
Arable		
Crop	25 (34.7)	8 (16.7)
Livestock	12 (16.7)	15 (32.3)
Fishery	12 (16.7)	7 (14.6)
Snailery	7 (9.7)	4 (8.3)
Poultry	4 (5.6)	3 (6.3)
Apiary	5 (6.9)	5 (10.4)
Others	3 (4.2)	4 (8.3)
Total	4 (5.6)	2 (4.2)

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Table 2 shows respondents' farming activities more cooperative members participated in the production of cash crop more than non-cooperative members and also

in virtually all other farming activities except arable cropping. This might be responsible for the higher level of income generated by these categories of farmers.

Table 3: Sources of Agricultural Information available to farmers.

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Cooperative	41	34.2
Friends	22	18.3
Radio	16	13.3
Television	4	3.3
Agricultural Extension Agents		
Others	34	28.3
	3	2.5
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Table 3 shows the sources of Agricultural information available to farmers. Television has the minimal usage among farmers as most farmers live in rural areas, and hence do not have access to power supply and therefore do not watch television.

In the study area, cooperative and Agricultural Extension agents were both highly rated as sources of information dissemination to farmers by accounting for 34.2% and 28.3% respectively. Information from friends is also an efficient means of disseminating agricultural information to farmers in the study area (18.3%).

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents to their Annual Income.

Income (Naira)	Cooperative Members (%)	Non-Cooperative members (%)
> 100,000	5 (8.3)	19 (31.7)
101,000 – 150,000	5 (8.3)	15 (25.0)
151,000 – 200,000	7 (11.6)	12 (20.0)
201,000 – 250,000	8 (13.3)	6 (10.0)
251,000 – 300,000	10 (16.7)	5 (8.3)
Above 300,000	25 (41.7)	3 (5.0)
Total	60 (100.0)	60 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

From the table 4 above, it could be deduced that cooperative member's farmers generated higher income than the non-cooperative farmers. 41.7% of the cooperative member farmers generated income above ₦300, 000.00 as against 5.0% of the non-cooperative farmers within these categories. Only 8.3% of the cooperative farmers generated income below ₦100, 000.00 while 31.7% of non-cooperative farmers generated income less than ₦ 100,000.00. The improved productivity and better income earnings of the cooperative farmers may be as a result of their exposure to agricultural information and access to capital which brought about improved performance as a result of benefits of cooperative society.

Results of correlation analysis between the socio-economic variables of farmers and productivity revealed that age of the farmers ($r = 0.190$, $p = 0.037$), nature of farming ($X^2 = 4.779$, $P = 0.051$) and the years of farming experience ($r = 0.778$, $P = 0.012$) had significant relationships with productivity. This implies that as the farmers grow in age and acquire more experience, there is improvement in their agricultural productivity.

Also there was a significance difference ($t = 100.317$, $P = 0.000$) between farmer's cooperative and productivity. This implies that farmer's involvement in cooperative society had led to improvement in their productivity.

There was also significant relationship between farmer's attitude towards farmers' cooperative ($r = 0.626$, $p = 0.000$) and their productivity. This implies that if farmers' attitude towards farmers' cooperative is improved through creating more awareness, motivation and education, it can lead to improvement in their productivity.

CONCLUSION

It has been revealed that farmer's cooperative is a viable tool towards improving farmers' productivity. It was also observed that farmers' participation and attitude toward farmers' cooperative can lead to increased productivity.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to assist agricultural cooperative to be effective and responsive to problems that farmers faced in relation to increased productivity.

- Government should encourage farmers' participation in cooperative by using it as a medium to reach the farmers in giving out incentives to farmers rather than targeting individuals who would divert such incentives to unintended purposes.
- Extension agents should utilize cooperative forum to reach the farmers on information to increased productivity.
- Government should empower farmers cooperative so as to be able to grant more loans to farmers, as Loans administered under this condition will be well managed and supervised with high resultant effect.

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