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Socio Economic Variables of Cashew Farmers in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study assessed the socio economic variables of cashew farmers in Oyo State. Two towns within Ibarapa East Local Government Area (Temidire and Eruwa) were purposively sampled. These areas are known for the cultivation, production and marketing of this crop. A total sampling frame of fifty-six respondents was used. Structured interview schedules were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages). Age, educational level, farm size, household size, gender, membership of association, and payment of tax constituted major socio economic variables influencing cashew farming in the study area. Adult literacy programme should be encouraged and introduced to the study area to increase the educational level of farmers. In addition, farmers should be given incentives to increase their farm holdings for higher productivity. Farmers that are members of association should be encouraged to participate more as this will go a long way in price determination for increased profit and access to trainings on improved production packages.*

Key Words: *Cashew, Farm holdings, Towns, Improved Production.*

I. Introduction

Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) originated from Brazil in South America. It is commonly grown in tropical countries of Africa; Nigeria inclusive. It is a broad leafed evergreen tree crop that thrives well in poor soils and dry sandy locations. There are tonnes of write-ups and studies about Nigeria's agricultural misadventure. However, we can bring some focus to a segment which can be regarded as a low hanging fruit in the Agricultural sector – Cashew. Nigeria is one of the largest producers of Cashew in the World. Furthermore, the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council in 2014 valued the global cashew market a whopping $4.69 billion. It is difficult to assess the production volumes across the various producing nations but the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that the production of raw cashew nuts (RCN) has grown from 0.29 million tons in 1961 to 2.60 million tons in 2013 and West Africa's share of the market has tripled in the past decade (SB Morgen, 2016). Cashew grows almost everywhere in Nigeria but it is concentrated primarily across the three southern geopolitical zones as well as the middle belt. The major producing Nigerian states are Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Oyo, Enugu, Abia, Anambra, Ekiti and Imo. The National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN) reports that Nigeria earned US$ 402Mn (N144.7bn) from the export of raw cashew nuts to Vietnam and other countries in 2017. In addition, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2017) reports that cashew exports increased by 463 percent from N2.4bn in quarter one of 2017 to N13.5bn in quarter two of 2017 on a quarter-on-quarter basis. The production of cashew can solve economic, social and environmental problems in Nigeria. Cashew contributed less than 2 percent to total agricultural exports in quarter one but contributed 45.4 percent to the sectoral export in the quarter two and 8.2 percent of total non-exports. The value makes the product the seventh largest export product in quarter two of 2017. Price per tonne of cashew nuts was put at US$1,800 and Price per tonne of processed cashew was put at about US$12,000.

Meanwhile, farmers' decisions with respect to production and land use are intensely guided by socio-economic factors. On many occasions, the farm size of farmers affects agricultural productivity. This is usually common when the land in question is fragmented, that is, if the land is divided into smaller pieces and allocated to individual farmers. The size of the farms makes mechanized and commercialization farming almost impossible on such land (Marocchino, 2009). In addition, the productivity of farmers to some extent could be attributed to the farmers' years of experience. According to Carter (2009) productivity is achieved, if a farmer is versed in his farming business. That is, he cultivates his crops at ease with little or no assistance from extension agents. He has full knowledge of his farming calendar, cropping system, as well as land use patterns and/or system.

The objective of the study was to profile the socio economic characteristics of cashew farmers in the study area.

II. Methodology

The study was conducted in Oyo State, Nigeria. The state is in the south west region and falls in to the tropical rain forest and guinea savannah agro ecological zone of the country. Two towns within Ibarapa East Local Government Area (Temidire and Eruwa) were purposively sampled. These areas are known for the cultivation, production and marketing of this crop. Twenty eight farmers were randomly sampled from each of the towns. A total sampling frame of fifty-six respondents was used. Structured interview schedules were used for data collection from respondents. Data were collected on socio economic characteristics such as age, educational level, gender, household size, farm size and membership of farmers' group, respectively. Additional information was gathered through informal discussions with the farmers and by personal observations of the crop in some of the farmers' fields. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics frequency, percentages and mean.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of cashew farmers. The table reveals that majority of the farmers (62.50%) were men. This result is in conformity with Lawal *et al* (2019) who affirmed that majority (77.01%) of cocoa farmers in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State are male. In addition, Adinoyi and Attanda (2016) reported that majority (94.4%) of groundnut farmers are male. Similarly, Girei *et al* (2013) reported that in Africa, men are more in a crop that is perceived to have commercial value. However, the result is contrary to Ibekwe (2008) who observed that women play a vital role on food production. The implication of this is that cashew farming in the study area is largely dominated by male gender and probably because cashew is a cash and perennial crop. Moreover, the mean age of the traders is 53 years. This conforms to the findings of Osuji *et al* (2013) who reported that age might have a tremendous influence on productivity, efficiency and utilization of farm resources. The implication of this is that cashew farmers in the study area are ageing and almost out of their productive years and this perhaps may be responsible for the average farm size (4ha) put into cultivation by farmers. Contrarily, Osuji *et al* (2013) submitted that majority of the food crop farmers operated on a small scale bases (cultivating less than 3.0 hectares). Similarly, the table reveals that about 43 percent of the farmers had no access to former education with average years of educational level being about 2 years. The implication of this is that the farmers may perhaps not have access to market information system (MIS) with respect to both production and marketing of the crop. Furthermore, the table reveals an average household size of 8 persons. This is in conformity with the results Osuji *et al* (2013) and Ibitoye *et al* (2012). They reported an average household size of 7 and 8 persons in their study on the socio-economic variables of arable crop farmers in Imo and Kogi State, respectively. This implies that the farmers may perhaps utilize members of the household as labour for some operations relating to production and marketing of the crop. This may reduce some labour and transaction costs that may be incurred on the crop. Moreover, the table shows that about 66 percent of the farmers belong to an association. The implication of this is that the farmers will be able to get needed improved production packages from the association.

IV. Conclusion

The study assessed the socio-economic variables of cashew farmers in Oyo State. Age, educational level, household size, farm size, gender and membership of association constituted the socio-economic characteristic factors influencing cashew farming in the study area. More efforts should be made to encourage youth to take up cashew farming as an enterprise to bridge the gap that will be created by the aging farmers. In addition, adult literacy programme should be introduced to the study area to increase the educational level of farmers. Similarly, farmers should be given incentives to increase their farm holdings for higher productivity. Farmers that are members of association should be encouraged to improve on their participation as this will go a long way in price determination for increased profit and access to trainings on improved production packages. This will encourage and improve cashew farmers' access to market information and as such will be able to sell the crop for more profits.

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Table 1: Socio economic characteristics of Cashew Farmers in Oyo State

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Gender			
Male	35	62.50	
Female	21	37.50	
Total	56	**100.00**	
Age (Years)			**53**
20-29	2	3.57	
30-39	5	8.93	
40-49	14	25.00	
50 and Above	35	62.50	
Total	56	**100.00**	
Marital Status			
Single	4	7.14	
Married	52	92.86	
Total	56	**100.00**	
Education (No of years)			**2**
No Education	24	42.86	
Primary	14	25.00	
Secondary	14	25.00	
Tertiary	4	7.14	
Total	56	**100.00**	
Membership of Farmers' Group			
Yes	37	66.07	
No	19	33.93	
Total	56	**100.00**	
Household Size (No. of Persons)			**8**
1-5	10	17.86	
6-10	38	67.86	
Above 10	8	14.28	
Total	**56**	**100.00**	
Farm Size (Hectares)			**4**
1-5	47	48.00	
6-10	8	52.00	
Above 10	1		
Total	**56**	**100.00**	

Source: Field Survey, 2016