



## **LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN RICE VALUE CHAIN AGRIEPRENEURSHIPS FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH IN NIGER STATE NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the role of Investment in the agricultural sector, especially in the area of agripreneurship development in rice value chain as a source of livelihood and job opportunities for both women and youth in Nigeria. It elucidates the sector's opportunities for women and youth empowerment as a strategy for poverty alleviation. Descriptive statistics was used in this discussion. The study looked at the value chain in rice as career paths for the future source of livelihood and enhancing empowerment for this vulnerable group. Furthermore, current efforts by the government on youths and women empowerment through investment in agripreneurship investment were investigated. The study therefore recommends that all tiers of government should intensify efforts to improve on provision of microcredit from financial institutions, intensify efforts to ensure gender parity in education, investment in women and youth training to give more educational training, especially in agribusiness. Finally, the study recommends the group should be well informed on how to access business information, adult education be taught as well as review of policy on entrepreneurship.



## Introduction

In most developing countries like Nigeria, agriculture is both the main traditional pursuit and the key to sustained growth of the modern economy. Economic growth has gone hand in hand with agriculture progress; stagnation in agriculture is the principal explanation for poor economic performance, while rising agricultural productivity has been the most important concomitant of successful industrialization, food security, self-sufficiency, agripreneurship development, as well as economic growth and development (World Bank, 1992; Ndanitsa, 2005 and Ndanitsa, *et al*; 2021).

Among the roles conventionally ascribed to the agricultural sector in a growing economy are those of; - (i) providing adequate food for an increasing population; (ii) Supply raw materials (like fibre) to a growing industrial sector; (iii) Earning foreign exchange through commodity exports, commercialization and value chain; (iv) Providing a market for the products of industrial sector such as fertilizer, machineries/equipment, agrochemicals, etc and (v) constituting the major source of employment and job creation.

Agriculture is thus a source of growth and a potential source of investment opportunities for the private sector. Two-thirds of the world's agricultural value added is estimated to have been created in developing countries (World Bank, 2008); moreover, employment and job creation remains front-page issues around the world.

Rice (*Oryza Sativa. L*) belong to the family *Poaceae*, USAID (2009) reported that rice is the most important food crop for half of the human race, it is the world's most consumed cereal after wheat which shapes the lives of millions of people; more than half of the world's population depends on rice for 80 percent of its food caloric requirements (Braun, 2006). More than 90 percent of the world rice production takes place in developing countries, mostly Asia with China and India being the two largest producers while Latin America and Africa produce 3.8 and 2.8 percent respectively (FAO, 2004).

FAO (2004) reported that rice is presently one of the most important staple food crops that have attained a staple food status in Nigeria and also a source of calories for the urban poor, grown mainly by smallholder farmers.

Niger state is one of the most important rice producing areas in the country; this is largely due to availability of irrigation structures and abundant *Fadama* lands (Ndanitsa, 2005 and Ndanitsa *et al.*, 2017). The state also has large processing clusters which are scattered in production areas, including Doko, Mambe, Edozhigi, Bida, Jebba, Badeggi, Wuya, Chanchaga, etc. The state also has large processing clusters which are scattered in production areas including Bida, Gbajigi, Edozhigi, Paiko, Kwakuti, Kataregi, Mokwa, Ja'agi, Muwo and Mambe; it is also traded as a major commodity in most of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state where both local and other traders were involved. Large quantities of rice is also brought from other states like Kaduna, Kwara Abuja (FCT), Kogi and Kebbi which is processed and sold in urban markets within the state (Alhassan, 2017). This makes the rice value chain in Niger State very important, and an important agripreneurship investment in the state. No wonder therefore, that the National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI) is located in Badeggi via Bida, Niger State.

Daniel (2007) defined value chain as an analytical as well as operational model. The model takes up the fact that a product is rarely consumed at its place of its production. It is transformed, combined with other products, transported, packaged, and displayed until it



reaches the final consumer. This implies that the raw materials, intermediate products and final products are owned by various actors who are linked by trade and services and each add value to the product (Alhassan, 2017). Kaplinsky and Morris (2001) explained the value chain concept (VCC), as a range of activities performed within a firm or industry to produce a certain output. This might include the conception and design stage, the process of acquisition of inputs, the production, processing, marketing and distribution activities as well as the performance of after-sales services. Ndanitsa *et al.* (2021) summarizes these stages as “Primary triaggrigate” and/or “secondary triaggregates”. According to the author, the agribusiness approach has sought to solve the adjustment problems of rural as well as urban economies in terms of well linked “primary triaggrigates” and/or “secondary triaggrigates”. It is capable of enabling as to fully appraise in terms of physical resources and working force, the general flow of goods and services in the economy. In addition, it is an effective method of facilitating sacral integration and change. In Israel, for example, through the process of “Agrindus”, Agribusiness has attempted to integrate agriculture and industry within the framework of the rural economy, and this is designed to bridge the gap between the urban and rural standard of living which has been weakening overtime, especially under this period of Post-Covid-19 (Ndanitsa *et al.*; 2021). Again, agribusiness evolves from changes in agriculture and these changes have the effect of reducing the number of operations on the farms, e.g off-farm processors and manufacturers supplying the farmers’ main requirements such as feeds, fertilizers, agrochmecials, and machineries while city processors take up his processing, retailing, marketing, etc. Thus, all the activities in both “primary triaggregates” and/or “secondary triaggregates” constitute the chain which link producers to consumers. Each activity adds value to the final product. VCC is an arrangement that describe the linkages of participants and their value creating activities that enhance the movement of goods and services from production, processing to the end users (consumer). In their contribution, Daniel *et al* (2006) censured that the number and conduct of the participants along the chain determine its efficiency, pricing and returns accruing to each actor at every stage of the chain. The broad approach of value chain (especially for rice entrepreneurship) does not only look at the activities implemented by a single enterprise, rather it includes all its backward and forward integration or linkages, until the level in which the raw material produced will be linked to the final consumer. The concept of value chain therefore encompasses the issues of organization and coordination, the strategies and relationship of the different actors in the chain policy makers and citizens in high income countries struggle with persistent unemployment associated with economic recession, poverty and recurrent financial crisis (Adetunji, 2016). Those in middle income countries are concerned that growth has by passed large segments of the population and resulted in income inequalities and dissatisfaction of key social growths. The consequence of this development and many others is inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor social services, low technical education, unstable growth patterns, unfavourable terms of trade, balance of payment problems of the economy, corruption tendencies, among other factors, including despicable poverty situation in Nigeria, especially in the rural economies (Ogwumike, 1998; CBN Zonal Research Unit, 1998).

In low income countries, job creation is the key to shared prosperity and reduction of poverty (Adetunji, 2016). Nigeria has a large and growing population of young people and women, yet little job creation in the formal sector – important as that may be – but of creating opportunities for productive activity of the 70 – 80 percent of workers in agriculture and informal non-farm enterprises. In the long run, many of these workers will move to the formal



wage sector (when the former begins to develop) elsewhere in the world on economies have undergone growth and structure change.

Women and youth entrepreneurship activities in any economy are essential pre-conditions to the development of a nation as a whole. In the world over, entrepreneurship (especially in the agricultural sector) and small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have provided effective means of greater employment and improving the standard of living for the people (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2001). It could be as a result of recognition of the immense contributions of entrepreneurship and SMEs to National Development that successive Nigeria Governments have made efforts at promoting and strengthening this sector of the economy. Among the earlier identified factors limiting the yields of government's investment in entrepreneurship is limited presence of women and youth among entrepreneurs (especially in agric sector) in Nigeria, against the United Nation resolution that tasked the various National leaders to empower both the youths and women in their region (UN, 2014).

The low participation of youths and women in agripreneurship activities, especially in the rice value chain development may not be unconnected to the gender roles concepts of African people that believed women are naturally endowed with the capacity to do domestic duties while men were to be breadwinners; Youths are also condemned for lacking experience. Folorunsho (2009), posited that people in Africa nations are born male or female, grow up to become boy or girl (youths) and both encouraged to take up roles as man or woman. This expression shows that generally, people perceived men to have separate roles in societies compared to women, including economic activities. Moreover, majority of customs of native Nigerians have noticeably placed obligation on the male child to be the economic provider, emotional protector and leader. All these factors accounted for less involvement of women and youth in commercial activities and for those that strive to participate in entrepreneurship, the lack of financial and moral support barred them from the chances to excel.

In spite of women and youth contribution toward economic development in Nigeria, their participation and representation in the entrepreneurship development as well as their involvement in SMEs like Agripreneursipin rice value chain remain noticeably low. Ahleri (2006) and Adama (2015), reported that women and youths are duly represented in the agripreneurial in advanced countries and that their entrepreneurial activities have a positive social effect for women, youths and their environment. This however, has not been properly investigated in the developing countries, including Nigeria. Developing women as entrepreneurs has become an important part of National development planning and strategies. Policy makers and planners have become acutely aware of the economic significance of women's and youths' activities and the nature of their contribution to income generation. It has been firmly established that women and youths in Nigeria are vital and productive contributors to the National economy, but their access to knowledge, skills, resources, opportunities and power, most especially in the area of SMEs business like that of agripreneurship development in rice value chain still remain rather low.

Globally the impact of women and youth is strongly gaining recognition, worldwide, as the number of female business owners and youth entrepreneurs especially in agribusiness ventures continues to increase steadily and are making positive impact in the global economy. For instance, women produce over 80 percent of the food for sub-saharan Africa, 50 – 60 percent for Asia, 26 percent for the Caribbean, 36 Percent for North Africa and the Middle



East, and more than 30 percent for Latin America (Ali and Ali, 2013). Women entrepreneurs around the world are major contributors to the economy, as they are making a difference in the socio-economic area. They contribute numerous ideas and a great deal of energy and capital resources to their communities, and generate jobs for the teeming youths, as well as create additional work for suppliers and other spin-off business linkages. Despite these, there are major factors that constrained women and youths from business venture, mostly gender-base discrimination, lack of shared support, limited or no access to information, not enough education and training facilities, lack of trust in one's capabilities and access to resources (Amzat, osman, Hassan and Rashid, 2010).

Unemployment and underemployment among women and youths in Nigeria is still high. A study by Oyelude and Bamigbola (2012), indicated that South-South and North-Eastern Nigeria are most deprived regions regarding youth development and women empowerment. According to Iyiola and Azuh (2014), the unemployment rate in North –East Nigeria was 38.8%. The recent past governments in Nigeria introduced various skills acquisition programmes also partnered with individual experts in various traders to train people on various skills, including agricpreneurial development skills in rice value chain activities (Alhassan, 2017).

The question that now arises is that, where will the large cohort of young Nigerians and women currently entering the labor force find employment? Agriculture, especially rice value chain development activities is uniquely positioned to absorb these workers, although farming and indeed skill acquisition in the area of rice value chain does not often occur to policy workers as a solution to the challenge of job creation and livelihood enhancement. Nigeria is urbanizing rapidly, but is still predominantly rural and most young people are born unto farm families. Baba (2004) has earlier submitted that farming is essentially a rural activity. Regional markets for food are booming, and height global food supplier creates high prices and active export markets. But to appeal to young people and women and delivers good job opportunities, Nigerian agriculture must break through a number of constraints that impede growth and competitive, especially in the area of agricpreneurship development, such as rice value chain activities.

Nigeria can harvest the “youth dividend” and “women’s empowerment” by accelerating the transformative change in agriculture that simultaneously raises incomes, and creates jobs. Although farming is now often done by the elderly, the professions requirements for energy, innovation, skill and physical strength make it ideally suited for these in the 15-34 year-old age range; that is, “the mature young”. Energy creativity and strength are attributes that African young people have in abundance. The agriculture that attracts them has to be competitive, and dynamic. Here lays, the importance of agricpreneurship development in rice value chain activities. These are some characteristics needed for agriculture and agribusinesses to deliver, growth to improve food security, preserve a fragile natural environment, increase employment opportunities, increase income, alleviate poverty, and bring about self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Generally, young people bring energy, vitality, and innovation into the workforce, and when their willingness to contribute matched with opportunity, they can have a transformative impact on economic growth and development.



### Investment in Rice Value Chain

Kaplinsky (1999) considered value chain to consist of full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production, to delivering to final consumers and disposal after use. Thus the idea of value chain is quite an intuitive one. Kaplinsky and Morris (2001) also defined value along the chain.

The broad approach to value chain looks at the complex range of activities implemented by various actors (primary producers, processors, traders, service providers, etc) to bring a raw material to the retail of the final product. This certain starts from the production system of the raw materials and will move along the linkages with other enterprises engaged in trading, assembling and processing. The broad approach does not only look at the activities implemented by a single enterprise, rather, it includes all its backward and forward linkages, until the level in the raw material produced will be linked to the final consumers.

Aminu *et al.* (2010) conducted a value chain analysis of rice in Kano State, Nigeria. Data for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Gross Margin Analysis (GM). Result from the study identified producers, parboilers, millers, traders and consumers as well as other value chain supporters. The movement of paddy from the production clusters through processing, marketing and consumption was also traced. Constraints affecting rice production, processing and marketing activities along the rice value chain were also identified. GM analysis revealed that all the value chain activities are profitable, but profit levels vary among actors, ranging between ₦128,000 per annum for parboilers to ₦700,00 per annum for rice traders.

Another study on the Nigerian RVC was conducted by USAID (2009); data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and GM analysis. Result from the study revealed that the value chain for domestically produced rice in Nigeria is currently dominated by a largely fragmented production and milling industry with limited new investment in either production or processing. Returns are quite good at each stage of the industrial value chain channel with many participants, benefits are therefore spread very thinly, also very few have any incentive to invest. Another study on the domestic rice value chains in the Niger Basin of Mali, Niger and Nigeria was conducted by IFDC (2008). Data for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and GM analysis. Result showed that in all countries average yield greatly lag behind those of the world. Whereas some systems in some countries like Mali do have relatively high yield (due to heavy investment in production and processing facilities). In all countries, subsistence oriented agriculture dominate; there is therefore a great deal of room for productivity growth. Even though rice producing and processing (through its value chain) is a profitable agribusiness in all countries, it is faced with series of constraints which affected the competitiveness, and this include poor human and material (capital) investment, especially in its value chain development, poor access to credit, low quality paddy and lack of branding. Despite the quality problem, many in West Africa prefer local rice due to its freshness and taste.

From the foregoing, it is evident that heavy investment in the rice value chain can be a source of livelihood for the youths and women. Private investors should be encouraged to invest in improved parboiling and milling technologies so that good quality rice that is well packaged and branded is processed and marketed in urban centers/markets. The processed rice should be able to match the imported rice in terms of quality and price. This can be a very good source



of livelihood for both women and youth in the rice value chain agripreneurship development in Nigeria.

Shift on the demand side create new agripreneurship opportunities for both the youth and women, in supply. Understanding of how to create good opportunities for young people and women of Nigerian agriculture requires a detailed look at the sector, peeling back the averages and looking at the dispersion of participant's activities, command of assets, and utilization of skills. New opportunities corresponding to changes in local and national markets draw on segments of the farming structure that have been underdeveloped in the past but now have room to grow. For example, CBN (2005), reported that the ratio of agricultural budget expenditure to total government expenditure from 1970 – 1980 was on average of 2.66 percent; it rose to 8.34 percent for 1981 – 1984, however, by 2000, it nosedived to a ridiculous value of approximately 2.10 percent in 2007. This fall short of the Maputo resolution that government of member state of African Union (AU) to allocate at least 10 percent of national budgetary resources for the implementation of the comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), which Nigeria is a signatory.

Nigeria's unemployment challenge especially amongst youth and women that has reached an alarming rate of 50% is another wakeup call that must address our low agricultural productivity and agripreneurship development, especially for the rice value chain. The sector has demonstrated the potential to solve this challenge, as states referred to as the bread baskets of the country (North Central) has recorded the lowest unemployment rate in the country (Adetunji, 2016). The potential of agriculture to create jobs and source of livelihood especially for the youth and women, and provide base for growth is already evident in states that have invested substantial amount of their budget (or resources) in agriculture, specifically in the area of value chain development, e.gKebbi State, Ebonyi State, Kano State, Jigawa State, Katsina State to mention but a few.

### **Current Efforts of the Federal Government on Women and Youth in Agriculture Viz-a-Viz Agripreneurship Development in Rice Value Chain Activities**

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) recognizes the extent of the youth unemployment crisis in Nigeria and the treat it poses to economic and social stability. Given the role that the agricultural sector can play as a job creation engine, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been allocated ₦32 billion Naira to design a youth empowerment strategy, in parallel with the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) that will create over one million jobs for Nigerian youth aged 18 – 35. The stakeholders workshop held on 20 and 21 September, 2012 provided an arena for selected experts, majority of which were youth, to design the framework for this strategy. The output include detailed strategies for 12 priority areas which represent critical components of the agricultural value chain, including agripreneurship development in the rice value chain.

In developing this youth empowerment strategy, the Ministry has taken an active step in involving the youth in every step of the design process. Prior to the workshop, an exceptionally experienced team, comprised mainly of youth actively involved in the sector, outlined the priority areas that will have the most leverage in job creation. Their approach examined the pressing problems facing youth along five components of the value chain: Research and development, inputs, production, processing and retail. This is to ensure that we



would be educating the next generation of agricultural business leaders that have broad base knowledge to successfully grow agricultural enterprises into multibillion naira business. To this end, the team designed a new and exciting youth empowerment and training program intended to create 3.5 million sustainable jobs by 2015. This translates to 1000 new business per year in every state, and of livelihood for the teeming youth and women too.

Another priority area in this program was the provision of rural infrastructure for the areas of high agricultural productivity, to be transformed into agricultural hubs, known as staple crop processing zones-prominent among them is the rice processing zone to create value chain for agripreneurship development. With this development, there is going to be provision of all necessary infrastructures to aid the effective distribution of food and food products, most especially rice. The focus of this program on this area is the provision of basic rural infrastructure such as water, power, and roads to boost food production, value-added processing and markets, thereby making agribusiness ventures attractive for youth.

Furthermore, the program also focuses on facilitating Supplier-Buyer relationship. This is to ensure that there would exist a robust system that easily connects buyers and suppliers for the purpose of improving the efficiency and the transparency of the agripreneurship sub-sector, and that the system should be doing 100 billion naira in trade and agribusiness, including rice value chain activities, through strategies designed to improve the efficiency of the value chain by building the capacities of relevant stakeholders and actors, coupled with the development of information bridges and associated infrastructure, to overcome the lack of access to information and improve market linkages.

Finally, the program focuses on the development of an integrated marketing strategy to meet the challenge posed to them: to ensure that agriculture and agribusiness should be the most sought after discipline in Nigerian Universities. The campaign is meant to be non-intrusive and will blend well with the way youth and women currently access their information and news. In particular, the strategy aims to create 370,000 jobs in the long term.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigeria's future will, for a large part, depend on government's capacity to stimulate and, above all, manage these three transformation forces of agricultural Productivity, rural diversification and urbanization while attracting young people in the agro-sector. Nigeria's population has been projected to double in the next twenty years with megacities and large secondary areas emerging around growth poles. Depending on government's actions today, including investments in agripreneurship activities, the rural areas could experience either crippling rural to urban migration or increased agricultural productivity, similar to Thailand, where smallholder agriculture is widely successful, paired with an increasing aging farmers' population. Farming after young generation (youth and women engaged in processing) a chance to make a difference by growing enough food to feed the world. Those who become farmers now have the opportunity to be generation that end world hunger and alleviate malnutrition, as well as helping the sector to adapt to climate change. There are many challenges ahead for the sector but if young people, including women are offered education in agriculture, a voice at policy level, and in the media, and are engaged with innovations, especially value chain development in staple foods like rice, then the agriculture industry can attract youth again as source of livelihood.





Ladies and Gentlemen, with the renewed efforts of the Federal and States Government in addressing youth and women involvement in Agriculture, permit me to use this opportunity to change all our addressing youth and women to take to agriculture as a business when you leave school. Obasanjo (2021) has earlier submitted that “he is sorry for any graduate of Nigerian University that has no alternative source of livelihood; Agriculture and Agribusiness is the answer”. Government on its part must invest heavily on the development of agripreneurship activities that will create value chain, especially for rice marketing, as this is capable of providing jobs and source of livelihood to our women and youth. Women entrepreneurs and youths can develop their business better if they can assess education, training and skills acquisition as well as access to microcredit. There is need to put these strategies for entrepreneurship development, especially for women, in rice value chain activities. Nigeria, as a nation, investing heavily and improving entrepreneurship among women is a key to effectively addressing the challenges of unemployment, as most formal employment are no longer available. Empowering women and youths through entrepreneurship is as good as empowering the nation and improving standards of living. Access to microcredit, access to education and training/skill acquisition have positive effect on improving women and youth entrepreneurship in rice value chain, and also capable of motivating them.

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