



Effect of Corruption on Farmers' Efficiency in Cassava Production and Income Generation among Rural Women in Etche Ethnic Nation, Rivers State

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Abstract

The study was conducted to determine the effect of corruption on farmers' efficiency on cassava production and income generation among rural women in Etche Ethnic nation, Rivers State. The study adopted survey design. Purposive sampling was used to obtain data from 200 cassava farmers from 20 cassava co-operatives societies. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire designed in the pattern of Likert 5-point rating scale of agreement (SA-5, A-4; UN-3, DA-2, SD-1) respectively. The data were analyzed with mean and percentage. The findings revealed that aside cassava production, rural women also engaged in other income generating activities; they were able to identify corrupt practices, and their effect on efficiency and income generating capacity. It was therefore, recommended that government should strengthen anti-corruption agencies and institutions to check-mate the trend and government incentives given directly to farmers through their co-operative societies.

Keywords: Corruption, Efficiency, Production, Income generation and rural women.

Introduction

Etche ethnic nation is made up of Etche and Omuma Local Government Areas, two out of the twenty-three Local Government Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. It is a rural area and the people earn their livelihood primarily from crop farming (Nnodim and Nwachukwu 2011). The main food crops produced by the people include yam, cassava, plantain among others. In Etche nation, crop farming seems to be gender-specific as cassava is mainly produced by women. Few decades ago, it was ridiculous for a man to farm cassava. Men are noted for yam production, while women farm cassava to complement family food resources and income. They achieve this through processing cassava into various food items, such as fufu, tapioca, cassava flour, starch, garri, chips and other food value-chain derivable from it.

Cassava is the primary income earner of women in Etche nation and humorously referred to as their second husband. The social and economic lives of rural women revolve around this particular food crop and therefore any effort made towards improving the production of cassava in the area would be a welcomed development and a step towards reducing poverty and hunger among the people.

The Global Food Security Index (2013) reported that more than 870 million people in the world do not have a secured source of food despite world leaders' avowed commitment to reduce hunger by half in the year 2015. The inability to achieve the feat irrespective of many programmes and aids to agricultural development is largely traced to corruption among our leaders and government officials.

Hornby (2010) defines corruption as dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority. The act or effect of making somebody change from moral to immoral standards of behavior. Centre for Democracy and Governance (1999) describes corruption as unilateral abuses by government officials (embezzlement and nepotism) as well as abuses by public and private individuals such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling or fraud.

Corruption pervades all sectors of our national lives, as it could be perpetrated in both political and bureaucratic offices and could range from petty, grand and organized to unorganized, with its effects felt everywhere in our daily activities. Corruption is a social-human factor, the abuse of public office for personal gains. Tunku (2001) traced the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor to corruption, just as Bawa et al (2010) linked the many challenges facing agricultural development in Nigeria to corruption. According to Tunku (2001) corruption inhibits social and economic development of a nation as it constraints the efforts of development agencies. Fink (2002) observes that corruption is inimical to agricultural development and fuels hunger and poverty among the people. According to Fink (2002), agriculture cannot develop without credits, yet corruption would not permit subsidized government credits reach the intended beneficiaries.

Corruption is pervasive when government officials collude with private sector firms, resulting to poor quality services that are capable of retarding agricultural development. Bawa et al (2010) observed that agricultural inputs, such fertilizers and other agro-chemicals hardly get to the farmers when needed and in the right quantity, as politicians and public influential hijack and sell off the products to the highest bidders. In Bangladesh, Anik et al (2011), reported that farmers pay heavily on products and inputs subsidized by the government for their good due to the activities of wealthy middlemen, while accusing the extension services for nepotism and favouritism.

On effect of corruption on income generation capacity of the people, Transparency International (2011) reported a clear, strong and negative relationship between perceived higher levels of corruption and lower growth, investment and development in agricultural output and income from agricultural activities. Corruption discourages investment, diminishes the values of a society, destroys its very fabric and perpetuates economic dependency and underdevelopment. Oromareghake and Arisi (2013) assert that corruption is detrimental to national economic, social and political progress.

The pervasive nature of corruption extends to investment and aids. Lack or poor investment in an economy by entrepreneurs and foreign aids for agricultural development reduces farmers income. Many of the farm produce are raw materials for the production of other products. The presence of investors and entrepreneurs heightens demand for agricultural produce hence farmers are likely to make more money. This situation would hardly be when nothing happens without corruption. Oromareghake and Arisi (2013) observed the withdrawal of entrepreneurs from Nigeria due to constraints imposed on them by corruption on a scale they can no longer bear. In Kashipur Bangladesh, systemic corruption made contractors and suppliers over-night millionaires without working, leading to the complete failure of the poverty alleviation and food security initiative sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Tunku, 2001).

Rural farmers need assistance to reach their potentials, and earn more income and satisfy their needs. In Etche, land is not a constraining factor to cassava production as it is in abundance with good soil and adequate rainfall, but other agricultural inputs and credits are lacking. Official reports from government show numerous efforts through programmes and projects including those of private organizations but have these efforts benefited the women farmers is a matter of concern. In what manner were the women cassava farmers sub-changed? What could be the effect of these corrupt practices on their cassava production and income generating capacity? This study intends to answer these questions among others.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose is to ascertain the effect of corruption on cassava production and income generating capacity of women in Etche ethnic nation of Rivers State.

Specifically, the study tends to:

1. determine the livelihood activities of women in Etche ethnic nation.
2. determine the forms of corruption experienced by the Etche women in relation to their livelihood activities.
3. ascertain the effect of corruption on cassava production and income of the rural women in the study area.

Methodology

The study was a descriptive survey, aimed at determining the effects of corruption on cassava production and income generation of women in Etche ethnic nation (Etche and Omuma L.G.As) of Rivers State. The study made use of 200 respondents (sample size) purposively sampled from 20 cassava co-operative societies (10 from each L.G.A) in the study area. The reason being, credits and grants could be easily accessed through co-operatives than by individual farmers. Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire, complemented with Focus Group Discussion held twice (once in each Local Government Area). The questionnaire was designed in the pattern of Likert 5-point rating scale of Agreement (SA-5; A4; UN-3; DA-2 and SD-1) respectively. The data gathered were analyzed using mean and percentage. The decision was formed by using the minimum acceptable mean score of 3.00. Therefore, mean value of 3.00 and above was accepted, otherwise rejected.

Result and Discussion

The livelihood activities of rural women in Etche nation

The data in Table 1 show the livelihood activities of respondents. The multiple responses recorded were an indication that rural Etche women engaged in varied livelihood activities to earn a living. Majority (90%) of the respondents were into crop farming followed by produce processing (70%), salaried work (32.5%), gathering of non-timber forest products (47.5%) and trading/marketing (40%) respectively. Other livelihood activities were livestock farming

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on their livelihood activities

Livelihood activities	Frequency (N=200)	Percentage
Crop farming	180	90
Livestock farming	60	30
Produce processing	140	70
Trading/marketing	80	40
Salaried work	65	32.5
Fishing	10	5
Fish processing	25	12.5
Gathering of non-timber forest products	95	47.5
Hired labour	70	35
Pottery/ceramics	-	-
Beauty salon/hair-dressing	40	20
Local brewing/selling	5	2.5
Fuel wood collection	20	10
Traditional birth attendance	2	1
Transportation	15	7.5
Income from spouse	22	11
Nanny	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2015

N/B: Multiple responses recorded.

(30%), hired labour (35%), beauty salon/ hair-dressing (20%), fish processing (50%), fuel-wood collection (10%), transportation (7.5%), local brewing/selling (2.5%) and income from spouse (11%) respectively. The funding corroborates the observations and explanation of Arnold and Bird (1999) that livelihood is the totality of means of securing a living or acquires the requirements for survival and satisfaction of needs. Again, the finding showed that crop farming, trading and other agricultural activities were the main livelihood activities of respondents, and it is in tandem with the findings of Amao et al (2005), Albert (2013) and Nnodim and Nwachukwu (2011) that rural women in Nigeria engaged in varied income generating activities with crop farming and other agricultural activities as the major income sources for rural women.

Forms of Corrupt Practices

Table 2: Respondents' understanding of corruption

Factors	Mean	Remark
Bribery of government officials	4.60	Accept
Cheating/illegal acquisition of credits and agricultural inputs by officials	3.20	Accept
Abuse of power by government officials	4.32	Accept
Fraudulent implementation of policies that discriminate the poor majority	4.55	Accept
Falsification of documents or titles	3.81	Accept
Lack of transparency and accountability	4.75	Accept
Forceful seizure of assets by officials	3.40	Accept
Inflating the prices of farm inputs	4.35	Accept
Undue lobbying for favour or position by government officials	3.60	Accept
Supplying of poor quality agricultural inputs	4.75	Accept
Collusion between government officials and individuals to divert government incentives	4.82	Accept
Embezzlement	4.95	Accept
Giving undue advantages to ones relatives	4.20	Accept
Under-delivery of goods by officials	4.62	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Data in Table 2 show varied forms of corrupt practices as perceived by the respondents. According to the findings, corruption in agricultural sector was in areas of government officials asking for bribe (4.60) before attending to farmers cases, cheating and illegal acquisition of credits and other inputs by those not qualified or meant for it (3.20), fraudulent implementation of policies to shut-out majority from benefiting from government incentives (4.55), abuse of power by officials (4.32) and falsification of document and titles in case of landed property (3.81) respectively. Corruption also include lack of transparency and accountability (4.75), forceful seizure of assets by government officials (3.40), inflating prices of farm inputs (4.35), supply of poor quality or sub-standard products (4.75) and diversion of government incentives by officials in collaboration with individuals (4.82) respectively. Other forms of corruption include embezzlement by individuals (4.95), giving undue advantages to ones relatives (nepotism) (4.20) and under-delivery of goods by officials (4.62) respectively.

The findings corroborated the description of corruption by the Centre for Democracy and Governance (1999) as a unilateral abuses by government officials (embezzlement and nepotism) as well as abuses by the public and private individuals such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling or fraud. According to the Centre for Democracy and Governance (1999),

corruption is pervasive and could be found in both political and bureaucratic offices; ranging from petty, grand, organized and to the unorganized.

Effects of Corruption and Cassava Production and Income of Rural Women

Table 3: Respondents' opinion on the effects of corruption on cassava production and income of women

Factors	Mean	Remark
Decreased productivity	4.85	Accept
Reduced government revenues to agriculture	4.20	Accept
Fewer resources for production expenditure	4.30	Accept
Reduced public infrastructure	3.82	Accept
Reduced economic growth and efficiency	4.25	Accept
Income inequality	4.50	Accept
Much time wasted seeking for farm inputs	3.95	Accept
Heightens transportation cost due to several visits	4.35	Accept
High prices and excess payment for inputs	4.65	Accept
Difficulty accessing information on innovations	3.65	Accept
Encourages additional cost thereby restricting the use of more inputs	4.10	Accept
Reduces farm profits and income	4.85	Accept
Discourages further investment in agriculture	4.70	Accept
Heightens poverty among rural women	4.60	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Data in Table 3 show the effects of corruption on cassava production and income generating capacity of rural women in Etche ethnic nation. The respondents were of the opinion that corruption could decrease productivity, reduce government revenues to agriculture generally, reduce public infrastructure and reduce economic growth and efficiency of farmers with mean values of 4.85, 4.20, 4.30, 3.82 and 4.25 respectively. Corruption could also cause income inequality among farmers, wastage of time seeking for farm inputs, heightens transportation cost as farmers pay several visits looking for farm inputs and credits, increase in prices and excess payment on subsidized inputs and difficulty accessing information on innovations with mean values of 4.50, 3.95, 4.35, 4.65 and 3.65 respectively. The respondents also agreed that corruption makes farm operations costly as it encourages additional cost thereby limiting the use of more inputs (4.10); reduces farm profit and income to the farmers (4.85), discourages further investment in agriculture (4.70) and heightens poverty among rural women in the area (4.60) respectively. The findings were indicative that corruption is a social-human factor which is contributing to the widening gap between the rich and the poor (Tunku; 2001). The findings also corroborated the view of Bawa et al (2010) that many challenges facing agricultural development in Nigeria are linked to corruption. According to Fink (2002) corruption had fuel hunger and poverty among the people as it had barred credits and government subsidized agricultural inputs from reaching farmers. The effects were low productivity, low income and poverty among rural women whose primary occupation was crop farming.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following were deduced:

1. That women of Etche ethnic nation engaged in various livelihood activities, mainly agricultural, with crop farming as the primary occupation.

2. That among various food crops cultivated by women in Etche, cassava was considered an indispensable crop among women.
3. That women farmers identified various forms of corrupt practices perpetrated by government agents, sometimes in collusion with some community influential's that affect the realization of their potentials.
4. That corruption affects rural women efficiency in cassava production and reduces the income from therein and thereby constrain their well-being.

Recommendations

It was therefore recommended that:

1. Anti-corruption agencies and institutions should be strengthened and encouraged to beam their search light on agencies that had to do with agriculture and expose corrupt officials. It is only by exposing perpetrators of corruption that others could be deterred from further practices.
2. Farmers should be encouraged to report corrupt practices to anti-corruption agencies. This would be effective in curbing corruption but only when the reporter is assured of adequate protection.
3. Government incentives should be given directly to farmers through cooperative organizations, thereby eliminating middle-men who short-change the farmers through various dubious means.
4. Cassava farmers should be encouraged to form cooperatives organization. This could be the better way of accessing incentives from agricultural and other development agencies. Easy asses to incentives would enhance their productivity and income generating capacity.

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