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THE INVOLVEMENT OF SMALL HOLDER PRIVATE FARM SECTOR IN AGRICULTURE IN UZO-UWANI LGA OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

A study of the activities of small-holder private farms in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State was carried out. Major objectives of the study include the determination of the contributions of small holder private sector farms to the socio-economic development of the study area as well as the identification of the constraints/problems of the private sector farms. A simple random sampling was employed to select 506 respondents out of a population of 3,209 targeted farm families. Interview schedule was used as instrument of data collection from the respondents. Data collected were analysed by use of percentages and mean scores. The study revealed that 39.77 percent of the farmers cropped less than 5ha, about 40 percent of them own the land they farmed, while 36 percent of the farm land were on lease. About 45.6 percent of the respondents sold their crops unprocessed, while 18.1 percent of those who process do so with the traditional method and 13.6 percent do so with improved techniques. The small holder private farmers do not have access to agricultural credits, farm inputs and insurance against crop failure. These constraints, notwithstanding, the small-holder farmers contributed immensely to the economic and social development of Uzo-Uwani L.G.A. It was recommended that the three tiers of government should create an enabling environment to enhance effective participation of the small holder farm sector in the socio-economic development of their LGAs and communities in partnership with the state and local governments.

Keywords: *Small-Holder Farm Sector, Agriculture, Involvement In Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu State.*

INTRODUCTION

Until fairly recently, Nigerian economy was essentially based on agriculture. In the last decade, Nigeria has witnessed a rapid decline in agricultural production mainly due to over dependence on oil (Abayomi, 1997). The gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated to have recorded an annual growth rate in real terms of 10.3 percent in 1976/77 compared with average of 7.6 percent in 1970/76 and about 5 percent in 1960s (CBN, 1984). According to 1991 CBN report, a sectional break down of the GDP indicates that agriculture formally the chief income earner in 1960s has given way to the petroleum. Its relative share of the GDP at current factor fell from 61.2 percent in 1962 to 23.3 percent in 1977 (CBN, 1984). The gravity of the situation is shown by the fact that Nigeria which was a major world producer of groundnut and palm oil can no longer produce even for her domestic needs. Central Bank of Nigeria (1991) reported that the country had to resort to large scale of importation of staple food. This resulted to rise in expenditure of 6.08 million in 1965 to 297.90 million in 1975, an increase of 500 percent in a decade. The Federal Government in 1980 allocated N100 million for the importation of 50,000 tonnes of rice in addition to 55,000 tonnes already imported by the government. The 1986 structural adjustment programme emphasized self-reliance in agricultural production through the technical committee on privatization and commercialization (TCPC).

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The prime motivator in any agricultural pursuit is the individual farmer. Olayide and others (1991) observed that most farmers do not often receive adequate advice or information, readily from government or its agencies while the credit institutions have performed abysmally poor in rural setting (Afolami and Falusi, 1999; Eicher, 1999; Dixon et al, 2001; IFAD, 2001; World Bank, 2001; World Bank, 2002; World Bank, 2003; World Bank, 2004; Kanu, 2005 and Okoye, 2005). Agricultural production is fraught with high risk, yet the rural small-holder farmers are expected to provide for the teeming-Nigeria population (Nwagbo, 1998; Gamal, 1996; Byerlee D. et al, 2002; Feder and Feeney, 1991; Ugwoke et al, 2005). It was in the light of these that the small-holder private farms in Uzo-Uwani LGA were studied and evaluated. This is because the current development plan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria champions private sector involvement in economic development.

The Involvement of Small Holder Private Farm Sector in Agriculture in Uzo-Uwani LGA of Enugu State, Nigeria

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The broad objective of this study is to find out the major constraints and prospects of the small-holder private farms in Uzo-Uwani LGA. The specific objectives were to:

- (i) determine the contributions of small-holder private sector farms to the socio-economic development of the study area.
- (ii) Identify the major constraints faced by the respondents.
- (iii) Make appropriate inference and recommendations for a more rewarding private sector involvement in Agriculture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Uzo-Uwani LGA is the study area. The local government area is made up of seventeen communities with Umulokpa as its Headquarters. It is located between latitude 9° N and longitude 8.5° E and about 86 km from Enugu, the State Capital. The local government covers an area of 1,388.95 km² and has a total population of 88,117 people (NPC, 1997). The people of Uzo-Uwani are both Igbos and Igala tribes known for farming. Simple random sampling was used in selecting 506 respondents who were administered with interview schedules. Data collected were analysed with mean score values and percentages.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION:

Data in table 1 showed that 54.37 percent of the respondents engage in crop production, 27.19 percent are involved in livestock production. In marketing and processing, 9.06 percent of these farmers were involved respectively. From the above result, it implies that crop production is greater and land becomes another important variable in determining the participation of these small holder in agriculture. The mean hectare cropped is 5ha. These findings agreed with the observations of Njoku (2000) and Ukoha and Godswill, (2005) that smallholder farmers own below 10 hectares in South Eastern Nigeria due to various social and economic variables.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Type of Enterprise.

Enterprise	No of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Crop production	276	54.37
Livestock Production	138	27.19
Marketing	46	9.06
Processing	46	9.06
Total	506	100

Source: Field data 2003.

Data on table 2 showed that 40.78 percent of the respondents inherited their farm land while 36.59 percent were on leased farms. However, 13.59 percent of the respondents directly purchased their farm land while 4.53 percent of them farmed on government owned land. The result indicated that 4.53 percent of the respondents have access to clearing of forest for farming purposes in the area under survey.

Table 2: Land Acquisition by Respondents.

Mode	No of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Inherited	207	40.78
Government	23	4.53
Lease	184	36.28
Purchase	69	13.59
Virgin forest clearing	23	4.53
Total	506	100

Source: Field data 2003.

In table 3 the social impact of the smallholder farmers are displayed based on the results of the study. It was observed that 27.18 of the respondents used their proceeds for training their children in schools at the three tiers. The study also revealed that 49.84 percent of the respondents were involved in community development while a combination of other activities were as shown in the table. The result therefore showed that there was a positive correlation between the smallholder private farm sector and rural development. This is an accord with the findings of Umeh (2001) that in 1981, the Nigerian small holder farmers accounted for about 90% of food produced and 65% of total crop output by halve.

Table 3: Social impacts of Respondents.

S/No	Obligations	No of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents.
1	Training of children in schools	138	27.18
2	Community development and levies.	253	49.8
3	Building of more houses	23	4.53
4	Only more farm in puts	Nil	Nil
5	Nos 1- 3 above	23	4.53
6	Nos 1 -4 above	46	9.06
7	All of the above	23	4.53
	Total	506	100

Source: Field data (2003).

The constraints faced by the small holder private farm sector were shown in table 4. The problems of collateral was a constraint to 45.31 percent of the respondents while late release of fund and inadequate funding accounted for 18.12 percent each. Lack of credit was hindering 9.06 percent of the farmers from operating at maximum capacity. Other variations were shown in the tables to capture the financial constraints of the small holder farmers.

Table 4: Constraints Facing Respondents in Uzo-Uwani in Sourcing Farm Credits.

S/No	Problems	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Collateral	230	45.31
2	Late release of credit	92	18.12
3	Inadequacy of credit	92	18.12
4	Lack of credit	46	9.06
5	Nos 2 & 3 only	23	4.53
6	All of the above	23	4.53
	Total	506	100

Source: Field data (2003).

Further, it was observed in table 5 that there are other constraints faced by these small holder private farm sector. Electricity was the major constraint for 46.49 percent of the respondents and irrigation facilities constrained 22.06 percent of them. The inadequacy of access roads was posited by 21.28 percent of the respondents as a critical problem while lack of water supply/boreholes and health facilities constituted serious constraints for 3.15 and 6.90 percent of the respondents respectively. This agreed with IWMI (2001) report that water supply is a critical factor in rural farming system.

Table 5: Infrastructural Problems Facing Small Holder Private Farm Sector in Uzo-Uwani.

S/No	Variables	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Electricity	236	46.49
2	Access farm roads	108	21.28
3	Irrigation facilities	112	22.06
4	Borehole or water supply	16	3.95
5	Health facilities	35	6.90
	Total	506	100

Source: Field data (2003).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was revealed that despite the constraints faced by the small holder private farm sector, they contributed immensely to the social and economic development of Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area. In addition, they train children in schools and colleges and build more houses while meeting their social and health needs. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the three tiers of government should create an enabling environment to encourage and harness sustainability of private small holder farm sector involvement through social security, provision of electricity and repair of damaged irrigation canals in Adarice while extension services should be intensified in food fortification and preservation.

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