

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Youths' involvement in agriculture is one of the robust means of reducing the preponderance of ageing farm population and alarming youths' unemployment rate. Dearth of information on youths' level of involvement in agriculture has also continued to be a serious concern. The study determined youths' level of involvement in agriculture in Kogi State. Rural youths in Kogi State formed the population of the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting 120 respondents. Information on respondents' personal characteristics, involvement in agricultural activities, areas of involvement, benefits derived and constraints to involvement was collected using structured interview schedule. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. Most respondents (49.2%) were averagely 23 years, single (85.0%), males (57.5%), attended secondary school (70.8%) and part-time farmers (85.0%) with a mean farm size of two hectares (96.0%). Also 52.5% were Muslims and 65.8% had average family size of 6 persons. Processing/storage ($\bar{x} = .61$), burning of rubbish ($\bar{x} = .55$), planting ($\bar{x} = .52$) ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd while feeding ($\bar{x} = .81$), pen cleaning ($\bar{x} = .83$), breeding ($\bar{x} = .29$) 1st, 2nd and 3rd among crops and animal husbandry activities respectively. Maize ($\bar{x} = .82$), sesame ($\bar{x} = .70$), vegetable ($\bar{x} = .63$), cassava ($\bar{x} = .62$) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th while poultry birds ($\bar{x} = .94$), goat ($\bar{x} = .70$), sheep ($\bar{x} = .53$), duck ($\bar{x} = .18$) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th among crops and animals produced respectively. Food security and manure ($\bar{x} = 2.55$), income ($\bar{x} = 2.53$) and improved nutrition ($\bar{x} = 2.40$) were major from crop production while manure ($\bar{x} = 2.52$), source of meat ($\bar{x} = 2.49$), source of income ($\bar{x} = 2.38$) and improved nutrition ($\bar{x} = 2.03$) were benefits derived from animals animal husbandry. Finance ($\bar{x} = 1.93$), labour cost ($\bar{x} = 1.92$), inadequate processing facilities and bad road ($\bar{x} = 1.87$) constituted major constraints. Significant relationship existed between respondents' mode of involvement ($\chi^2 = 6.349$), gender ($\chi^2 = 14.543$) and their level of involvement

in agriculture. Also significant correlation existed between age ($r = 0.246$), years of experience ($r = 0.180$), benefits derived ($r = 0.611$), constraints ($r = -0.221$) and respondents' level of involvement. The study concluded that youths' level of involvement was low. Evolving a platform that would bring all stakeholders together with a view to determining priorities and workable intervention programmes for improved youths' involvement in agriculture in the area is germane.

Keywords: Youth, animal husbandry, crop production, benefits derived, constraints

INTRODUCTION

The fact that Nigeria is the 8th most populous nation in the world, (NBS, 2009) is no more in contention. That poverty is widespread with an estimated 80% of Nigerians subsisting on less than \$2 a day (UNDP 2009) is also not in doubt. It was also speculated that about 82 million hectares of Nigeria's total land area of 91 million hectares were found to be arable and thus; farming is generally profitable (Lenis SL, Kuku and Ajibla 2011). Agriculture no doubt plays a leading role in most developing countries' economy and remains a significant source of raw material, food/nourishment, foreign exchange and livelihood. Its contributions to national survival, youth employment, and food and foreign exchange earnings are reportedly robust (Adebayo and Okuneye 2011). It is further revealed that the relevance of agricultural sector is laudable, contributing over 60 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 90 percent of exports even before Nigeria's discovery and massive dependent on oil (Adedoyin 2011).

Unfortunately, things cannot be said to have gone well with the sector over the years. There has been a decline in production and export share of the sector (Adewuyi 2002). The decline was such that Nigeria which, used to be in the fore front of food export is today food insecure evidenced in its food production deficit (Oviasogie 2005) and rate of food importation since 1980s (Fasoranti 2006). This could be attributed to use of manual labour or crude tools and declining age of individuals that are involved. In addition to these supposed constraints are scarcity and high cost of labour, agrochemicals, and fertilizer (Egwuda 2001, Ojo 2005, Peke 2008), disease, low skilled and poorly educated family labour (Adejoh 2009). The declining age of those involved in agriculture as a constraint has been illustrated by the fact that youths that have desirable qualities that can promote agriculture in Nigeria are demonstrating strong apathy toward it (Adewale, Oladejo and Ogguniyi 2003). This is unfortunate as youths' involvement in agriculture is undoubtedly a means of creating career opportunities for the youths, increase food production and to a large extent reduce the gap between food production and its demand in the community (NDE 2003).

Youth, defined as the period of adolescence when young people make transition from childhood to adulthood become sexually mature and experience increasing social and economic autonomy (Afande, Maina and Mathenge 2015); their sustainable involvement in agriculture is undeniably germane. Consequently, in recognizing the dwindling rate of agricultural production and the need for youths' involvement, a good number of laudable interventions were embarked upon by successive governments at both federal and state levels with the aim of encouraging the ever growing youths' population involvement as well as increasing production scale. Some of the measures included provision of agricultural infrastructure, inputs and effective extension work (Adaigho and Tibi 2014). Others were the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and FADAMA which were initiated to create opportunities for acquisition of prerequisite skills in agriculture and enhance food sufficiency respectively. These measures were further taken in view of the fact that youth as people with ample ideas, energy and new ways solving problems, are more apt in adopting innovation, have access to extension and utilize agricultural loans more effectively (Amaza and Tashikalma 2002).

However, despite these massive opportunities agricultural sector presents and more so in mitigating the scale of unemployment and stimulating youths' interest, the rate of opting out and unprecedented level of rural- urban migration has incredibly increased in recent times (Adaigho and Tibi 2014). The consequences undoubtedly include persistent food production deficit, hunger and corresponding increase in food imports.

As a social construct, involvement is location specific and is predicated upon prevailing challenges and or circumstances. Conceived in this perspective, the study therefore is aimed at determining the level of youths' involvement in agriculture in Kogi State, Nigeria. In specific terms, the study aimed at:

1. determining respondents' areas of involvement in agriculture
2. identifying benefits derived by respondents
3. determining respondents' constraints to involvement in agriculture

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and their level of involvement in agriculture

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried in Kogi State with 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Two distinct seasons: the wet and dry seasons that span through April to October and through November to

March respectively characterize the climatic condition of the area [18]. Thus; staple food crops such as yams, cassava, rice, sorghum, beans, maize, and cotton are predominantly produced across the state. The youths in the state made up the study population. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. At the first stage, 30% of the 21 LGAs was selected using simple random sampling technique to give six LGAs: Ibaji, Idah, Ogori-Magongo, Igamela-Odolo, Kaba/Bunu and Okehi. The LGAs were purposively chosen because of their agrarian endowment. The second stage involved using simple random sampling technique to select two communities from each of the 6 LGAs to give 12 communities. The third stage involved obtaining 10 youths from each of the 12 sampled communities using simple random sampling technique to get a sample size of 120 respondents. A structured interview schedule was used to collect data on respondents' personal characteristics, involvements in agriculture, benefits derived and constraints to involvement. The dependent variable (level of youth involvement in agriculture) was measured on 4-point scale of always, occasionally, rarely, never and was scored 3, 2, 1, and 0 respectively. The mean involvement was obtained and used to categorize respondents' level of involvement into high (> mean score) and low (< mean score). The data collected were described using frequencies, percentages and mean scores. Chi square analysis was used to determine level of association between selected socio-economic characteristics (marital status, level of education and religion, membership to association, mode of involvement and gender) of the respondents and their involvement in agriculture. Also, PPMC analysis was used to test level of correlation between respondents' age, farm size, farm experience, benefits derived and constraints to involvement.

RESULTS

Personal characteristics of the respondents

The personal characteristics of the respondents as shown in Table 1 indicates that majority (49.2%) were between the ages of 21 – 25 years. The result also revealed that most respondents (80.0%) had a mean farm size of 2 hectares and 65.8% had mean family size of 6 persons. Most respondents (85.0%) were single and 70.8% attained secondary school education. It was also revealed that Islam is predominantly (52.5%) practiced by most respondents who were mainly males (57.5%). Majority (96.7%) were part-time farmers who did not belong to co-operative society.

Table 1: distribution of respondents based on personal characteristics

Variable	F	%	Mean
Age:			22.55 ± 3.10
Less or equal 20	39	32.5	
21-25	59	49.2	
26-30	21	17.5	
Above 30	1	0.8	
Farm size:			2.09 ± .72
Less or equal 2	96	80.0	
3-4	23	19.2	
5-6	1	0.8	
Years of experience:			10.20 ± 4.16
1-5	14	11.7	
6-10	65	54.2	
11-15	31	25.8	
16- 20	9	7.5	
Above 20	1	0.8	
Family size:			6.28 ± 1.40
1-3	3	2.5	
4-6	79	65.8	
7-9	34	28.3	
10-12	4	3.3	
Marital status:			
Married	15	12.5	
Single	102	85.0	
Divorced	3	2.5	
Educational Qualification:			
Quaranic education	3	2.5	
Primary	4	3.3	
Secondary	85	70.8	
Tertiary	28	23.3	
Religion:			
Christianity	56	46.7	
Islam	63	52.5	
Traditional	1	0.8	
Membership to co-operative association:			
No	116	96.7	
Yes	4	3.3	
Mode of Involvement:			
Part-time	102	85.0	
Full-time	18	15.0	
Gender:			
Male	69	57.5	
Female	51	42.5	

Source: Field survey 2015

Involvement in agricultural activities

The result on agricultural activities involved by the respondents as presented in Table 2 revealed that majority were occasionally involved in crop processing and storage (52.5%). Land clearing (66.7%), harvesting (61.7%), weeding (60.8%) and mounding/ridging were crop production activities the respondents did not carry out. However, processing (mean = .61) and burning/packing of rubbish (mean = .55) ranked 1st and 2nd respectively as crop production activities the respondents were involved. This was followed by crop planting (mean = .52) that ranked 3rd. Result on youths’ involvement in animal husbandry activities showed that pen clearing (73.3%) and feeding of animals (62.5% were occasionally carried out by the respondents. Most of the respondents did not at all get involved in milking (94.2), pasture/range management (88.3%), medication (84.2%), breeding (81.7%) and processing (81.7%). Pen clearing (mean = .83), feeding (mean = .81) and breeding (mean = .29) ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively as animal husbandry activities the respondents carried out. Table 3 revealed low level of involvement in crop production (60.0%) and animal husbandry (70.8%) activities by most youths.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents on agricultural production activities involved

Variable	Always	Occasionally	Not at all	Mean	Rank
Crop production activities:	F	F	F		
Land clearing	8(7.5)	31(25.8)	80(66.7)	.41	8 th
Weeding	10(8.3)	37(30.8)	73(60.8)	.48	6 th
Burning/packing of rubbish	9(7.5)	48(40.0)	63(52.5)	.55	2 nd
Mounding and ridging	7(5.8)	47(39.2)	66(55.0)	.51	4 th
Planting	6(5.0)	50(41.7)	64(53.3)	.52	3 rd
Harvesting	10(8.3)	36(30.0)	74(61.7)	.47	7 th
Processing and storage	5(4.5)	63(52.5)	52(43.3)	.61	1 st
Marketing	5(4.2)	50(41.7)	65(54.2)	.50	5 th
Animal husbandry activities:					
Feeding	11(9.2)	75(62.5)	34(28.3)	.81	2 nd
Breeding	3(2.5)	19(15.8)	98(81.7)	.29	3 rd
Processing	2(1.7)	20(16.7)	98(81.7)	.20	5 th
Milking	1(0.8)	6(5.0)	113(94.2)	.07	7 th
Marketing/distribution	4(3.3)	18(15.0)	98(81.7)	.22	4 th
Medication	5(4.2)	14(11.7)	101(84.2)	.20	5 th
Pen clearing	6(5.0)	88(73.3)	26(21.7)	.83	1 st
Pasture and range management	3(2.5)	11(9.2)	106(88.3)	.14	6 th

Source: Field survey 2015. Figures in parentheses are in percentages

Table 3: Respondents' level of activities

Crop production activities:	Score	F	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
				4.03	3.71	.00	16.00
Low	<4.03	72	60.0				
High	≤4.03	48	40.0				
Animal husbandry activities:				2.68	2.72	.00	16.00
Low	<2.68	85	70.8				
High	≤2.68	35	29.2				

Areas of agricultural involvement

Table 4 is a presentation of the various areas of agriculture the respondents were involved. High percentages of the respondents occasionally produced sesame (66.7%) and maize (61.7%). Rice (93.3%), beans (80.8%), yam (68.3%), okra (50.8%) and vegetable (45.8%) were not at all produced by majority. Maize (mean = .82), sesame (mean = .70), vegetable (mean = .63), and cassava (mean = .62) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively as crops produced. Goat (70.0%), poultry birds (67.5%) were animals occasionally reared. Pigs (98.3%), grasscutter (96.7%), and snail (95.0%), rabbit (94.2%), honey bee (98.3%), dogs (85.8%) and turkeys (87.5%) were not reared at all. However, poultry birds (mean = .94), goat (mean = .70), sheep (mean = .53) ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively among animals kept. Table 5 revealed that while 50.8% had low level of involvement in crop production, animal husbandry recorded high involvement by 60.8%. On the overall, majority (65.0%) recorded low level of involvement in agriculture.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on areas of agriculture involved

Variable	Always	Occasionally	Not at all	Mean	Rank
Crop production:	F	F	F		
Maize	12(10.0)	74(61.7)	34(28.3)	.82	1 st
Okra	6(5.0)	53(44.2)	61(50.8)	.54	5 th
Sesame	2(1.7)	80(66.7)	38(31.7)	.70	2 nd
Vegetable	11(9.2)	54(45.0)	55(45.8)	.63	3 rd
Rice	5(4.2)	3(2.5)	112(93.3)	.11	8 th
Yam	7(5.8)	31(25.8)	82(68.3)	.38	6 th
Cassava	10(8.3)	54(45.0)	56(46.7)	.62	4 th
Beans	4(3.3)	19(15.8)	97(80.8)	.23	7 th
Animal husbandry:					
Sheep	8(6.7)	48(40.0)	64(53.3)	.53	3 rd
Goat	9(7.5)	84(70.0)	27(22.5)	.85	2 nd
Pig	0(0.00)	2(1.7)	118(98.3)	.02	9 th
Ducks	2(1.7)	18(15.0)	100(83.3)	.18	4 th
Turkeys	2(1.7)	13(10.8)	105(87.5)	.14	5 th
Rabbit	1(0.8)	6(5.0)	113(94.2)	.07	6 th
Grasscutter	0(0.00)	4(3.3)	116(96.7)	.03	8 th
Snail	1(0.8)	5(4.2)	114(95.0)	.05	7 th
Poultry birds	16(13.3)	81(67.5)	23(19.2)	.94	1 st
Dogs	5(4.2)	12(10.0)	103(85.8)	.18	4 th
Honey bees	2(1.7)	0(0.00)	118(98.3)	.03	8 th

Source: Field survey 2015. **Figures in parentheses are in percentages**

Table 5: Respondents' level of involvement in agriculture

Crop production:	Score	F	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
				4.02	2.92	.00	16.00
Low	<4.02	61	50.8				
High	≤4.02	59	49.2				
Animal husbandry:				3.04	2.15	.00	10.00
Low	<3.04	47	39.2				
High	≤3.04	73	60.8				
Overall:				13.96	10.63	.00	56.00
Low	<13.96	78	65.0				
High	≤13.96	42	35.0				

Benefits derived

Table 6 presents benefits derived from crop production involvement. Manure (50.0%), income (45.8%), improved nutrition (44.2%) and food security (43.3%) benefits were moderate. Using crop farm as collateral (63.3%) and recognition (45.8%) were very low. Food security (mean =

2.55) and manure (mean = 2.55) ranked 1st followed by income (mean = 2.53) and improved nutrition (mean = 2.40) that ranked 2nd and 3rd as benefits. In animal husbandry, manure (43.3%), income (41.7%), and meat (40.0%) benefits were moderate. Means of transportation (65.8%), raw material (65.0%), source of power (60.8%) and recognition (60.0%) recorded very low benefits. It was also found that manure (mean = 2.52), source of meat (mean = 2.49) and income (mean = 2.38) ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd as benefits derived from animal husbandry.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents based on benefits of involvement in agriculture

Variable	Very high F	High F	Moderate F	Low F	Very low F	Mean	Rank
Crop production:							
Food Security	6(5.0)	4(3.3)	52(43.3)	47(39.2)	11(9.2)	2.55	1 st
Manure	3(2.5)	4(3.3)	60(50.0)	42(35.0)	11(9.2)	2.55	1 st
Income	4(3.3)	5(4.2)	55(45.8)	43(35.8)	13(10.8)	2.53	2 nd
Recognition	1(0.8)	3(2.5)	21(17.5)	40(33.3)	55(45.8)	1.79	5 th
Employment	2(1.7)	2(1.7)	25(20.8)	67(55.8)	24(20.0)	2.09	4 th
Improved nutrition	3(2.5)	4(3.3)	53(44.2)	38(31.7)	22(18.3)	2.40	3 rd
Collateral	2(1.7)	1(0.8)	13(10.8)	28(23.3)	76(63.3)	1.54	6 th
Animal husbandry:							
Source meat	5(4.2)	7(5.8)	48(40.0)	42(35.0)	18(15.0)	2.49	2 nd
Manure	4(3.3)	7(5.8)	52(43.3)	42(35.0)	15(12.5)	2.52	1 st
Income	3(2.5)	3(2.5)	50(41.7)	45(37.5)	19(15.8)	2.38	3 rd
Source of power	3(2.5)	2(1.7)	10(8.3)	32(26.7)	73(60.8)	1.58	7 th
Means of transportation	4(3.3)	1(0.8)	5(4.2)	31(25.8)	79(65.8)	1.50	9 th
Raw material	2(1.7)	2(1.7)	12(10.0)	26(21.7)	78(65.0)	1.53	8 th
Security/Protection	2(1.7)	5(4.2)	14(11.7)	28(23.3)	71(59.2)	1.65	6 th
Recognition	2(1.7)	5(4.2)	14(11.7)	27(22.5)	72(60.0)	1.65	6 th
Employment	2(1.7)	4(3.3)	17(14.2)	44(36.7)	53(44.2)	1.82	5 th
Improved nutrition	3(2.5)	4(3.3)	33(27.5)	33(27.5)	47(39.2)	2.03	4 th
Collateral	1(0.80)	0(0.00)	5(4.2)	23(19.2)	91(75.8)	1.31	10 th

Source: Field survey 2015. **Figures in parentheses are in percentages**

Constraints to involvement

Table 7 shows various constraints to respondents' involvement in agriculture. Inadequate finance (95.0%), high labour cost (93.3%), bad road (90.0%) inadequate processing facilities (89.2%) and storage facilities (89.2%) were serious constraints. Other serious constraints included tedious nature of agricultural activities (84.2%), low social status of agriculture (82.5%), pests and diseases (82.5%) infestations. Interestingly, social cultural restrictions (50.8%) and gender bias (50.0%) did not pose constraints to slightly above half and half of the respondents respectively. Finance (mean = 1.93), labour cost (mean = 1.92), inadequate processing facilities (mean = 1.87), bad road (mean = 1.87) and inadequate storage facilities (mean = 1.86) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th respectively as constraints to youths' involvement in agriculture.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents based on constraints to involvement

Variable	Serious	Mild	Not a constraint	Mean	Rank
	F	F	F		
Inadequate finance	114(95.0)	3(2.5)	3(2.5)	1.93	1 st
High labour cost	112(93.3)	6(5.0)	2(1.7)	1.92	2 nd
Bad road	109(90.0)	6(5.0)	5(4.2)	1.87	3 rd
Lack of agricultural extension contact	75(62.5)	35(29.2)	10(8.3)	1.54	12 th
Socio-cultural restriction	23(19.2)	36(30.0)	61(50.8)	.68	15 th
Lack of market infrastructure	90(75.0)	20(16.7)	10(8.3)	1.67	11 th
Poor land tenure problem	90(75.0)	21(17.5)	9(7.5)	1.68	10 th
Gender bias	31(25.8)	29(24.2)	60(50.0)	.76	14 th
Tedious nature of agriculture	107(89.2)	8(6.7)	5(4.2)	1.85	5 th
Unfavourable climatic conditions	99(82.5)	15(12.5)	6(5.0)	1.78	7 th
Pilfering	95(79.2)	13(10.8)	12(10.0)	1.70	9 th
Pest infestation	99(82.5)	17(14.2)	4(3.3)	1.80	6 th
Disease infestation	99(82.5)	18(15.0)	3(2.5)	1.80	6 th
Inadequate storage facilities	107(89.2)	9(7.5)	4(3.3)	1.86	4 th
Inadequate processing facilities	107(89.2)	10(8.3)	3(2.5)	1.87	3 rd
Inconsistencies of government policies	95(79.2)	15(12.5)	10(8.3)	1.71	8 th
Low level of technical know-how	23(19.2)	62(51.7)	35(29.2)	.90	13 th
Low social status of agriculture	101(84.2)	13(10.8)	6(5.0)	1.80	6 th

Source: Field survey 2015. **Figures in parentheses are in percentages**

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and their level of involvement in agriculture.

The result in Table 8 shows that at 5 percent level of significance, there are significant relationships between respondents' mode of involvement ($\chi^2 = 6.346$), gender ($\chi^2 = 14.543$) and their level of involvement in agriculture. The result further revealed significant correlation between respondents' age ($r = 0.246$), years of experience ($r = 0.180$), benefits derived ($r = 0.611$), constraints ($r = -0.221$) and their level of involvement in agriculture.

Table 8: Relationship between respondents’ selected personal characteristics and their involvement in agriculture

Variables	χ^2	df	P	Remark	Variable	r	p	Remark
Marital status	3.956	2	.138	NS	Age	0.246	0.007	S
Educational status	.503	3	.918	NS	Farm size	-0.083	0.370	NS
Religion	4.607	2	.100	NS	Years of experience	0.180	0.050	S
Membership of association	2.910	1	.088	NS	Family size	-0.084	0.362	NS
Mode of involvement	6.346	1	.012	S	Benefits	0.611	0.000	S
Gender	14.543	1	.000	S	Constraints	-0.221	0.015	S

DISCUSSION

The young, energetic and active characteristics of the youths have been found to enhance agricultural productivity (Ugwoke, Adesope and Ibe 2005). This is in conformity with the finding on entrepreneurial agricultural activities of youths in Michika Local Government Area of Adamawa State (LGA), Nigeria persons (Gwary, Kwaghe, Ja’afar- Furo and Dennis 2011). The large family size of the respondents is an indication of possible cheap labor availability and sourcing from the family. The polygamous type of marriage that is in vogue in the area could be the reason. The result is in line with the finding on youths in Michika LGA that had family size of between 6-10 persons (Gwary, *et al* 2011). That most respondents were not married is a common trend among youths. It has implication for youths’ level of involvement in agriculture as ones’ marital status could determine his/her scale of responsibilities and diversification of coping strategies. The secondary education attainment of the respondents infers a fair level that may assist them in acquiring relevant skills and adopting new farming techniques. The result does not support the finding that most youths in Isoko LGA of Delta State attained primary school education (Adaigho and Tibi 2014). The dominance of male gender in agriculture is typical of Muslim dominated areas of Nigeria where female genders in some cases were restricted from carrying out some agricultural activities that could be more physical and excruciating. The result is in tandem with the youths in Isoko LGA (Adaigho and Tibi 2014), and validates the finding that most agricultural activities among South Eastern Ethiopia are men's task (Regassa 2002). That most respondents were not members of a co-operative society could be attributed to lack of awareness of its fundamental roles in addressing issues that may be affecting their involvement in agriculture. On the other hand the respondents may have other means of livelihood going by their part-time mode of involvement in agriculture.

Respondents’ involvement in animal husbandry than in crop production was expected as given the tedious nature of crop production activities. The result contradicts the earlier finding that

youths in Mitchika LGA of Adamawa State were mostly involved in crop production, than livestock production (Gwary *et al* 2011). The overall low level of involvement in agriculture can be attributed to level of benefits derived and constraints. The result implies possible rural/urban food deficit and calls for an emergency and sustainable measures to stem the tide. The result corroborates the report that involvement of youths in agricultural production has suffered nationally in recent times in rural areas (Russel 2001).

The relationship between respondents' personal characteristic and level of involvement in agriculture was established by Chi square and Person Product Moment Correlation analysis. It could be inferred from the result that respondents' mode of involvement, and gender influenced youths' level of involvement in agricultural in the area. The result further indicates that years of experience, benefits derived and constraints were adequately sufficient to influence respondents' involvement in agriculture.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated youths' involvement in agriculture in Kogi State, Nigeria. The following conclusions were reached on the basis of the findings: maize, sesame, vegetable and cassava were crops mainly produced by the youths. Poultry birds, goats, sheep and ducks were parts of animal husbandry that dominated youths' involvement. Youths' level of involvement in crop production was low and high in animal husbandry. Overall level of involvement in agriculture was astonishingly low. Agricultural activities carried out by the youths included processing/storage, burning/packing of rubbish, planting and mound/ridge making. Others were pen clearing, feeding, breeding and marketing/distribution of animals. Food security, manure and improved nutrition were major benefits derived. Inadequate finance, labour cost and bad road constituted robust constraints. Food security, manure, income, improved nutrition, employment and meat were major benefits derived whereas finance, labour cost, bad road and inadequate storage facilities among others constituted major constraints to youth's involvement. Youths' mode of involvement, gender, age, years of experience and constraints had significant relationship with youths' level of involvement in agriculture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made towards improving youths' involvement in agriculture in Kogi State.

1. Evolving a platform that would bring all stakeholders together in determining priorities and intervention programmes for youths' involvement in agriculture in Kogi State is germane. This should be done in such a way that availability, suitability; accessibility and

sustainability of such interventions are guaranteed to encourage and improve upon level of youths' involvement.

2. A waiver on collateral for credit, reduction in price and easy access to processing/storage facilities and good and functional market system for disposal of products are sin qua non in motivating youths into getting involved in agriculture.
3. Formation of cooperative societies should be encouraged among youth farming population in the area to help them pull their resources together for bulk purchase of inputs and better services.
4. Rural infrastructure (stable electricity, adequate water, roads and rural micro-finance banking) should be improved to make life comfortable for youths, stimulate their involvement into full-time farming, and enable them venture into more advanced approach in production, processing and marketing.

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