



## PERCEPTION OF KOGI STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS ON FARMING AS A CAREER

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the perception of Kogi State University Agricultural Students on farming as a career. Primary data were collected using structured interview schedule to pick 150 students in the study area. Stratified random sampling technique was used to pick 30 students from each level (100-500). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage and mean score on a 3 point likert-type of scale. The result of the study indicated that a large percentage (42.7%) of students were from household size of 4 to 6 which is fairly large for the needed labour force for agricultural activities. Many (56%) of the students had no farming experience before their enrolment into the university. The study further showed that most of the students had negative attitude when they resumed in 100 level mean score (X) (2.30) but are now greatly influenced by agricultural education impacted by trained agricultural experts (X) (2.67). Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme had also positively changed the students attitude to farming (2.25). Most respondents (X) (2.58) 86% showed willingness to engage in practical agricultural enterprise if supplied with the necessary agricultural inputs. Also willingness to embark on poultry farming had (X) (2.73), fish farming had ms (2.49), cash crop farming had (X) (2.19) and arable crop farming had (X) (2.12) which represented a popular perception among the respondents. Piggery farming with (X) (1.47) and beekeeping with (X) (1.33) had the least indication of interest by the students. Implementation of government agricultural policies that will ensure regular input and attractive market price could motivate agricultural graduates to embrace farming as a career.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Youth, Career, Farming agricultural education, Schemes, Policy.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is an important sector of the Nigerian economy with high potentials for employment generation, food security and poverty reduction. Agricultural sector in the 1960s provided the main source of employment, income and foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria (Azih, 2011). The sector accounted for 41.8 percent of the overall economy in 2006, followed by the non- oil industry (26.1%) while the crude oil only accounted for 21.9% (Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), 2006). It is a general believe that agriculture is growing at a slower rate than the population of the nation yet it remains dominant in Nigeria economic growth as it will continue to contribute to the major part of the Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) for many years to come (World Bank, 2004).

However, agriculture has been left in the hands of peasant farmers who employ traditional implements for most of their farm operation. People tend to ascribe poverty, drudgery and so on to farming and prefer other white collar jobs that will provide steady flow of income. This perception often turn-off men and women away from this noble profession. Yet youths are the most economically productive group that should supply continuous flow of labour and add sustainable value to food production chain that can ensure food security.

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The youth population in Nigeria according to the 2006 population is almost a hundred million. This means that they constitute more than two-third of the country's population of 140 million. If Nigeria youth policy definition of all young persons of ages 18 to 35 years is used as benchmark, it implies that correct diagnosis that will bring about right motivation that will ensure aggressive and efficient involvement of youth in agricultural production will be a solution to food security in Nigeria. They are the backbone of the development of the country. Indeed, if agriculture is to be sustained as a viable entity in Nigeria, there must be a very good plan to tap the energy and resourcefulness of the youth population.

By the definition stated above, more than 80% of the youth population quoted are within the age group of students in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Edozien (2002) opined that Nigerian future lies in the participation of agricultural students and youth in farming. Munowenyo (1999) advocated that education should produce graduates who can create rather than seek employment.

Career choice in practical farming has a lot to do with the kind of skill and entrepreneurial knowledge acquired. When a person is technically strong and practically willing to farm, there is every tendency that such will want to use any available opportunity to put the knowledge acquired to use. It is often argued that lecture based knowledge alone does not often make the expected impact on practical output and confidence of students that will ensure exploration of careers in agriculture. Consequently, Nigerian government has attempted to stimulate youth's interest in agricultural production and processing through targeted intervention. To this regard, several programmes and policies have been developed to facilitate meaningful youth participation in Agriculture. Some of these programmes include: Farm Settlement Scheme (FSS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), Better Life Programme for rural women (BLP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). These programmes are the various avenues where youth can make career as a product of the vocational knowledge they must have received.

Career choice is one of the most important decisions in the life of an individual. It has far-reaching implications on the individual's future in terms of lifestyle, status, income, security and job satisfaction. The values an individual holds, the successes and failures he experiences, the social class in which he has developed and his interests, strengths and capacities are only some of the factors which could affect his selection of a career. Certain factors influence career choice among youths. Ferry (2006) identified schooling as one of the cultural and socioeconomic factors affecting the choice of a career. Farming is considered a default career for villagers with little or no education in many third-world countries. However, Sanusi (2011) reported that farmers represent the poorest of the poor and that about 105 million people in Nigeria especially the masses of the rural areas, mostly farmers, are living below poverty level of one dollar per day. This information, if accessed by the students through print or electronic media, might be scaring and capable of predisposing the students into confusion and fear of being poor if farming is chosen as a career.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The unemployed youth population is put at 20.3 million with Nigeria generating about 4.5million new entrants into the labour market annually with 2.2 million primary school leavers not proceeding to secondary school, one million secondary school leavers not proceeding to the tertiary level and 300,000 graduates finding no placement anywhere for productivity, and yearly graduate turnover at over 600,000 (National Bureau of Statistic Abuja, 2012). Agricultural production can contribute immensely to youth development and act as a means of future livelihood. Since agriculture is practical and entails skill building to move out of poverty and enhance income rather than learning farming at the mercy of the peasant farmers that can hardly produce enough for their subsistence needs. Farming serves as a tool for providing employment opportunities for graduates thereby alleviating poverty and youth delinquencies. It is therefore important to encourage agricultural graduate involvement in farming. Youths

are strong and possess abundant energy that needs proper channeling and harnessing for increased agricultural production (Ogunbameru, 2001).

Youth involvement in agricultural activities will not only create career opportunities for the youth but also increase food production and to a large extent reduce the gap between

### 2.1. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the perception of Kogi State University agricultural students on farming as a career for future livelihood.

The specific objectives are to:

1. describe the student socio-economic characteristics,
2. find out the perception of agricultural students on choosing farming as a means of livelihood,
3. identify the type of agricultural enterprise preferred by the students and
4. determine students' attitude to farming during their five years of training.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Study Area

The study was carried out in Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria. The University is located in Anyigba town within Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The school was established in 1999 and commenced academic activities in April 2000 with six (6) faculties. Namely: Faculty of Agriculture, Arts and Humanities, Law, Management Sciences, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. Presently, it comprises of about 30 departments (Wikipedia, 2014). The study site is located on latitude 7°N and 6°43'N and with an average altitude of 420 meters above sea level. It is located in the northern guinea savannah ecological zone of Nigeria with an average annual rainfall of 1600mm and daily temperature range of 25°C – 35°C (Ifatimehin *et al.*, 2011).

The people of the town are predominantly small scale farmers who are engaged in both crop and animal production for domestic and commercial purposes.

### 3.2. Sampling Procedure

The population for the study consist of all agricultural students (100-500 levels) of the Faculty of agriculture from various Departments namely; Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Animal Production, Crop Production, Soil and Environmental Management, Food Science and Technology, Home Sciences, Fisheries and Aquaculture (Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture was not captured because the students were just at 200 level). The population of students as at the time of study was 1, 457. As a result of the large size, a stratified random sampling technique was used to stratify the population into sub-group (departments and student level of study) that is from 100- 500 level. Thereafter, random sampling technique was employed in sampling 25 students from each of the six departments and also across all levels amounting to a total of one hundred and fifty respondents.

### 3.3. Method of Data Collection

The data were collected through primary source, The primary source involve the use of structured interview schedule which was administered to students.

## 4. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected were analyzed based on the stated objectives; objective one and three were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count and percentage.

Objective two and four were analyzed using mean score on a 3 point likert type of scale of strongly agree = 3, partially agree = 2 and disagree = 1. Mean score used was as presented by the formula below

$$X = \frac{\sum f_x (A_i)}{N}$$

Where X = Mean score

$f_x$  = Frequency

$A_i$  = Value assigned to each response.

N = Sample size

$\sum$  = Summation

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is made up of the following subsection: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents, Perception of agricultural students on farming as a career, perceived preference of enterprises by students and students' attitude to farming during their five year agricultural training course.

### 5.1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-economic characteristics studied include sex, age, marital status, parent occupation, household size, place of childhood residence, and year of farming experience.

### 5.2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of Kogi State University agricultural students of which about half (54.7%) and (45.3%) were males and female respectively. This implies that agricultural education gives equal chances to both males and females to make a fortune for their livelihood. This result agrees with the work of [Ayanda \*et al.\* \(2012\)](#) who opined that both gender were given an equal opportunity to pursue educational development.

### 5.3. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Result on the age of the respondents as indicated on Table 1 revealed that 66% were in the age bracket of 20-24. This was followed by those between 25-29 years which constituted 26.7% of the respondents, those between the age bracket of 15-19 constituted 5.3% of the respondent while those who were between 30-34 and above 35 years of age made up 0.7% and 1.3% respectively. This implies that almost all the respondents were young energetic that could be economically productive.

They, therefore have the potential strength needed for agricultural activities. This agrees with the works of [Abebo and Sekumade \(2013\)](#) who asserted the age range as an active productive age that can be explored in the development of the agricultural sector and the economy at large.

### 5.4. Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

On the marital status of the respondent's result of the analysis showed that 93.3% of the respondents were single and 6.7% were married. This shows that majority of the students were single. It can be deduced that majority of the respondents could still decide on making agriculture their career since they are very free from influence of spouses or children as a career.

Table-1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Kogi State University Agricultural Students

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	82	54.7
Female	68	45.3
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
15- 19	8	5.3
20 – 24	99	66.0
25 – 29	40	26.7
30 – 34	1	0.7
34 and above	2	1.3
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	140	93.3
Married	10	6.7
<b>Parent's Occupation</b>		
Teacher	19	12.7
Civil servant	59	39.3
Farmer	16	10.7
Banker	31	20.0
Trader	3	2.0
Doctor	1	0.1
Others	21	14.0
<b>Student Parent's Household Size</b>		
1 – 3	16	10.7
4 – 6	64	42.7
7 – 6	40	26.7
10 and above	30	20.0
<b>Place of Childhood Residence</b>		
Rural	48	32.0
Peri – urban	25	16.7
Urban	77	51.3
<b>Farming Experience (Years)</b>		
None	84	56.0
1 – 5	14	9.3
6 – 10	13	8.7
11 – 15	6	4.0
16 – 20	1	0.7
21 and above	32	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2014

### 5.5. Distribution of Respondents by Parent Occupation

The result Table in 1 indicated that 12.7% of the student parents were in the teaching profession, 39.3% were civil servant, 10.7% were farmers while 20.05% were bankers, 2.0% were traders, 0.1% were doctors and 14.0% were in other professions. The students were mostly from elite and professional background who understood the value of education. The background of these respondents' parents may thus influence the choice of agriculture for self-employment.

### 5.6. Distribution of Respondents by Household Size

Table 1 further revealed that 10.7% of the respondents were from household size of 1-3, 42.7% of them were from 4-6, 26.7% were from the household of 7-9 and 20.0% represent household size of 10 and above. Household size of 4 to 6 persons (42.7%) 4 to 6 persons represented a family with fairly large family. This may influence the source of fund and or family labour for whoever may choose farming as a career may have friends and family as a source of fund to an enterprising young one as a form of encouragement.

### 5.7. Distribution of Respondents by Place of Childhood Residence

More than half of (51.3%) of the respondents had their childhood in the urban center, 16.7% in the peri-urban area and 32% of the respondents grew up in the rural area where agriculture is majorly practiced as a means of livelihood. Since majority of the respondents were domiciled in the urban centers where they have access to infrastructural facilities such as light, water and good road with high competition for agricultural land as compared with rural areas with less access to infrastructural facilities and more access to land, many of the respondents may therefore prefer urban farming that makes them remain in the urban area. This agrees with the works of [Abayomi \(2008\)](#).

### 5.8. Distribution of Respondents by Farming Experience

Table 1 also indicated that 56.0% of the respondents had no farming experience at all, 9.3% had 1 to 5 years of farming experience, 8.7% had 6-10 years, 4% had 11-15 years, 0.7% had 16-20 years and 21.3% had been exposed to farming activities. This could be interpreted to mean, that majority (56.0%) of the students had no farming experience before admission into the university. The high percentage without farming experience may find it difficult to pick interest at making farming a career unless they are properly persuaded and motivated through putting some incentives in place as a way of encouragement. Thus, this result contradicts the work of [Abebo and Sekumade \(2013\)](#) who asserted that their respondents (59.38%) had farming experience before their admission into the university.

**Table-2.** Perceptions of Agricultural Students on Choosing of Farming as a Career

S/N o	Research item	SA (3)	PA (2)	D (1)	Total no of Respondent	Total sum Of Frequency	Mean score
1.	Farming is not appealing Because it is a dirty job	28	26	96	150	232	1.54
2.	Farming is not laborious	29	62	59	150	270	1.80
3.	Farming is a poor's man Job	18	15	117	150	201	1.34
4.	Farming is not lucrative	20	40	90	150	230	1.53
5.	Farming is not prestigious	24	49	76	150	246	1.64
6.	Farming is sustainable	91	30	29	150	362	2.41
7.	Farming is a stepping Stone to other career	55	47	48	150	307	2.04
8.	Farming requires high Capital outlay	33	57	60	150	273	1.83

Source: Field survey, 2014

### 5.9. Perceptions of Agricultural Students on Choosing Farming as a Career

The result of the analysis presented in Table 2 showed respondents who rated research item “farming as a career does not appeal to me because it is a dirty job” with a mean score of 1.54 which is below the average mean score of 2.0. This implies that majority of the respondents do not perceive farming as a dirty job. This was not in accordance with the work of [Juma \(2007\)](#) who asserted that a career in agriculture lacks appeal for many young people who perceived farming to be a dirty activity, and as an employer of the last resort. Research statement on “farming does not interest me because it is labourious had a weak mean score of 1.80. The interpretation of the result indicates that since it fell below the mean score of 2.0 more than average mean of the respondents did not perceive farming as labourious. This finding did not agree with [Kritzinger \(2002\)](#) who carried out a study on teenage girls working as hired labour on fruit farms and found the respondents agreeing that farming was too labourious for them. This suggest that many of the respondents have the potential to cope with labour requirement of farming. Research item on “farming as a career does not appeal to me because it is a poor man's job” had a mean score of 1.34 which is also below the average mean score and it represents a weak and unpopular response from the

entire respondents. This implies that many of the respondents recognized that one can become wealthy through farming.

Research statement on “Farming as a career is not attractive to me because it is not lucrative” had a mean score of 1.53 which is below the average mean score and this implies that farming can be a lucrative venture. Research statement on “Farming as a career is not appealing because it is not prestigious” had a mean score of 1.64 which is still below the average mean score signifying that it is a weak statement. Thus, the respondents perceived farming as a prestigious career. This finding corroborates the work of [Adamu et al. \(2011\)](#) who reported that a lot of youth are proud to farm and did not see anything wrong with farming as a business. Research statement on “Farming as a career appeals to me because it is sustainable” had a mean score of 2.41 which is greatly above the average mean score (2.0) of the respondents. This indicates that the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. This could be as a result of new findings/observation of young ones who now pick farming enterprise as a career through the intervention of federal government self-employment programme. Research item on “Farming as a career only serves as a stepping stone to other career” had a mean score of 2.04 which was also a strongly agreed statement. This can be interpreted to mean that many of the respondents are not totally convinced that farming alone can be dependent upon as the principal means of livelihood. This finding did agree with the work of [Abebo and Sekumade \(2013\)](#) who opined that farming serves as a stepping stone to other profession. A mean score of 1.82 which is below the average mean score (2.0) and represent the respondents’ perception on “farming as a career puts me off because of its high capital outlay” is perceived to be weak. This may be interpreted to mean that high capital outlay was not perceived to be very strong problem against farming as a career.

**Table-3.** Distribution of Respondents by preference of perceived agricultural enterprises

S/No	Agricultural Enterprise	VW (3)	W (2)	NW (1)	Total no of Respondent	Total no of Frequency	Mean score
1	Poultry farming	119	22	9	150	410	2.73
2	Cattle farming	29	51	69	150	258	1.72
3	Piggery farming	23	25	102	150	221	1.47
4	Sheep and goat Farming	53	64	33	150	320	2.13
5	Rabbit farming	49	65	36	150	313	2.09
6	Fish farming	97	30	23	150	374	2.49
7	Snail farming	26	45	79	150	247	1.64
8	Cash crop farming	67	44	39	150	328	2.19
9	Arable crop farming	60	48	42	150	318	2.12
10	Horticulture	46	53	50	150	294	1.96
11	Bee keeping	14	22	114	150	200	1.33

Source: Field survey, 2014

### 5.10. Preference of Agricultural Enterprise by Agricultural Students

Table 3 shows the various agricultural enterprises of interest to respondents based on three degree of very willing, willing, and not willing to make fortune in various enterprises. Poultry farming had the highest mean score of 2.73 and fish farming 2.49 respectively. This implies that certain profession such as livestock enjoyed a lot of willingness by the respondents which could be due to the short gestation and or level of financial outlay. Cash crop and arable crop farming (2.19 and 2.12) also received a lot of interest from the respondents.

However bee keeping (1.33), piggery (1.47), snail farming (1.64) and cattle farming (1.72) did not receive much willingness from the respondents. Inadequate knowledge, cultural acceptance, land requirement and security of the enterprises could be responsible for their responses.

Table-4. Students' Attitude, to farming during the five year Agricultural training

S/No	Research item	SA (3)	PA (2)	D (1)	Total no of Respondent	Total sum Of Frequency	Mean score
1.	My attitude towards farming was negative when I resumed 100 level	82	31	37	150	345	2.30
2.	My attitude has not changed after receiving training in agriculture	23	33	94	150	229	1.53
3.	I now have a positive attitude towards	117	17	16	150	401	2.67
4.	If supplied with the necessary agricultural input I can now take farming as a career	102	24	24	150	318	2.12
5.	SIWES programme made to have positive towards agriculture	72	43	35	150	337	2.25
6.	If agriculture can be made more profitable, it will interest me to engage in it	102	33	15	150	387	2.58
7.	Lack of relevant knowledge turn me off in farming	41	57	52	150	289	1.98
8.	Inadequate entrepreneurial education and training made me to have low interest in farming	43	44	63	150	280	1.87

Source: Field survey, 2014

#### 5.11. Students' Attitude to Farming during their Five Years of Agricultural Training Course

The result of the analysis in table 4 showed the result of students' attitude, towards acceptability of farming as a means of livelihood. The mean score that agreed with the statement "My attitude towards farming was negative when I resumed 100 level" was 2.30 which is above the average mean score. This implies that more than average number of respondents strongly agreed that their attitude towards agriculture was negative before their admission into 100level. This implies that many respondents were not pleasantly disposed to agriculture before their admission to the university. Research item on "my attitude has not changed after receiving training in agriculture had a mean score of 1.53 which is below the mean score of (2.0). This implies that the education received from the university had a positive change of attitude towards agriculture.

In the reverse order of the statement that read "I now have a positive attitude towards agriculture" with a mean score of 2.67 which is highly above the mean score of 2.0 further confirmed the fact that training received by respondents changed their attitude positively. Respondents who fell in the category "If supplied with necessary agricultural input I can take farming as a career" had a mean score of 2.12 which is also above the mean score of 2. This result also consolidates the fact that some of the respondents have certain inspiration to pick farming as a career, but unavailability of inputs may be the area of challenge. Research item on "Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme made me to have positive attitude towards agriculture" had a mean score of 2.25 which is above the average mean score. This implies that student's industrial work scheme (SIWES) positively influenced the attitude of students towards farming as a career.

Hence, This finding corroborates with the work of [Abayomi \(2008\)](#) who stated that practical training in agriculture will increase agricultural graduate employability on graduation. Research statement on "if agriculture is made more profitable it will interest me to engage in it" had a mean score of 2.58 in the study. This implies that assurance of profit from farming will encourage people to take to farming. This agrees with the study conducted by [Rose et al. \(2006\)](#) and also strengthened by [Mann and Kogl \(2003\)](#) which emphasized that bigger profits garnered through farming will be a catalyst for having more people to have a positive attitude and accept farming as a career. Research item on "Lack of relevant knowledge turned me off in farming/agriculture" had a mean score of 1.93



which is below the average mean score of 2.0 that is the respondents had received above average knowledge necessary for practical farming. Research statement on “Inadequate entrepreneurial education and training made me to have low interest in farming had a mean score of 1.87 which is below the means score. This implies that some of the respondents had received some education on entrepreneurship but a significant number will still need the training to effectively take farming as a career. Entrepreneurship education and training are important for economic development, particularly in improving the quality and increasing the quantity of future entrepreneurs (Othman and Ishak, 2009).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the study showed that the agricultural sector as viable sector is yearning for the replacement of aged farmers with youth that will be more venturesome and adopt better farm practice. The study also discovered that most agricultural students in the study area who had negative attitude to farming until their admission into the university, now have positive attitude through training received from the University. Therefore, functional agricultural education can greatly influence the student choice of farming as a means of self-employed. Government can explore His positive disposition to farming by putting in place good infrastructural and other motivational facilities that will make these young men depend on farming as a career.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research may be of tremendous help to the growth and development of the agricultural sector, Nigerian economy, and also address the problem of unemployment in the study area. If recommendation can be utilized

- I. incentives such as input supply, good market outlet and attractive price of agricultural produce should be put in place to encourage youth and make them know that agriculture can be profitable.
- II. improvement should be made in the areas of rural infrastructural development to reduce the rate of rural-urban migration of agricultural entrepreneurs.
- III. policies should be designed to encourage suitable access to credit facility since it was found to be a strong factor that prevents youth from embarking on large scale agricultural production.
- IV. finally, youth who are currently into agriculture should be encouraged and honoured so that others will take in interest in agriculture.

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