



## PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL YOUTHS TOWARDS TAKING AGRICULTURE AS A CAREER IN EGBEDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE, NIGERIA.



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### ABSTRACT

*The paper examines the perception of secondary school youths towards taking agriculture as a career in Egbeda Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from one hundred and eighty respondents sampled using a two-stage sampling technique. The findings revealed that majority (92.7%) of the youths were within the age range of 15-20 years and resided in relatively large households with mean household size of 7 persons. More than half (58.9%) were exposed to family farming activities, had parents that have tertiary education (60.0%) but who were primarily into other occupations aside agriculture. Majority of the youths were seen to have negative and wrong perception towards taking agriculture as a career and chi-square analysis revealed that the age, household size, involvement in family activities, parents educational level and occupation significantly influenced the way the youths perceive taking agriculture as a career. The study recommends an urgent need to reach out to the youths through the packaging of educational campaign programmes by government, educational stakeholders and extension agencies in order to re-orientate these young minds to pursue a career study in agriculture related fields so that they will be well equipped to leverage on the potentials in the sector for national and personal economic transformation.*

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Career, Perception, Youths

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is essential in the economic development and poverty alleviation drive of many countries and it is the main economic activity in the rural sector of Nigeria (Adebo and Sekumade, 2013). It is an important sector of the Nigerian economy with a high potential for employment generation, food security and poverty alleviation (NBS, 2011). However, these potentials have remained largely untapped, thus resulting in the dwindling performance of the agricultural sector (Adekunle, 2013). Over the years, the exploitation of the sector has drastically reduced due to the huge revenues from crude oil exports (Akpan, 2012). This situation has hampered the participation and exposure of a lot of children and youth to agriculture. The observable trend still reveals that most youth are not willing to venture into agriculture or interested in taking it as a career and this is posing a great concern to the future of agriculture and food production in Nigeria.

Career perceptions, social status and lack of information about career opportunities have been identified as some of the barriers to pursuing careers in agriculture (Outlay, 2008). Given the current economic realities in Nigeria in terms of oil prices downturn, high unemployment rates and necessity to ensure food security for all, there is the need to produce more agriculture professionals that will leverage on the enormous potential the sector has to offer in providing a more sustainable solution to the economic problem of the country. Adedapo *et al.* (2014) opined that early intervention in a child's career plays essential role in the choice of a career. In view of these, it is therefore pertinent to examine the current perception and perspectives of secondary school youths towards taking

agriculture as a career in order to give insight that will help re-strategize efforts focused towards properly orientating and educating these youths at this crucial stage of career choice for improved participation in agriculture and the production of adequate qualified manpower needed for the transformation of the agricultural sector in Nigeria. To this end, the study specifically sought to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the secondary school youths in the study area, examine the career choices of the respondents, identify the source of information preferred by the youths and determine the perception of the respondents towards taking agriculture as a career.

Note: Youth as used in this study refers to a secondary school students in Senior Secondary three (SS3).

### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Egbeda Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is situated in Egbeda town. The LGA is located on a land area of about 191km<sup>2</sup> and it has a population size of 281,573 individuals (NPC, 2006). The area is well known for their farming activities through their various agricultural produce which includes maize, cassava, yam and vegetables. The target population for this study comprise of the secondary school youths in Egbeda LGA of Oyo State. Data collection was carried out with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire. A two stage sampling technique was employed in the selection of the respondents. First was a purposive selection of six (6) major secondary schools in Egbeda LGA which was followed by a random selection of 30 science students of Senior Secondary three (SS3) in each of the selected schools. This gave a total sample size of one hundred and eighty (180) respondents. Data were

collected on the socio-economic characteristics of the youths, their career choice and preferred information source while the dependent variable was the youths' perception towards taking agriculture as a career. These variables were measured as follows:

**Perception of the youths:** Respondents were presented with a list of statements about agriculture and their perception was measured based on their agreement or disagreement with these statements which were rated on a 5-point likert type scale of strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1).

**Career Choice:**

a. **Factors affecting choice of career:** The youths were asked to indicate which factor mostly affected their choice of career for tertiary education from a list of influential factors which was measured as Passion (1), Lucrative (2), Teacher (3), Peers (4) and Parent (5).

b. **Willingness to take agriculture as a career:** Respondents were asked of their willingness to take agriculture as their future career. This was measured as No (1) and Yes (2).

c. **Other course preferred aside agriculture:** Youths who were not willing to take agriculture as a career were asked to indicate other profession they will prefer to go into.

**Preferred Information Source:** The secondary school youths were asked to indicate channels of information preference in receiving agricultural related information from a list of information sources and these were rated on a 3-point likert type scale of highly preferred (3), preferred (2) and not preferred (1).

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means scores and ranks while chi-square analysis was used as an inferential statistics to test the significance of the relationship that exist between selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on agriculture.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

Results from table 1 revealed that majority (92.7%) of the youths were within the age range of 15–20 years with a mean age of 17 years. This indicates that most of the respondents were young adults (adolescents) who are at a period when they take vital life decisions such as career decision making this period very important in catching them young for effective tutoring and guidance towards choosing the right career. The result obtained showed that there were more male (51.1%) respondents than their female (48.9%) counterparts but the margin of difference was not so wide indicating that the education of both gender is encouraged in the area.

Most (99.4%) of the respondents belonged to the two prominent religion in Nigeria and they reside in a relatively large household with mean household size 7 persons. This was a little higher than the average persons per rural household as established by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2011). More than half (58.9%) of the respondents have been involved in one form of family farming activities or the other implying that they have little practical experience about what farming is all about. This attribute if properly harnessed by ensuring that a larger

percentage of this youth eventually venture into choosing agriculture as a career can be a solid foundation to build on to make them professional change agents for the transformation of the sector.

More than half (60.0%), of the respondent parents had tertiary education and majority (95.0%) of them was involved in several other primary occupations aside farming. This agrees with the findings of Akinsorotan *et al.* (2007) where they reported that majority of the parents of secondary school students in Oyo State were involved in non-farming occupation. This is a very important factor that might influence them to have a negative perception about choosing agriculture as a career because most of the people around them are also not primarily into the profession and most youths in this part of the world tend to choose their career line based on that of their parents and people around them.

**Table 1. Socio-economic Characteristics of respondents**

Socio-economic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
<b>Age (Yrs.)</b>			
< 15	12	6.7	17
15 – 20	167	92.7	
> 20	1	0.6	
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	92	51.1	
Female	88	48.9	
<b>Religion</b>			
Christianity	98	54.4	
Islam	81	45.0	
Traditional	1	0.6	
<b>Household Size</b>			
1 – 5	65	36.1	7
6 – 10	102	56.7	
11 – 15	10	5.6	
16 and above	3	1.6	
<b>Involvement in</b>			
<b>Family Farming</b>			
Yes	106	58.9	
No	74	41.1	
<b>Parent</b>			
<b>Educational Level</b>			
No formal	11	6.1	
Education	12	6.7	
Adult Education	14	7.8	
Primary Education	35	19.4	
Secondary	108	60.0	
Education	36	20.0	
Tertiary Education	9	5.0	
<b>Parent Occupation</b>			
Civil servant	12	6.7	
Farmer	9	5.0	
Doctor/Nurse	82	45.6	
Engineer	17	9.4	
Trader/Personal Biz	8	4.4	
Teacher	7	3.9	
Banker			
Clergy			

Source: Field Survey, 2014

N = 180

### Factors affecting Career Choice

Results from table 2 revealed that Parents (33.3%), Passion (23.3%) and Peers (20.6%) were factors that greatly influenced the youths in deciding their choice of career. This result agrees with the findings of Adedapo *et al.* (2014), Adebo and Sekunmade (2013) and Azubuike (2011) who also reported that Parents, personal interest friends and background were significant factors that influence the career choice of youths.

**Table 2. Factor Influencing Youths Career Choice**

Career Choice Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Parent	60	33.3
Peer	37	20.6
Teacher	15	8.3
Passion	42	23.3
Background	26	14.4

Source: Field Survey, 2014

N = 180

### Willingness to take Agriculture as a Career

Findings from Table 3 showed that majority of the respondents indicated their lack of willingness to take agriculture as a career while a little above one-third (35.6%) of the youths were very willing to become professional agriculturist. It was observed that the category of the youths that were willing were those who have been much more involved and exposed to family farming activities and some of whom have parents whose major source of livelihood is based on farming and agricultural related activities. This group of youths seems to have a high positive perception of the benefits they stand to gain in taking agriculture as a career and they are ready to go ahead to get more education and knowledge that will make them better agriculturist.

**Table 3. Respondents willingness to take Agriculture as Career**

Willingness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	64	35.6
No	116	64.4

**Table 5. Respondents Preferred information Source**

Information Source	Highly Preferred	Preferred	Not Preferred	Mean Score	Rank
Radio	49 (27.2)	31 (17.2)	100 (55.6)	1.71	3rd
Television	61 (33.9)	86 (47.8)	33 (18.3)	2.15	2nd
Internet/Social Media	83 (44.4)	47 (26.1)	53 (29.4)	2.20	1st
Newspaper	19 (10.6)	40 (22.2)	121 (67.2)	1.43	4th
Friends/Family	13 (7.2)	40 (22.2)	127 (70.6)	1.36	5th

Source: Field Survey, 2014

N=180

Note: Value in the parenthesis represent percentage while that outside represent the frequency

### Perception of the Youths on taking Agriculture as a Career

The youths' perception towards taking agriculture as a career was measured on their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements. Table 6 revealed that the youths showed their disagreement with positive statements such as "Agriculture is capable of creating job opportunity for youths" (MS=1.78), "Agriculture serves as a good source of income" (MS=1.88), "Agriculture is a lucrative source of employment" (MS=1.51) while on the other hand, they showed their agreement with negative statements such as "I do not want agriculture because

Source: Field Survey, 2014

N = 180

### Other Career Preferred aside Agriculture

Table 4 revealed that majority (81.1%) of the respondents who were not willing to choose agriculture as a career preferred other major science related courses such as Medicine (44.0%), Engineering (20.7%), Nursing (12.1%) and Physical Sciences (7.8%). This finding is probably so due to the fact that these are the popular courses they hear about and they see being celebrated in the society as opposed to agriculture.

**Table 4. Respondents Career Interest aside Agriculture**

Other Careers Preferred	Frequency	Percentage
Medicine	51	44.0
Physical Sciences	9	7.8
Nursing	14	12.1
Environmental Sciences	7	6.0
Engineering	24	20.7
Teaching	5	4.3
Accounting/Other Social Sciences	6	5.2

N = 116 (Total Respondents who did not choose Agriculture as a career)

Source: Field Survey, 2014

### Preferred Information Source

Results from Table 5 shows the respondents' distribution based on their source of information preference. Using mean score to rank the information sources, the respondents preferred internet/social media (MS = 2.20), television (MS = 2.15) and Radio (MS = 1.71) as they ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. This reveals that these three (3) sources of information were prominently preferred by the youths. This implies that government agencies, extension agencies, educating bodies and other stakeholders should focus more attention on the usage of these three sources of information in the educating, enlightening and re-orientating of the youths in the study area.

farmers around have little or nothing to show for their hardwork" (MS=4.14), "I do not want agriculture because of the difficulty of getting land" (MS=4.13), "Agriculture is seen as a career for the less brilliant students" (MS=4.00) and "People involved in agriculture seem not to be respected and reckoned with" (MS=4.00). This result generally shows that the youths have a negative and wrong perception towards taking agriculture as a career. This finding corroborates the opinion of Adebo and Sekunmade (2013) that youth lack interest in agriculture and they often see it as an exclusive activity of the rural sector which is unattractive. The implication of this is that most of the

youths do not want to venture into agriculture and this is not a good sign as regards efforts towards economic sustainability, increased food production, unemployment amelioration and poverty alleviation. The negative perception of young people to farming which “births” poor participation of young people in farming and the

agricultural sector must be seen as a matter of grave concern which must be tackled urgently with early education and proper re-orientation in order to save the future of agriculture and ensure the success of the rural economic transformation clamoured for by the Agricultural Transformation Agenda.

**Table 6. Perception of the respondents towards agriculture as a career**

Perception Statements	Mean Score
Agriculture is a lucrative source of employment	1.51
Agriculture serves as a good source of income	1.88
Agriculture creates job opportunity for youths	1.78
Agriculture is seen as a career for the less brilliant students	4.00
I do not want to go into agriculture because farmers around me seems to have little or nothing to show for their hard work	4.14
People that involve in practical agriculture around me seems not to be respected and reckoned with in the society	4.00
Little attention is given to the sector by the government	3.46
I do not want to go into agriculture because of the difficulty of getting land due to the land tenure system in Nigeria	4.13
I do not want to go into agriculture because of the use of old and crude implements	3.34
I do not want to go to Agriculture because of lack of access to loan and credit facilities	3.41
I do not want to go into agriculture because of inadequate extension services given to farmers in my area	3.66
I do not want to go into agriculture because majority of my peers do not have interest in it and I do not want to be the odd one out	3.33

Mean Score derived from SA=5, A=4, U=3, D=2, SD=1; N=180  
Source: Field Survey, 2014.

#### **Relationship between Respondents’ Socio-Economic Characteristics and their Capacity Building Needs**

Ho: There is no significant relationship between some selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception towards taking agriculture as a career. Table 7 shows that there is a significant relationship between the youths perception towards taking agriculture as a career and their age ( $X^2 = 28.723$ ), household size ( $X^2 = 14.715$ ), involvement in family farming activities ( $X^2 = 5.689$ ), parents occupation ( $X^2 = 20.971$ ) and parents educational level ( $X^2 = 19.083$ ), thus the null hypothesis was rejected. The result further revealed that there is no significant relationship between the respondents’ gender

and religion and their perception towards taking agriculture as a career therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. The implication of this result is that youths age, household size, involvement in family farming activities, parent’s occupation and parent’s educational level significantly influence the way the secondary school youths perceive taking agriculture as a career while their gender and religion do not have any significant influence on their perception. This finding agrees with Adedapo *et al.* (2014) who reported that childhood background, parents’ occupation and education were determinants of the choice of agriculture as a profession among youths.

**Table 7. Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their perception on taking agriculture as a career**

Variables	Df	$X^2$	Significance	Decision
Age	2	28.723	0.000	Reject Ho
Household Size	3	14.751	0.002	Reject Ho
Gender	1	0.089	0.089	Accept Ho
Religion	2	89.433	0.766	Accept Ho
Family Farming Activities	1	5.689	0.896	Reject Ho
Parents Occupation	7	20.971	0.001	Reject Ho
Parents literacy level	4	19.083	0.015	Reject Ho

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Significant level  $p \leq 0.05$

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that majority of the youths were seen to have negative and wrong perception towards taking agriculture as a career and this translated to most of them being unwilling to take

agriculture as a career. The high percentage of respondents’ parents involved in other primary occupation aside agriculture coupled with the influence of peers and other people around them were factors that influenced the youths’ perception and career choice.

The study therefore recommended an urgent need to reach out to youths right from the secondary school level through well packaged enlightenment programmes by government, educational stakeholders and extension agencies in the form of school campaigns, seminars, workshops and also through the use of mass media channels such as social media, television and radio which were highly preferred sources of information by the respondents. This will ensure a timely re-orientation of these young minds to focus on leveraging on the potential of the agricultural sector in securing their future with viable employment opportunities and sustainable sources of income. Their choice to study a career in the sector will help them to gain the necessary skill and knowledge that will make them relevant to effectively contribute their quota to transforming the sector and also their lives.

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