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PROSPECT AND CHALLENGES TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE MARKETING OPERATIONS IN WUKARI METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This paper aimed to identify the opportunities and difficulties of marketing agricultural products in Wukari metropolis, with implications for the economic development of Taraba State. The data used in the study was collected from one hundred and sixty (160) farmers and farm produce marketers in the area, and was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Principally, the study discovered that lack of infrastructure, irregular power supply for preservation of produce, high costs of marketing functions, inadequate funding for agricultural produce marketers, too many intermediaries and lack/poor market information system are among the major challenges of farmers The study therefore concluded that adequately monitoring and stimulating agricultural production and produce marketing has become a necessity due to the fact that in spite of government's commitment to growing the agricultural sector, several factors continue to be obstacles in the effective and efficient production and marketing of agricultural produce and therefore recommends that government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen cooperative marketing structures, enabling farmers to pool resources, negotiate better prices, and improve access to credit and market infrastructure.

Introduction

The return to civil rule in Nigeria has witnessed the concerted effort of Government to diversify her economy which has been crude-oil-dependent for well over fifty (50) years. Prior to the commercial discovery of crude oil in 1956 in Oloibiri, in what is now Bayelsa State, Nigeria's economy was based primarily on agriculture. Crude oil's discovery had both advantages and disadvantages. While the nation became more affluent, the pollution that follows crude-oil exploration rendered many farm lands less yielding. Also, young men and women who hitherto should be on the farms or engage in one form of agropreneurship or the other moved to urban and semi-urban centres in search of white-collar jobs; thus, causing a drastic reduction in the nation's agricultural output (Yusoff, 2017).

The production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce received renewed attention and increased government support under the current administration due to the increasing realisation of the importance of the agricultural sector to the micro and macro-economic wellbeing of the nation and her citizenry (Gbam, 2017). The visible political-will to encourage increased production in the agricultural sector and thus harness its numerous benefits; and the improvement being made in the cultivation and processing of agricultural produces notwithstanding, much is still desired in the marketing of produces to local and international consumers.

It is believed that the production and marketing of agricultural produce is a potential income earner for many households in Nigeria, and this is obviously due to the many by-products that are derived from agricultural produces. However, much revenue is still lost as most farm produces are yet to be exploited to the full of their potentials; owing to some salient marketing related issues which when addressed, can improve or increase the economic benefits already being enjoyed by farmers and agropreneurs in Nigeria.

According to Babalulu, Anorue, Amusa, Moghalu and Ugwoke (2025), recognizing Nigeria's tremendous

agricultural potentials, the government has accepted the view that the country should resolve most unequivocally to make agriculture the mainstay of the economy. These authors state that agricultural development means among other things increasing agricultural productivity to generate substantial surpluses. The issues of surpluses lead to the issue of marketing. Production of surpluses should occur simultaneously with adequate processing, storage and distribution if the surpluses are not to waste. In other words, surpluses without appropriate processing may bring about significantly increased post-harvest regime losses, which can enormously reduce expected productivity and income in the agricultural sector.

Agriculture continues to be a dominant driver of development in most Nigeria states i.e Taraba, Benue among others. It employs about forty per cent (40%) of the active labour force globally (Abdi & Mohamed, 2025). According to World Bank (2022), the agriculture dependent population in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific is over sixty per cent (60%), while in Latin America and high income economies, the proportions are estimated at eighteen per cent (18%) and four per cent (4%) respectively. Here in Taraba state specifically, agriculture employs over seventy per cent (70%) of the labour force and accounts for about thirty per cent (30%) of the State's GDP (Asa, Madaki & Jibo, 2024). Taraba state is cited as one of the largest agricultural dependence area in Nigeria Hence, the importance of the agricultural sector to the socio-economic development of the state cannot be overemphasized.

Agricultural development has been constrained by marketing of commodities, especially staple food (Garba, Yakubu & Abdullahi, 2024., Audu & Audu, 2024 and Danjuma & Daniel, 2024). To this end Government has put up marketing reforms in order to encourage the development of the agricultural sector (Animba, Onitekun & Olusina, 2024). Thus, several policy studies have been commissioned in Taraba state by the Government to identify potential contributions of agricultural marketing policy to agricultural development (Fagam, 2024)

Since sustainable agricultural policy issues require different strategies for both domestic and international markets and different strategies for minimizing the problems confronting agricultural produce marketing, it is against this backdrop that this term paper tends to elaborate on the prospects and challenges of Agricultural produce Marketing Operations in Wukari Metroplis: Implications on Taraba state economic development.

Problem of the study

Despite the Nigerian government's attempts to reframe agriculture as a profitable substitute for crude oil, there are still many obstacles to overcome in the selling of agricultural products, particularly at the local level.

While agriculture has regained some policy attention due to its potential to provide food, employment, and foreign exchange, the marketing of farm produce — the critical bridge between production and consumption — remains inefficient and underdeveloped in many parts of the country (Abdi & Mohamed, 2025).

In Wukari metropolis, this problem is particularly acute. Farmers often experience substantial post-harvest losses due to a lack of structured market systems, poor infrastructure, inadequate market information, and the dominance of exploitative middlemen. These issues lead to reduced profitability for smallholder farmers and marketers, limit their access to competitive markets, and discourage increased production. The weak linkage between agricultural production and effective marketing channels has resulted in reduced income for producers and an underperforming agro-allied sector in the area (Audu & Audu, 2024).

The failure to establish efficient marketing operations undermines the broader objectives of agricultural development in Taraba State. Without reliable market access and systems that guarantee fair pricing, value addition, and consistent supply chains, agricultural sector cannot contribute meaningfully to economic diversification or poverty alleviation.In order to provide workable solutions that might promote sustainable agricultural development and economic progress in Taraba State, this study aims to critically analyze the unique opportunities and problems in agricultural produce selling activities in Wukari city.

Research question

The following research question is raised in line with the statement of the problem and research objectives:

i. What are the challenges to Agricultural produce marketing operation in Wukari metropolis?

Aims/Objective

The key objective of the study is to examine the prospects and challenges of Agricultural produce Marketing operations in Wukari Metropolis: implications on Taraba state economic development. The specific objective is:

i. To examine the prospect and challenges to Agricultural produce marketing operations in Wukari metropolis.

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis is raised in line with the research questions and objectives to guide the study

HOI: Prospect and Challenges do not have any significant impact to Agricultural produce marketing operations in Wukari metropolis

Significance of study

The result of this study will help to improve agricultural production and marketing operations as well as in the growth of knowledge in the following:

The findings from this term paper will help farmers to plan their production and marketing operations in accordance with the needs of the economy. The study will be of great interest to the Taraba State Government in terms of serving as a blueprint in identification of key challenges facing agricultural development.

Literature Review and Gaps

Conceptual Framework

This section discusses the definition of Agricultural Marketing, analyses the prospects and challenges of Agricultural produce marketing operations to have detailed understanding on the subject matter.

Agricultural Marketing Definition: The term agricultural marketing is composed of two words-agriculture and marketing. Agriculture, in the broadest sense, means activities aimed at the use of natural resources for human welfare, i.e., it includes all the primary activities of production. But, generally, it is used to mean growing and/or raising crops and livestock. Marketing connotes a series of activities involved in moving the goods from the point of production to the point of consumption. It includes all the activities involved in the creation of time, place, form and possession utility. According to Thomsen (2024), the study of agricultural marketing, comprises all the operations, and the agencies conducting them, involved in the movement of farm-produced foods, raw materials and their derivatives

Requirements of effective agricultural product marketing:
The establishment of favorable conditions, as well as the supply of resources and services are necessary for the efficient marketing of agricultural products. Legal and dispute resolution systems, financial and credit provision systems, standard setting and verification systems, and price setting and confirmation systems are among the institutions and structures that must be maintained in order to support all commercial bargaining and exchanges. By encouraging consumption, growing the agro-industry, and promoting industrial growth, it helps to increase production. Farmers must also be supported by improved storage techniques developed by relevant research institutes, as well as information and communication capabilities pertaining to products, location, times, types, quantity, prices, and any other information needed by producers and consumers to make informed decisions.

Also, entrepreneurial and technical skills in all facets of the marketing process of relevant products, including the ability to choose between different products, types, seasons, markets, and processing options to maximise farming income, research into product varieties, post-harvest handling, preservation, processing, preparation and presentation.

Prospects of Agricultural Produce Marketing Operations in Wukari Metropolis

Economic growth and Diversification: The marketing of agricultural products is seen as a crucial factor for economic growth and sustainable development in Taraba state. Also, with the decline in oil prices, there is a renewed focus on diversifying the economy through agricultural exports, which can significantly boost the sector's contribution to the national economy.

Growing Demand for Agricultural Products: With Wukari Local government Area increasing population, urbanization and changing dietary patterns, there is a rising demand for agricultural products both within Wukari and Taraba state at large.

Technological Advancements: Digital platforms, mobile applications, and e-commerce are transforming the agricultural marketing landscape, providing farmers with direct access to buyers and reducing exploitation by middlemen.

Government Support and Policies: Initiatives like the Anchor Borrowers Program and agricultural subsidies have encouraged production and improved market accessibility for smallholder farmers.

Export Opportunities: Farmers in Wukari LGA has significant potential to become a key exporter of agricultural commodities such as Yam…… benefiting from global trade agreements and partnerships.

Value-Addition and Agro-Processing: Investments in food processing industries improve the value chain by extending shelf life and increasing profitability for farmers.

Potential for Employment and Value chain: The agricultural sector, particularly cash crops like yam, cashew, holds significant potential for employment creation and value chain. Establishing marketing boards

and implementing proper policy interventions can improve production levels and provide employment opportunities.

Challenges of Agricultural Produce Marketing in Wukari Metropolis

The Nigerian agricultural sector, despite its significant potential, faces numerous challenges that impede its contribution to sustainable development. The existing literature on agricultural produce and marketing operations highlights the transformative roles and importance of agriculture in yielding economic growth and development (Nwuba & Okoli, 2022., Khou & Mothilal, 2018). However, the context of Nigeria presents unique challenges that require a more nuanced understanding and approach to Agricultural produce and marketing operations.

Several factors have been identified by various scholars as the elements that militate against marketing operations of Agricultural produce. These include but not limited to:

Poor Infrastructure: Inadequate roads, transportation facilities, storage, and processing facilities result in high post-harvest losses and increased marketing costs.

Market Information Asymmetry: Many farmers in Wukari metropolis lack access to timely and accurate market information, making them vulnerable to price fluctuations and middlemen exploitation.

Financial Constraints: limited access to credit and high- interest rates prevent farmers within Wukari metropolis from expanding their production and participating effectively in the market

Government Policy Inconsistencies: Frequent policy changes, multiple taxation, and bureaucratic hurdles affect market stability and discourage investment in the agricultural sector.

Security Challenges: Insecurity issues such as banditry, kidnapping, and farmer-herder conflicts disrupt farming activities and hinder transportation of goods to markets within Wukari metropolis and Taraba state at large.

Technical Limitation: Technical challenges in Wukari metropolis and Taraba state in general affect the agricultural produce marketing operations in this region. The constraint shows up as inadequate technology, subpar raw materials, and a shortage of contemporary inputs.

Empirical review

Empirical studies on agricultural produce marketing in Nigeria have explored various dimensions, including marketing efficiency, infrastructural constraints, and access to finance. This section reviews recent empirical findings, providing insights into the practical experiences of farmers, marketers, and policymakers.

Bharadwaj, Borbora, Nath and Deka (2022) investigated a study on prospects and challenges of Agricultural marketing in North- East India. The study used both secondary and primary sources of data collection from both States namely, Assam and Meghalaya to understand the problem in agricultural production and marketing. A sample size of 110 was chosen. Standard questionnaire was used to approach the farmers. Data were analysed through mean average and statistical ranking methods. Findings from the study revealed that non-availability of bio-pesticide, lack of information about organic farming, absence of crop insurance etc. as some of major problems abstaining agricultural production. Lack of proper information of the market, lack of proper storage facilities, high cost of production, lack of agricultural credit facilities etc. serves some of the significant problem in agricultural marketing

A study by Adeola, Yusuf, Nazifi and Ibrahim (2023) analysed market trends in the agricultural sector and found that urbanization and changing dietary habits have boosted demand for processed agricultural products. Using survey data from 500 smallholder farmers in three Nigerian states, their findings revealed that 78% of farmers experience increased sales due to population growth. Also, in a study by Raj (2018) on problems and prospects of Agricultural marketing in India using conceptual review rather than quantitative analysis. The study revealed countless of problems involved in marketing of agricultural produce. There is limited access to the market information, literacy level among the farmers is low, multiple channels of distribution that eats away the pockets of both farmers and consumers.

Further insight was provided by Nwuba and Okoli (2022) on the challenges and prospects of Agribusiness in Nigeria. Marketing issues, infrastructure shortcomings, and fluctuating input and output prices are among the obstacles or constraints that have been noted. Improvements in downstream commodities operations, environmental management, more funding, and more efficient agriculture spending are all necessary steps to remove constraints. The government needs to take action and make investments in infrastructure, which should guarantee the growth of both urban and rural areas.

Also, a study was investigated by Khou and Mothilal (2018) on challenges of agricultural production and marketing in Nirth-East India. The data in their study was collected from 120 farmers from four states in the region and was analyze using SPSS. The study found

absence of crop insurance; non-availability of bio-pesticide, non-availability of information on organic farming etc. are categorized under severe problems in production for farmers. Lack of agricultural credit facilities, lack of market information, lack of warehousing and storage facilities, too many intermediaries resulting in high cost of goods and services, lack of farmers' organization etc. are found to be severe problems in marketing for farmers.

In addition, Anitie, Veres and Pisla (2021) researched on challenges and prospects of Digital Agriculture.A questionnaire survey was developed and disseminated as one of the qualitative ways to find out. Targeted Romanian farmers received the questionnaire online, and the information gathered was examined. In the comprehensive analysis of the questionnaire session, participated 19 respondents from several counties of Romania, of which 17 farmers of small, medium and big farms and 2 business experts. The envisaged regions are: Calaras, Olt , Dolj, Suceava, Ias, Ialomit, Tulcea, Mures, and Ilfov. The questionnaire was formed of 4 identification questions and 9 open questions related to the digital agriculture. From the survey 100% of the participants agreed that digitalization is an opportunity for their activity; none of them consider digitalization a threat. Digitalization in farmer's view is a real help, which will lead to maximum efficiency in the carried out activity. Participants were asked the express terms associated to Digital Agriculture. Most of them mentioned "indispensable" (26.3%), "efficiency" (26.3%) and "necessity" (21.1%), but also "future", "help for farmers", "evolution", "yield", "profitability", "development" and "maximum potential".

Gaps in Literature

This study aims to address the critical research gap in understanding key prospects and challenges of Agricultural produce marketing operations in Nigeria using Wukari metropolis as a case study in order to achieve sustainable economic development for Taraba state. While much attention has been given to agricultural production, the integration and development of marketing operations for farmers and marketers remain insufficiently explored. This research, therefore, seeks to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities within Nigeria's agribusiness sector and propose course of actions for robust agricultural production and marketing.

Methodology

Study Area

Wukari Local Government Area (LGA), which is situated along the Jalingo-Kasina-Ala road, was the site of this study. The capital of Taraba State, Nigeria's Wukari LGA is Wukari Metropolis. Wukari is situated in Nigeria's middle belt, in the Guinea savannah. Geographically, it lies between the Greenwich Meridian's longitudes of 10°E and 12°E and latitudes 7.5°N and 9.5°N of the Equator. It is bounded in the North by Ibi and Gassol LGA in the north east; in the south by Kastina-Ala (Benue State) and Takum LGA, in the east by Donga LGA and in the west by Nasarawa (Nasarawa State). The area has good climatic conditions and rich agricultural soil (Bako, Oparaku & Flayin, 2016). The study area has a land mass of about 4,308km2 with a population of 241,546 (National Population Commission, 2006). The dry and rainy season common to tropical regions are the dominant climatic features. The rainy season starts in April and ends in October, while the dry season begins in November and ends in March. The dry season reaches its peak in January and February when the dusty north east trade winds blow across the study area. The Local Government is situated on a rich agricultural land, suitable for the cultivation of the following crops; yam, rice, sorghum, maize, fruit trees, beni-seed and vegetables. The people living in Wukari local government area are engaged in agricultural production activities (www.kwararafauniversity.edu.ng), with different cultural tribes among which the Wapan, Wanu, Ekpan, Ichen, Kuteb, Hausa, Chamba, Tiv, Igede and Fulani among many others.

Research Design, sampling method and Data Analysis Technique

This study adopted an exploratory research design. Exploratory research according to Hunter, McCallum and Howes (2019) is used when the researcher is seeking insights into the general nature of a problem, the possible decision alternatives, and relevant variables that need to be considered.

The study adopted the convenience sampling method, a total of one thousand (160) farmers and farm produce marketers drawn from the Eight (8) division (20 from each division) of Wukari LGA participated in the study. Data were also collected from primary sources in Wukari to understand the prospects and challenges in agricultural produce marketing operations. The sample size of the study was 160. Standard questionnaire was used to approach the farm produce marketers of the eight districts. In order to gather data for the study, participants were asked to check yes or no boxes on a

series of items on a checklist. Frequencies and percentages were then utilized to analyze the data.

Results and Findings

Revised Table 1: Checklist of Prospects of Agricultural Produce Marketing Operations in Wukari Metropolis, Taraba State

(n = 160)

S/N	Item	Yes (Freq)	Yes (%)	No (Freq)	No (%)
1	Financial Assistance from government agencies	122	76.3%	38	23.7%
2	Financial assistance from NGOs	2	1.3%	158	98.7%
3	Sourcing of loans through Microfinance Institutions	66	41.3%	94	58.7%
4	Public distribution of Agricultural produce	152	95.0%	8	5.0%
5	Any forms of Co-operative marketing among farmers	144	90.0%	16	10.0%

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Table 2: Checklist of Challenges of Agricultural produce Marketing operations in Wukari metropolis of Taraba state

(n = 160)

S/N	Item	Yes (Freq)	Yes (%)	No (Freq)	No (%)
1	High costs of marketing functions	146	91.3%	14	8.7%
2	Irregular power supply for preservation of produce	155	96.9%	5	3.1%
3	Inadequate funding for agricultural produce marketers	145	90.6%	15	9.4%
4	Lack/Poor market information system	138	86.3%	22	13.7%
5	Low market demand of value-added products by the consumers	30	18.8%	130	81.2%
6	Stiff competition in terms of location, quality, and pricing	115	71.9%	45	28.1%
7	Lack of infrastructure (roads, communication etc.)	156	97.5%	4	2.5%
8	Unstandardized sorting, grading, and pricing system	135	84.4%	25	15.6%
9	Price fluctuation	128	80.0%	32	20.0%
10	Limited purchasing power of consumers	31	19.4%	129	80.6%
11	Faulty weighing of agricultural produce	124	77.5%	36	22.5%
12	Lack of institutional credit facilities	131	81.9%	29	18.1%
13	Too many intermediaries	144	90.0%	16	10.0%
14	Poor handling, packaging, and processing facilities	126	78.8%	34	21.2%

S/N	Item	Yes (Freq)	Yes (%)	No (Freq)	No (%)
15	Poor supply chain management	112	70.0%	48	30.0%
16	Lack of farmers and marketing associations	27	16.9%	133	83.1%

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

From the analysis of the data collected in Table 2 above, it is observed that the dominant challenges that Farmers faced in Agricultural produce and marketing operations in Wukari metropolis include:

i. Lack of infrastructure (roads, communication etc.)

ii. Irregular power supply for preservation of produce

iii. High costs of marketing functions

iv. Inadequate funding for agricultural produce marketers

v. Too many intermediaries

vi. Lack/Poor market information system

Conclusion and Recommendations

Agriculture holds significant potential for driving economic development in Nigeria, particularly in rural communities like Wukari metropolis. While this study has identified critical challenges such as poor infrastructure, limited access to market information, and inadequate funding it has also revealed promising prospects, including strong cooperative marketing practices and supportive government interventions. To ensure that agricultural produce marketing in Wukari contributes meaningfully to the local economy, both constraints must be addressed and opportunities strategically enhanced. Therefore, this paper recommends the following:

i. A structured and accessible agricultural marketing information system should be developed to provide farmers and marketers with timely data on pricing, demand trends, and logistics, thereby reducing information gaps and improving decision-making.
ii. The government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen cooperative marketing structures, enabling farmers to pool resources, negotiate better prices, and improve access to credit and market infrastructure.

Limitations of Study

This study is not without limitations. First, the research was geographically limited to Wukari metropolis in Taraba State, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-economic and agricultural conditions. Secondly, the study relied heavily on self-reported data collected through checklists and questionnaires, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or misinterpretation of questions by respondents.

Additionally, a sample size of 160 respondents was used, which, although adequate for exploratory analysis, may not capture the full diversity of experiences among all agricultural marketers in the area. Finally, the study focused primarily on the marketing dimension of agricultural produce, and therefore did not delve deeply into other interconnected variables such as production techniques, environmental factors, or policy implementation outcomes.

Future studies are encouraged to expand the scope, adopt mixed-method approaches, and include comparative analysis across multiple local government areas to strengthen the robustness of findings.

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