

**PERCEPTION OF FARMERS ON AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN
CHANCHAGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MINNA,
NIGER STATE, NIGERIA**

**¹Jibrin, S.,²Muhammed, H. U.,³Loko, A. I.,⁴Mohammed, U.,
⁵N. T. Kolawole-Jimoh and ⁶Abdulbaki, N.**

*^{1,2,5&6}Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, FUT Minna, Niger
State, Nigeria.*

*³Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Management, Niger State College of Agriculture
Mokwa, Niger State, Nigeria.*

⁴Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Extension Services, IBBU Lapai Extension

Corresponding Author's Email/Phone No

safiya.jibrin@futminna.edu.ng/07030648457

ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the perception of farmers on cooperatives in Chanchaga Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria. The objectives were to describe the socio economic characteristics of the respondent, identify the various cooperative societies that exist in the study area, identify the perception of farmers on Agricultural cooperative societies, determine the factors influencing the participation of farmer's in Agricultural co-operatives and identify problems militating against participation of farmers in different cooperative societies. A multistage sampling technique was used in selecting 120 respondents for this study. Cross sectional data were collected with the aid of questionnaire complimented with interview schedule. Descriptive statistics and Logit regression were the tools used to achieve the data collected. The results revealed that 75% of the respondent were male, with a mean age of 40 years, 53.3% had household size of 11 and above while 28.3% had household size of 6 – 10. The study also revealed that majority (70.8%) of the respondents belonged to farmer producer cooperative while 22.5% belonged to farmer marketing cooperative. Farmers perceived Agricultural cooperative as a tool for promoting their good relations, bringing about innovations promotion of rural development and provision of services. Logit regression analysis result showed that the value of coefficient of determination R^2 was 0.355303 (36%). Age, gender, household size, educational status and farm size were all significant at 1%, and directly related to factors influencing their participation in Agricultural cooperatives in the study area. However, most of these farmers are small scale farmers and have not been gaining enough access to credit facilities. It is therefore recommended from the result, that financial institution responsible for provision of funds should assist rural farmers by providing flexible credit facilities through cooperatives that will enhance more participation.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is by far the most important sector of Nigeria's economy that employs about 70% of the labor force (Adebayo and Olagunju, 2015). However, Nigerians' agriculture is characterized by smallholder farmers who have less resources, cultivate small pieces of land and have inadequate or no access to inputs and credit (Wachira et al., 2019). Improving agricultural productivity and commercialization of agricultural products among smallholder farmers is widely seen as a key approach for rural development, poverty alleviation, and food security. People in developing countries have until now depended on their government to meet their basic needs. Self-help projects undertaken through voluntary effort and full engagement of individuals and corporate groups in communities are an important nucleus in grassroots development (Wahab, 2000 in Jibirin et al 2019). Cooperative society came into being as a result of inability of government in meeting the socio-economic needs of its citizen. These society are non-profit and non-governmental organizations because all members contribute economically towards the fulfilment of their responsibilities to the immediate

environment and not depend on government solely before fulfilling these (Claudia, 2003 in Jibirin et al., 2019). The main challenges include poor access to credit services and inadequate infrastructure and physical dispersion of small holders (Muzari et al., 2012). In addition, infrastructure and institutions such as irrigation input and product markets (Oruonye et al., 2012), and credit as well as extension services are poorly developed (Mojo et al., 2017). Cooperative action is often suggested as a tool to overcome those obstacles (Ibitoye, 2013).

Despite all the benefits associated with Agricultural Cooperative Societies small holder farmers still feel reluctant to join these societies because of their ignorance. Agricultural Cooperatives, it is also known as a farmer's co-op. It is formed by farmers to make ends meet and improve their standards of living by pooling their resources together in a particular way of activities through controlled enterprise (International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) 1995). Cooperatives are formed by people having the same view or targets, to achieve a set of goal by providing appropriate techniques, technology and tools needed. It is a channel by which members are provided with farm implements, farm

mechanization and agricultural loans, Adebayo and Yusuf (2004) also explained the importance to be improving the power of agreement between two parties concerning the price of their goods with other business. They buy in large quantities so that they can beat down prices and obtain better products and services. Grounded in theories of social cohesion and social capital, farmer cooperatives provide small-holder farmers with economies of scale by facilitating cheaper and more efficient access to inputs, improved production techniques, and information about markets. (Akinwumi, 2006; Bhuyam, 2007). Abdulquadri (2012) reported that in the context of trade liberalization and globalization, the cooperative approach is one of the best means of self-protection for small farmers mainly due to its self-help concept and member's participation while Biru (2014) revealed that while cooperatives are serving the rural community, they are contributing a lot in improving the standards of living of their members residing in rural areas. The researcher furthered explained that government provides avenues for improving the income of women thereby militating the food insecurity and problems of women by promoting and developing different classes of

cooperatives which will enable them to solve their common economic and social problems. Food and Agriculture Organization, (FAO) (2013), reported that Agricultural cooperatives is very important in the development of the rural sector and in promoting food security, It was found out that Agricultural Cooperatives have had the largest market share of the supply of inputs so far, in Egypt about, 4 million farmers earn their income through cooperative membership; In Brazil about “37 percent of gross domestic product(GDP) are as well being produced through cooperatives; in Ethiopia the equivalent figure is 900,000; and in India, 16.5 million liters of milk are collected every day from 12 million farmers in dairy cooperatives. In Europe 60 percent of the processed, marketing of Agricultural commodities and about 50 percent of the supplies of inputs were obtained.

However, Wachira *et al* (2019) reported that most challenges cooperatives face are related to management aspects. These include lack of experience in organizational management, high costs of production, lack of working capital, weak information systems, poor product design, and lack of knowledge and skills on the part of the entrepreneur. Verakumaran, (2005) on the other hand

observed that lack of trust among farmers was the major reason why they do not join cooperative societies and as such has led to the major setback in the development of cooperatives

In view of the importance of farmers cooperative societies, this study is set out to describe the socio-economic characteristics of farmers, identify the various cooperative societies that exist in the study area, identify the perception of farmers on Agricultural cooperative societies, determine the factors influencing the participation of farmer's in Agricultural co-operatives and identify problems militating against participation of farmers in different cooperative societies.

METHODOLOGY

Area of study

Chanchahga is a local government area in Minna Niger State Nigeria. Its Administrative headquarters is Minna and accommodated most of the local government area. It has an area of 72km² and population of 201,429 according to 2006 census at a growth of 2.5%. The council has 201,429 as at 2006 and it is subjected census expected to be 276,007 as at 2015, according to Nigeria Population Census (NPC). It shares boundary with Bosso Local Government

enveloping in Minnametropolis. It is inhabited by Gbagyi, Nupe, Hausa, Yoruba and other ethnic groups. Their major activity is farming and other vocations include fishing, blacksmithing, cloth weaving etc (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2015).

Sampling Technique and sampling Size

A multistage random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondent. First stage purposive selection of FCT due to high government involvement in agriculture in the area, second state was random selection of two (2) villages from each of the eleven (11) districts of the Local Government Area to give a total of twenty two (22) villages. Third stage was also random selection of six (6) villages out of the selected twenty two (22) villages. Using the list of registered cooperative societies in the study area, twenty farmers were randomly selected from each of the six (6) villages which give the total sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents. Data for this study were collected through cross sectional survey . The cross sectional data were obtained using questionnaire and interview schedules. The data

collected was on socio-economic characteristic of the respondents which include age, sex, level of education, size of family, years of processing experience, membership of co-operative society, etc., and constraints faced by the farmers. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Logit regression model. In implicit form, the model is specified as:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + e$$

Y = Participation of respondents in agricultural cooperative (Yes = 1, No = 0)

X₁ = Age (years), X₂ = Gender (Male = 1, Female = 0) X₃ = Marital status (Married = 1, Single = 0) X₄ = Household size (number) X₅ = Educational level (years of schooling)

X₆ = Farming experience (years) X₇ = Income (naira) X₈ = farm size (hectares) X₉ = years spent in community (years): e = error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results in Table 1 revealed that the mean age was 40. This implies that the respondents were within their productive age. Thus, they had all the needed strengths to carry out farm work and may participate actively in cooperative. This is in line with the findings of Omoregbee (2012) who reported that majority of participant of cooperative in Edo State

were within their active age. Majority (75.0 percent) of the respondent were male which might be due to the rigorous and tedious nature of farming. Most females engaged in light activities like marketing, drying of farm produce, as well as assembling of farm product which is in consonance with the findings of Jibirin *et al* (2016) who reported that male farmers were dominant in Chanchaga LGA of Niger State.

Furthermore, 79.2 percent of the respondents were married, which implies that married men dominated the business of farming in the study area which is in agreement with the findings of Ajayi *et al.*, (2014) who reported that cooperative in Mokwa were dominated by married farmers. The results in Table 1 also show that majority 53.3% had household size of 11 and above. The reason could be to the fact that the study area is an agrarian community which may depend mostly on larger household labour to carry out their farming activities. Although, large household size could also increase the welfare and social needs of the family. The results also revealed that 33.3% of the respondents had secondary education, this implies that respondents in the study area might have the abilities to read and write. They can as well have abilities to

cope and understand with the complexity of agricultural innovations. About 50.4% of the respondents had between 11-20 years of farming experience, this implies that farmers in the study area are well experienced, thus they have adequate knowledge of farming activities.

More also, result presented in Table 1 showed 30 percent of the respondents were engaged in the processing of farm produce while 18.3 engaged in livestock. About 51.7% engaged in other forms of activities. So, there is likelihood to safe guide against crop failure due to pest, diseases and other environmental factor. The results presented also revealed that 82% of the respondents do not have access to extension contact; this is likely to affect the spread of recent innovation to farmers and also reduce the interest of farmers towards participating in activities of the society.

Furthermore, 70.8% of the respondents belonged to farmer producer cooperative

while 22.5% belonged to farmer marketing cooperative. Only 5.0% belonged to thrift and credit cooperative. The larger number of farmer producer cooperative could be due to the respondents that participated in FADAMA III additional financing. This was similar to the findings of Ajayi *et al.* (2014) who found out that Agricultural credit and marketing cooperative, thrift and credit cooperative, farmer's processors cooperative and farmer's producers cooperatives are the major types of cooperative. It was observed that 64.5% of the respondents had farm size less than 3 hectares. This implied that the farmers had small farm sizes which indicated the subsistence level of farming. The result is in consonance with the findings of Omoregbee and Okoedo (2012) who reported that farmers' participation in cooperative activities in Uhumwonde Local Government area, Edo State, Nigeria operate on a subsistence level.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents in the Study Area.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
<20	4	3.3
21–30	12	10.0
31 – 40	47	39.2
41 – 50	51	42.5
>50	6	5.0
Gender		
Male	30	25.0
Female	90	75.0
Marital Status		
Single	5	4.2
Married	95	79.2
Widow	13	10.8
Divorced	5	4.2
Separated	2	1.7
Household size		
<5	22	18
6-10	34	28
>11	64	53
Education		
Quran	29	24
Primary	30	25
Secondary	40	33
Tertiary	21	18
Farming Experience		
<11	61	50.4
11 – 20	40	33.1
21 – 30	15	12.4
31 - 40	4	3.3
>40	1	0.8
Extension Contact		
Rarely	82	68.3
Frequently	38	31.7
Secondary Occupation		
Livestock	22	18.3
Fishing	18	15.0
Petty trading	15	12.5
Processing agricultural products	36	30.0
Civil Servant	14	11.7
Types of Cooperative Society		
Farmer Producer	85	70.8
Farmer Marketing	27	22.5
Thrift and Credit	6	5.0
Others	2	5.0
Farm Size		
<3	78	64.5

Field survey, 2016

The results presented in table 2 showed that, farmers perceived Agricultural cooperative as a tool for promotion of farmer's good relation, provision of services to farmers, help to gain access to credit, bringing about innovations and promotion of rural development which are ranked first to fifth respectively. Promotion of farmers good relation was ranked first, this might be because cooperative strengthen farmer's relationship and help the members live harmoniously as a family. Thus, any relevant information within the disposal of any members would be shared among their members.

Provision of services to all members was ranked second. This could be because, the agricultural cooperative existing in the study area help the members to acquire

both production inputs in bulk and other consumers products in other to enjoy the benefits of bulk purchasing. Help to gain access to loan was ranked third as one of perception of farmers toward agricultural cooperative. This might be to the fact that most financial institution preferred to deal with group members rather than individual members. In addition to securing of loan, the members would enlighten one another on how to properly allocate the credit to expand their farm to enjoy economics of scale. Increase in farm income, improvement in the general living condition, improved farm output, easy access to agricultural credits from banks, education and training and easy access to farm output are some of the benefit derived for been a member of CBOs (Ibitoye, 2013, Jibrin et al., 2017).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to farmer's Perception on Agricultural Cooperative.

Variables	S. Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	S. Disagree	Sum	%	Rank
Promote farmers good relation	100 (83.3)	20 (16.7)	-	-	-	580	18.15	1
Provide services to all farmers	17 (14.2)	86 (71.7)	6 (5.0)	10 (8.3)	1 (0.8)	468	14.64	2
Bring about innovation	9 (7.5)	61 (50.8)	43 (35.8)	7 (5.8)	-	432	13.52	4
Activities for executive members only	7 (5.8)	71 (59.2)	8 (6.7)	29 (24.2)	5 (4.2)	406	12.70	7
Helps to solve Agricultural problem on time	7 (5.8)	77 (64.2)	9 (7.5)	25 (20.8)	2 (1.7)	422	13.20	6
Helps to gain access to loan	90 (10.8)	4 (75.0)	33 (33.3)	10 (8.3)	3 (2.5)	460	14.39	3
Promote rural development	12 (10.0)	49 (40.8)	55 (45.8)	3 (2.5)	1 (0.8)	428	13.39	5
Total						3196	100.0	

Field survey, 2016

Table 3 revealed that the Log-likelihood value is -51.49 which is statistically significant at 1% level of probability. It also revealed that the R^2 was 0.35 which implies that 35% variation in the dependable variables were explained by the independent variables included in the Logit Regression Model.

All the variables were all directly related to the dependent variable implying that one unit increase in any of the independent variable might result in an increase in the level of participation in the Agricultural cooperative. The coefficient for Age was statistically significant at 1%. This implies that age has a positive relationship with

participation which tends to influence participation positively. This means that an increase in the age of farmers might likely lead to an increase in participation in cooperative society. This could be due to the fact that most of those farmers in the studied area were within their productive age thus they can jointly pool their resources together. The coefficient for gender was positive and significant at 1% level. This implies that men participate more in cooperative society activities than women. This could be to the fact that women are engage in so many activities (child bearing, cooking, fetching water, processing farm produce

etc) thereby have little time for cooperative activities. The coefficient for household size was also positive and statistically significant at 1% level. This implies that household has positive relationship with participation which implies that an increase in the size of household might likely lead to increase in participation in cooperative society. The result is in consonance with the finding of Oluwafemi *et al.*(2015) who reported that some socio-economic characteristics (marital status, education, household size, and primary occupation) affect participation in cooperative activities. Furthermore, the coefficient for education was also positive and statistically

significant at 1%. This implies that their level of education also has a positive relationship with participation thus; the more educated the farmers become the more they participate in cooperative society and also the more they accrue the enormous benefit to cooperative the result is in disagreement with the findings of Jibrin *et al.*, (2019) who reported that there will be less participation in CBOs activities from fish processor as the level of their education increases. Marital status, Farming experience and income were not significant; therefore have no influence on respondents' participation in cooperative.

Table 3 Regression Estimates of the Determinant Factors Influencing the Participation of Farmer's in Agricultural Co-operatives

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value
Constant	-5,924	1.774	-3.34***
Age	0.018	0.004	4.43***
Gender	0.791	0.089	8.92***
Marital Status	-1.163	0.855	-1.36
Household Size	0.193	0.069	2.77***
Education	3.352	0.044	7.97***
Experience	0.033	0.037	0.90
Farm Size	0.777	0.255	3.05

Log likelihood = -51.49883LR Chi-squared = (7)56.76***Prob chi-square = 0.0000

No of observations =120 R-squared = 0.355303 ***=Significant at 1% level of probability.

The results presented in Table 4 revealed that, Lack of extension contact, Insufficient funds, insufficient inputs, Lack of technical knowledge and Leadership skills were the major factors hindering the participation of farmers in Agricultural Cooperatives. Many of the respondents in the study area which accounted for 90.8% opined that they have high access to land and just 1.7% disagreed that they have low access to land hence land is not a major problem in the study area. Furthermore the results also explained that 55.8% of the respondents have low inputs while 43.8% agreed they have moderate inputs. More also, 50.8% of the result explained the farmers are experiencing severe technical knowhow. This is in line with the findings of Okoede and Onemolease (2009) who explained that major constraint limiting

farmers to adopt new technology is lack of technical knowhow. The table also showed that 80.8% of the farmer's lack the contacts of extension agents who could have enlighten them on the enormous benefits that accrue to participation on cooperative and to assist farmers to achieve their set goals or target. This is against the findings of Zwane, (2009) that reported that extension practitioners are moderate in their commitment. 23.3% reported that there is lack of leadership skills and the result is in line the findings of Oluwafemi *et al.*(2015) who reported that management and leadership problem are among the factors militating against cooperative participation, while 65.8% agreed that there is moderate sense of ownership in their properties.

Table 4 :Distribution of Respondents according to Factors Militating against Participation of Farmers in different Cooperative Societies

Variables	Low	Moderate	High
Unavailability of land	90.8	7.5	1.7
Insufficient funds	0.8	43.3	55.8
High input costs	1.7	56.7	41.7
Lack of technical know how	3.3	55.8	40.8
Lack of commitment by extension agents	5.0	15.8	80.8
Lack of leadership skills	15.0	71.7	23.3
Lack of sense of ownership	0.033	65.8	19.2

Field survey, 2016.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the bases of the findings of this research, it can be concluded that most of the farmers were male, married and within the age of 31-40 years. Most of them also had secondary education and had a household size of 6 - 10 people. Moreover, farmers cooperative society was the most patronized cooperative society in the area but rarely had extension visit. The study also concludes that promotion of farmer's good relation, provision of services to all farmers and helps to gain access to loan were the most perceived benefit of cooperative society. ranked first,

second and third respectively on the perception of farmer about cooperative society. It is therefore recommended from the result, that financial institution responsible for provision of funds should assist rural farmers by providing flexible credit facilities through cooperatives that will enhance more participation. Also government and non-governmental organizations should help to improve extension contact and services. Furthermore, farmers should be educated by organizing adult education classes which will help them embrace agricultural innovation and also increase their participation in agricultural cooperative societies.

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