

Economics And Social Issues Affecting The Sustainability Of Cassava Post harvest Projects In Southern Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Over a decade ago, some projects for the processing of Cassava (Manihot esculenta Crantz) tubers were established in various villages in Nigeria. The objectives of those projects were to reduce post harvest losses, reduce labour use, and raise output and farm-household income. This paper examines some of such projects established by the International Institute of Tropical agriculture (IITA) and another established jointly by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Development Projects (UNDP) and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). Information obtained is related against a benchmark of a previous study conducted in 1992. Findings show that the IITA project has collapsed while that of the ILO/UNDP/NDE is still functioning. Factors leading to this can be located in the relative economic performance, method of introduction of the project, institutional support, and ownership structure and community participation. These hold important lessons for policy and sustainable project development and management.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of a gulf between the intensions of researchers and developers in relation to the objectives of farmers and beneficiaries is widely acknowledged (Doppler, 1993) this has attracted the attention of researcher over the years with the aim of bridging the gap. This has informed the introduction of systems –oriented and other participatory approaches in projects and researches. These issues have consequences for sustainability of projects. Sustainability can be seen as long-term stability. This may be ecological or economic (Ehui and Spencer, 1993). With respect to Cassava post harvest projects we are interested in long term sustained patronage from an economic and social perspective.

This paper is concerned with the long –term functioning of cassava processing centres established at village levels about a decade ago. We are interested in

- (a) Two cassava processing centres established by the IITA at Ngoro in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia state, and at Moniya in Akinyele Local government area of Oyo state.
- (b) A cassava-processing centre established by the ILO/UNDP/NDE at Ezeoke –Nsu in Ehime Mbano Local Government area of Imo state.

The social and economic impact of these projects was studied in 1992 (Nwajiuba, 1995,1996). The objective of this paper is therefore to examine how those projects are functioning after over a

decade. This is with the intension to draw lessons for sustainable project development and implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on three cassava processing centres purposively selected because of a previous study over a decade ago (Nwajiuba, 1995; 1996). These cassava-processing centres are at Ndoro in southeast Nigeria, and Moniya in Oyo state in southwest Nigeria. These two were supported by the IITA. The third is at Eze-oke Nsu in southeast Nigeria supported by the ILO/UNDP/NDE.

Data collection was based on observations, key informants and interviews of households in the area. The leaders who were involved at the initial stage of implementation were interviewed. In all 45 respondents were interviewed in the three villages.

The farming systems approach was adopted in analysing the data in order to know the contribution of these to family income. Descriptive and comparative analysis were carried out. Specific indicators were identified as key issues in the sustainability of the projects

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. State of the Projects:

- (a) **The IITA Project at Ndoro:** This has ceased to operate. There was no clear indication of ownership of the centre. It was supposedly targeted at the women but leaders outside the women's group influenced its establishment and location. The project was not profitable enough to generate the staff salaries. It was negatively influenced by domestic occurrences within the leader's home.
- (b) **The ILO/UNDP/NDE Project at Ezo-oke Nsu:** This is still functional but epileptic. As the machines age, the frequency and cost of maintenance increased. Local maintenance capacity is limited and they rely on technicians from outside the village for repairs.
- (c) **The IITA project at Moniya:** This was introduced through an existing women's cooperative, however the centre now belongs to the group's leader. It is located on a private land and runs as a profit making enterprise. The transfer of ownership had a direct effect on the commitment of the group. It is still functional but more to the benefit of the leader.

2. Lessons Learnt

- (a) Need for institutional support. The project at Ezeoke-Nsu was established in concert with St. Paul's Church women Cooperative Society in 1991. The project is also located within the church premises. This is different from the other two projects at Ndoro and Moniya, which do not have such or were established with individuals, or with groups without clear state of ownership or clearly defined roles.

- (b) **Defined Ownership:** The project at Ezeoke-Nsu clearly belonged to the church and was supplied as a loan, which has been repaid. This is different from the Ndoro project; hence the women withdrew from participation. This greatly affected patronage and investment by the women, who are also the main processors of cassava.
- (c) **Economic Performances:** Nwajiuba (1995) had observed the better economic performance of the Ezeoke-Nsu project over the Ndoro project. This is related to the level of technology already existing in the villages. While the ILO/UNDP/NDE project was an improvement over existing techniques e.g. Wider fryers which saved fuel wood, and reduced losses, the IITA project at Ndoro, was with smaller fryers /which already existed and led to more losses and firewood, and had superfluous facilities such as the peeling bay. Cassava peeling is tasks, which most families do at home, and were not prepared to take unpeeled cassava to the processing centre. Mostly women and children who simultaneously do other household chores while peeling the cassava do cassava processing. The opportunity cost of peeling at the centre (in not being at home) may be too high for the women.

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