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## Economic 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* CRANZ) tubers were established in various villages in Nigeria. The objectives of those projects were to reduce post harvest losses, reduce labour use, reduce shortage of the product and its processed form and raise output and farm-household income.

Cassava is the most important crop in the farming systems of Southern Nigeria as a food crop and cash income source. It is processed into several forms the most common being ‘gari’ (Cassava flakes). Some of its by-products can be used as starch while the bark is fed to livestock. Its production has expanded tremendously in the past decade, but post harvest problems constrain development.

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). These were in the form of village processing centres with community participation. It was envisaged that there would be further expansion of these by the communities concerned.

Information obtained is related against a benchmark of a previous study conducted in 1992. Findings show that IITA project has collapsed while that of the ILO / UNDP / NDE is still functioning. Further findings also revealed that such projects were perceived by the community members to belong to a particular ‘family’ or persons.

Factors leading to this can be located in the relative economic performance, method of introduction of the project, institutional support, ownership structure and community participation. These hold important lessons for policy and sustainable project development and management.

**Keywords:** Economic, post harvest projects, social issues, Nigeria