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Socio-Economics and Food Security of Farming Families in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

Farming families in Nigeria have to cope with food supply shortages, price fluctuation and pressure to get ‘more’ out of thinned out resources especially land. Some of the reasons for this situation include poverty, near absence or inadequate infrastructure, population explosion and unstable macro-economic environment. The south east Nigeria is generally densely populated with an average of 480 people per square kilometre. However, there exist in some areas an imbalance of the population distribution even within the same locality which has implications for resource availability and capacity.

This study examines families’ ownership and access to resources such as land, labour and capital; the impact to these on family living standard and household food security (supply and access). To achieve this, the Farming systems approach is used. The farm-family-household system is considered as a whole which ensures that the overlaps between the sub units are considered. 105 randomly selected families were interviewed. These were eventually clustered into two main groups, the Resource Rich and the Resource Poor. Descriptive, comparative and econometric analyses were carried out.

Result show that income of the two groups differ significantly, in both cases off farm income plays an important role. The farming systems in highly populated areas have relatively smaller resources and capacity base, are crop oriented and have a lower living standard. They sell more of their outputs but purchase less to meet household food supply. The farming systems located in low/medium populated areas expend more on market supply purchases though they have more land resources. Both groups show desires for more food in terms of increased meals per day, quantity of food eaten; and a need for better quality. There is clear indication that access to food either through own supply or market purchase is not a guarantee of food security for both groups.

Keywords: Families’ resources (ownership, access and use), food security, living standard