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Food Security and Marketing Problems in Nigeria: The Case of Maize Marketing in Kwara State

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Abstract

This paper examines problems of food marketing and security in Nigeria, using maize marketing in Kwara State as a case study. This is against the background of persistent food crisis being experienced for sometimes now in the country. Primary data were collected during the 1997/98 farming season from two hundred food marketers consisting of eighty wholesalers and one hundred and twenty retailers spread across six local government areas of the state. Secondary data were collected from Central Bank of Nigeria statistical bulletin and annual reports. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Market margin, distribution of total market margin and marketing efficiency were estimated. The results indicate that the average farm gate price of maize was N 755 per 50 kg bag of maize. The average marketing cost was N 105.3/bag and the average net marketing margin was N 158.2/bag. The average marketing efficiency was 143.5 % in the study area. The distribution of total marketing margin shows that the wholesalers' share was 68.1 % and the retailers' share was 31.9 % on the average. When compared with the farmers' returns, the middlemen's share of total market margin was higher. This is perceived as market exploitation because not much values are added to the food by the middlemen to justify the very high margin collected. This "exploitation" directly or indirectly lead to loss of interest in farming and subsequently food insecurity in the country. Responses of the selected respondents show that the major problems of food marketing are; transportation problem, inadequate market infrastructure, inadequate funding, shortage of processing facilities and seasonality and perishability of food produce. To improve food marketing and food security situation in Nigeria, it is recommended that adequate transportation facilities, in terms of good roads and functional vehicles should be provided by government, private individuals and cooperative groups. Also, research into post-harvest storage and processing techniques should be intensified and finally, fund should be made available, through both formal and informal sources, to food marketers so that they can take advantage of bulk purchasing, market expansion and post-harvest processing.

Keywords: Food marketing, food security, market efficiency, market margin