Preference for Food Quality Attributes: How much does it Cost Household Consumers of Imported Rice Brands in FCT, Nigeria?

***Abstract***

Consumers’ preference for imported rice brands in Nigeria has been largely attributed to differences in the quality attributes of local and imported rice brands. This paper presents the findings of a revealed preference study conducted in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria to determine the relative importance as well as the prices consumers pay for rice intrinsic quality attributes, which in turn influence their utilitarian attitudes and intentions to purchase rice. This study used a cross sectional dataset collected through a structured questionnaire interview of 460 households consumer of imported rice brands. Thirteen rice quality attributes were considered in this study and their monetary values were computed as Marginal Implicit Prices (MIPs). The results of the analysis showed that consumers in FCT consider swelling capacity, after-cook colour, neatness, unbroken grains, and separate (non-sticky) grains as the most important quality attributes of rice, and they pay more for these physical attributes than they pay for nutritional/safety attributes. These findings represent both a challenge and an opportunity for rice breeders, farmers and processors in Nigeria as it has implications for rice breeding, farming and processing policies/programmes that can be implemented in the country towards breaking consumers’ preference inertia for imported rice brands.

It is therefore imperative that breeding, farming, processing and marketing strategies for local rice brands target improvements in both physical and nutritional/safety intrinsic quality attributes. Rice breeding and processing programmes need to aim at producing varieties that have high swelling capacity, and do not produce large amount of after-cook starch that results in sticky grains. Alternatively, artificial ageing technique can be adopted to achieve these same results. Packages and label of local rice brands need to contain clear and detailed description of cooking procedures that will minimize the production of after-cook starch. The marketing strategies of local rice distributors need to include campaigns that sensitize consumers on the nutritional and health issues associated with eating highly polished (brightly white) rice.

*Key words:* Preference, Quality Attributes, Rice, Brands, FCT-Nigeria