

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Problems associated with agricultural produce marketing in Nigeria: the experience of milled rice women marketers from southern Taraba State, Nigeria.**

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**This study investigates the problems of milled rice marketing among women marketers of southern Taraba state, Nigeria. Questionnaires and interview schedules were employed to collect data from sixty (60) milled rice women marketers from three purposively selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely Donga, Takum and Wukari LGAs and simple random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents for the study. The results indicated that the major milled rice marketing problems include inadequate credit facilities, transportation problems, and inadequate market infrastructures. Responses of the selected respondents show that they are in dire need of agricultural marketing information. To improve milled rice marketing and reduce poverty among the women marketers, it is recommended that adequate funds, transportation facilities, market infrastructures and agricultural extension services be provided by government and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs). Also women marketers should form themselves into market cooperatives to enable them obtain credit facilities from banks and other financial institutions in order to expand their marketing activities.**

**Key words:** Agricultural produce, milled rice.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Women participation in agricultural produce marketing is not a new phenomenon. In Enugu South Area of Enugu State, they constitute an overwhelming population of those who are involved in agricultural produce marketing against the men who focus more on artisan, subsistent farming and civil service occupations (Enugu state Agricultural Development Programme, 2009). A sizeable number of women in Taraba state are actively engaged in agricultural produce marketing as their primary source of livelihood. They market farm produce such as rice, cassava, maize, vegetables etc in order to earn a living.

According to Onyeabor(2009) agricultural produce marketing depicts a picture of a process of demands and motivation of sellers to distribute food items unto ultimate consumers at a profit. Essentially, agricultural produce

marketing forms an integral component of any given successful and economically viable farm business. However, in spite of the importance of agricultural produce marketing in agricultural development, it has remained largely neglected by government. Olayemi (1982) observed that food marketing is a very important but neglected aspect of agricultural development. He noted that more emphasis is usually placed by government on policies to increase food production with little or no consideration on how to distribute the food produced efficiently and in a manner that will enhance increased productivity.

Over the years an enormous amount of research work to understand the problems associated with agricultural produce marketing in Nigeria has been carried out and well documented. Earlier research by Eze et al., (2010) identified produce deterioration, inadequate processing equipment, poor marketing facilities, high costs of shops, inadequate packaging information etc as some of the

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problems of agricultural marketing confronting women agricultural produce marketers in south-eastern Nigeria. Other problems associated with agricultural produce marketing as reported by Awoyinka (2009) include scarcity of agricultural marketing information, inadequacy of transport services in rural areas, poor marketing for agricultural produce, inefficient and inadequate storage system etc.

Since several studies have provided evidences that agricultural produce marketing is often associated with myriads of problems, we suspect that milled rice marketing in southern Taraba state is not without its shortcomings. Therefore the overall purpose of this study was to investigate the marketing problems confronting milled rice women marketers in southern part of Taraba state, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- (1). Describe the Socio-economic characteristics of the milled rice women marketers
- (2). Identify the marketing problems facing the milled rice women marketers
- (3). Identify the agricultural marketing information needs of the milled rice women marketers

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Taraba south Area of Taraba state comprising Donga, Ibi, Takum, Ussa and Wukari Local Government Areas and Yangtu Development Area. Taraba state is located in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, it lies between latitude  $6^{\circ}30''$  and  $9^{\circ}36''$ N of the equator and latitude  $9^{\circ}10''$  and  $11^{\circ}50''$ E of the Greenwich meridian (Taraba State Government diary, 2008). It shares common boundaries with six states of Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroun (Agboola, 1979). The state has a land area of about  $60,000 \text{ km}^2$  (Federal office of statistics, 1996) with a population of 2, 300,736 people (National Population Commission, 2006). Both purposive and simple random techniques were employed in data collection. Donga, Takum and Wukari LGAs were purposefully selected due to the preponderance of rice mills and milled rice marketing activities in these areas. Twenty (20) milled rice women marketers were selected at random in each of the three (3) LGAs. Thus, a total of sixty (60) women who engaged on milled rice marketing constituted the sample size for the study.

Questionnaire and interview schedules were employed for data collection on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, their agricultural marketing information needs and constraints to milled rice marketing in the study area. Frequency counts and simple percentages were used as statistical tools of analysis in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicates that majority (71.7%) of the respondents were within the ages of 31-60 years, while 53% of them were married. Majority (68%) of the women marketers had 6-10 members in their household, while large (43%) numbers of them had no formal education. These findings indicate that most of the milled rice women marketers in southern Taraba state were adults who lack formal education. Earlier research reports by Nwaru and Iwuji (2005) have indicated a positive relationship between education and marketing margin because education has training advantages that helps the marketers to be informed, innovative and averse to risks associated with marketing. From the foregoing, the low educational attainment revealed by this study could have a negative effect on marketing efficiency among the milled rice women marketers.

Majority (78%) of the women marketers have 6-20 years of milled rice marketing experience and majority (60%) of them engage in milled rice marketing as their primary source of livelihood. These results are closely related to earlier reports by Eze et al., (2010) in a study conducted on women agricultural produce marketers in south-eastern Nigeria.

The problems associated with milled rice marketing as given by the respondents are presented in Table 2 below. Given that there are multiple responses, the problems are ranked according to the percentage of respondents who indicated them.

Inadequate credit to carryout milled rice marketing was the major marketing problem identified in the study area. Funds at the disposal of the women marketers were grossly inadequate. In the study area only very few formal credit institutions were available and, the interest rates charged by such institutions are usually very high and unfavorable to the women marketers. Besides, most of the women marketers do not own land holdings that could serve as collateral security for loan. Like the formal credit sources, informal credit providers also charge high costs on funds borrowed by the marketers. In spite of this, the funds provided by these informal credit providers are grossly inadequate to cater for the needs of the women marketers. Lack of credit facilities limits the capacities of the women marketers to embark on a large scale purchase, transportation, processing, and sales of rice. Apart from the problem of inadequate credit facilities, transportation problem is also very evident in the study area. In most rural areas of Nigeria, transport facilities are in short supply. Motor able roads to convey farm produce are lacking and where they do exist, they are either not motor able throughout the year or they are in deplorable conditions and this in turn affects the evacuation of farm produce from the rural areas to urban markets thereby making transportation cost to account for a very significant part of the overall marketing costs.

Agricultural produce marketing requires considerable

Table1: Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic characteristics

Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=60)	Percentage
Marital status	Single	15	25
	Married	32	53
	Widowed	9	15
	Divorced	4	6.7
<b>Age(Years)</b>	15-30	8	13
	31-45	16	26.7
	46-60	27	45
	.60 and above	9	15
<b>Household size</b>	1-5	6	10
	6-10	41	68
	11-15	12	20
	16 and above	9	15
<b>Marketing experience</b>	1-5	3	5
	6-10	33	55
	15-20	14	23
	21 and above	10	16.7
<b>Education</b>	Non-formal	26	43
	Primary	13	21.7
	Secondary	15	25
	Tertiary	6	10
<b>Primary occupation</b>	Full time rice marketer	36	60
	Farming	7	11.7
	Civil servant	6	10
	Artisan	8	13
	Student	3	5

Source: Field survey, 2011

investment of funds in the provision of adequate market infrastructures such as good storage and warehousing facilities. About 72% of the respondents indicated that they lack adequate market infrastructures. Inadequate market infrastructures often lead to produce deterioration due to attack by pests with resultant low revenue from the sales of farm produce. Another serious problem is that of unpredictable bad weather, which has the potential to negatively affect harvest with attendant low yield and shortage of farm produce. Although processing of farm produce tends to add value to the processed produce, rice processing facilities are scarce in the study area as revealed by the respondents. Absence of adequate rice processing facilities adversely affects marketing and lowers women marketers' income.

Closely related to the problem of inadequate processing facilities is the problem of high cost of processing rice in the study area. On the average, it costs about N500 to mill a 50Kg bag of rice. In addition to this cost, some women marketers pay huge sums of money as labor costs for boiling and sun-drying of rice prior to milling. Other costs include the cost of winnowing and sorting of milled rice before packaging. All these costs inevitably, translate to low profit. The various agricultural produce marketing problems identified in the study area are in close agreement with (Awoyinka, 2009; Eze et al., 2010).

Another important marketing problem identified in the study area is that of inadequate market information. Evidently, women milled rice marketers in the study area are desirous of information on credit sources (52%),

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents according to types of agricultural produce marketing problems

Constraints	Frequency*(n=6)	Percentage	Rank
Inadequate credit facilities	58	96.7	1
Transportation problem	50	83.3	2
Inadequate mkt infrastructure	43	71.7	3
Poor mkt information system	37	61.7	4
Shortage of processing facilities	32	53.3	5
Unpredictable/bad weather	28	46.7	6
High cost of processing rice	18	30	7

Source: Field survey, 2011 \*Multiple responses Mkt=Market

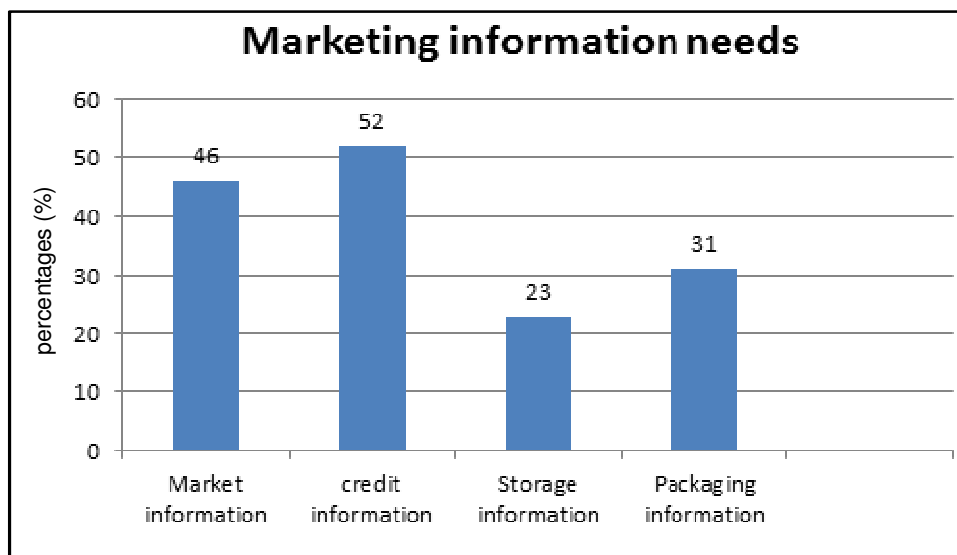


Figure 1: Marketing information needs of milled rice women marketers

storage information (23%), and packaging information (31%) as well as market information (46%) as presented in Figure 1 below. Lack of adequate and timely market information on the part of both sellers and buyers of agricultural produce could greatly reduce marketing efficiency. Awoyinka (2009) has observed that agricultural marketing information is scarce in Nigeria.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study investigates the problems associated with agricultural produce marketing in Nigeria using milled rice women marketers from southern Taraba state as a case study. The study is based on the premise that identifying the marketing constraints being faced by the women marketers could provide a basis for solving some of their

marketing problems and possibly assist in reducing poverty among them.

The results show that the prominent marketing problem confronting the women marketers is that of inadequate credit facilities. This is closely followed by transportation problems and inadequate market infrastructures respectively. Lack of adequate agricultural marketing information was also reported in the study area. Some of the major agricultural marketing information needed by the women marketers includes information on sources of credit, storage information, packaging information, and market information.

Based on the findings of this study, there is convincing rationale to conclude that much still needs to be done in order to improve milled rice marketing with a view to reduce poverty among the women marketers. The following recommendations are therefore suggested:

- I. Milled rice women marketers should form and register market associations and marketing cooperatives so as to facilitate the process of obtaining credit from banks and other financial institutions
- II. There should be provision of adequate transportation facilities, especially by government.
- III. Government, Non-governmental organizations, individuals, corporate organizations and market associations should provide basic market infrastructures.
- IV. Timely and adequate information on agricultural produce marketing should be provided by the extension services.

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