

Assessment of Training and Information Needs of Tomato Marketers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Marketing of tomato is crucial to ensure sustainability of the value chain. It has been noted that for continuous growth in the supply chain of tomato, training and information needs of stakeholders should be adequately addressed. The study therefore examined tomato marketers training and information needs. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to select 182 marketers from Oyo, Nasarawa, Katsina and Ogun states. Data were collected through interview guide and Focus Group Discussion and were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Results revealed that most of the marketers interviewed were males (84.6%), married (92.3%), literate (75.8%) and were members of association (68.1%). Majority of the marketers were operating at retail level (48.9%) and source produce from farmers (69.2%). Major areas of information needs include health and nutritional importance (64.8%), source of credit (61.5%), preservation and storage (59.9%). The most important challenge was lack of storage facilities (62.1%) and perishability of produce (61.1%) while the least constraint was inadequate grading (37.9%). The study recommends capacity development on method of processing and preservation to reduce the losses being experienced in the supply chain.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the Nigerian economy, despite the high oil revenue. The sector contributes over 40% of Nigeria's GDP, employs about 70% of the population and produces about 80% of the food needs. Among the wide range of agricultural crops, vegetables occupy an important place because of their

economic potentials. The term 'vegetable' applies to those plants and plant parts that are edible, especially leafy or fleshy parts that are usually eaten with staples as main courses or supplementary foods in cooked or raw forms. It is estimated that there are at least ten thousand (10,000) plant species used as vegetables worldwide although only about fifty are of great commercial value. Vegetables play a very significant role in human nutrition; they contain vitamins, minerals and chemical compounds that are essential for human health. Among different vegetables grown in Nigeria, tomato clearly stands out as the most important both in scale of production and level of consumption. Tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) is grown by most dry season market gardeners who regard it as the principal crop. Although most other vegetables have restricted demand in Nigeria, demand for tomato is universal. Tomato has great poverty alleviation capacity. Its production, handling, transportation, distribution and marketing will definitely employ a large number of people. Tomato can be processed and exported to other West African nations or sold within the country. An increase in agricultural productivity depends heavily on its marketability. An efficient market does not only link sellers and buyers in reacting to current situations of supply and demand, but rather has a dynamic role to play in stimulating consumption of outputs which are essential elements of economic development. Katharina and Stefan have reported that the concept of marketing subsumes a set of different innovative advertising instruments which aim at having a large effect with a small budget. Agricultural marketing is defined as the performance of all the activities involved in the flow of agricultural products and services from the initial points of agricultural production until they reach the hands of the ultimate consumers. It is concerned with all that happens to crops after leaving the farm gate; making decisions, taking actions and bearing responsibility of the action ^[1].

Agricultural marketing also articulates all processes that take place from when the farmer plans to meet specified demands and market prospects to when the produce finally gets to its consumers. Aminu pointed out that in a typical vegetable marketing, retailers and wholesalers were observed to sell both tomato and onion at the same time in addition to other vegetables like hot pepper, sweet pepper, cabbage, salad and in some cases, chili pepper. The crops were sold in heaps, small baskets and metal containers of varying weights. Tomato marketing is poorly developed in Nigeria. It is characterized mainly by the problem of seasonality and perishability amongst others. Worst still, in the past, the government paid more attention to production with little attention to the marketing of vegetables such as tomato, pepper, onions, garden eggs, okra and leafy vegetables despite the fact that they need spatial marketing facilities. Consequently, losses of 40-50 percent occur for many vegetables mainly due to spoilage, inadequate transportation, sorting, improper packaging and handling and lack of storage facilities. Also, another problem with tomato marketing is in the area of standard weights and measurements. These leave the consumer to sharpen their prowess in haggling abilities in securing a good bargain. This has resulted in deficiencies in some technical and managerial skills. Successful and result oriented requires the skill and knowledge of the marketers which can only be attained through the right training. Information is valuable because it can affect behaviour, decision, or an outcome. Information and training is germane to any profession. Training is teaching, or developing in oneself or others, any skills and knowledge that relate to specific useful competencies. Training need can be defined as skill, knowledge and attitude an individual requires in order to overcome problems as well as to avoid creating problem situation. Also a need can be referred to as the difference between what is and what ought to be.

This implies that a gap is created between the two conditions. Need therefore show that there is lack of something, which if present would better the welfare of an individual or group of people whose situation is at stake. Many studies have established the training needs of different target audience for strategic future Extension planning and development. Some of which include training needs of women farmers in livestock production by Farinde and Ajayi 2005 which revealed that women farmers have training needs which should be met in the course of development programmes directed both at them and the rural populace. Training needs of citrus farmers in South western Nigeria by Oyedele 2006 stated by majority of farmers had favourable attitude towards training in improved techniques of citrus. Topmost production constraints considered limiting are in the order: lack of capital>premature fruit drop>pest incidence>low yielding trees. None of these studies focused on the assessment of the training needs of tomato marketers. Data on the studies on training and information needs of tomato marketers is very scarce or not existing at all. The main objective was to assess the training and information needs of tomato marketers in selected geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- Identify socioeconomic characteristics of tomato marketers in the study area
- Determine information and training needs of marketers in study the area
- Analyse challenges faced by tomato marketers in the study area

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Multistage sampling procedure was employed to sample respondents for the study. In the first stage three out of the six geo-political zones (North West, North Central and South West,) were purposively selected due to their comparative advantage in tomato production. Second stage was purposive sampling of the states (Oyo, Nassarawa, Katsina, Kano and Ogun State).

Third stage was random selection of the Local Government which is based on the established ADP zones. Purposive selection of the markets was based on the volume of produce transaction and then fifth stage was random selection of the marketers. Table 1 shows distribution and spread of the areas of study Information was obtained from respondents through structured interview schedule and Focus Group Discussions. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used in data analysis [2].

Table 1. Percentage distribution of Respondents' Location.

State	Local Government	Frequency	Percentage
Oyo	Afijio	19	10.4
	Ogo Oluwa	5	2.7
	Akwanga	2	1.1
	Lafia	13	7.1
	Obi	1	0.5
	Roni	1	0.5
Katsina	Bagwai	1	0.5
	Danja	15	8.2
	Daura	23	12.6
	Dutsi	3	1.6
	Maiadua	7	3.7
Kano	Bebeji	28	15.4
	Garun mallam	3	1.6
	Kadawa	4	2.1
	Kura	15	8.2
Ogun	Ijebu ode	2	1
	Ilaro	3	1.6
	Sagamu	4	2.1
	Yewa	3	1.6
	Tarka	28	15.4
	Tiwada	1	0.5
	Wamba	1	0.5
Source: Fields Survey, 2017			

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Tomato Marketers

Findings from Table 2 show that most (84.6%) of the marketers of tomato were males and married (92.3%). The result of the FGD corroborated this where *discussants in the North mentioned that majority of us that markets tomato are males which is due to cultural beliefs in which male are mainly involved in activities such as production and marketing among others while the females are expected to be in purdah. This is in line with the findings of Haruna who found out that 88% of tomato marketers in Bauchi state were males but a contrast to the study of Salau and Salman in which majority 70% of the marketers were female. Sizeable proportions of the respondents (71.4%) had 1-10 household members and were within 31-40 years (37.9%). This indicated that the marketers were in the active years. This is corroborated by Salau and Salman 2017 who reported that tomato marketers had an average age of 39.5 years. Majority of the marketers were literate with 41.8%, 26.9% and 7.1% having Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education. Marketing was the major occupation of the respondents (67.6%). Other income generating activities involved in were trading (30.8%), civil servant (2.2%), Artisan (0.5%) and others (66.5%). An appreciable number of the marketers were members of association (68.1%) with the main businesses of the group being cooperative society (19.8%), marketers group (48.9%), and religious group (3.8%). According to Akinsanmi et al 2005, cooperatives are a vehicle for development in Nigeria since they provide credit to farmers. Thus, members of the cooperative are likely to perform better than non-members because of possible economies of scale. Most of the marketers operated at retail (48.9%) and wholesale (39.0%) level. Majority of the marketers sourced their produce from farmers (69.2%), wholesalers (20.3%), and assemblers (7.1%). The prevalent measuring unit employed in the area was basket (84.6%). This showed that improved method of packaging such as the plastic crate is not common in the study area (Table 2) [3].*

Information and training needs of marketers

The major areas of information need of the marketers were on health and nutritional importance of tomato (64.8%), source of credit and loan (61.5%) and available market channel (58.8%). Other important areas of information needs were on methods of preservation and storage (55.5%), source of produce (49.5%), packaging method (48.9%) and pricing (46.7%). Oyedele also affirmed a high information need expressed by Citrus farmers on credit source (70%), market location (63.2%), and storage (66%). The least information required by the marketers was on handling methods (42.3%) despite the highly perishable nature of tomato. Inadequate information on handling methods may lead to high post-harvest losses in the produce.

A number of trainings may be required to improve performance of the actors in tomato supply chain. Findings from Table 3 showed that the most important training needs of the respondents were in the order processing (61.5%), > preservation and storage (59.9%), > credit/loan (49.5%). Other training needs were packaging

(46.2%), handling (40.1%), source of produce and health and nutrition (33%). The least important training need requested for was on pricing (25.8%) of produce [4].

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Information and Training Needs of Marketers.

Variables	Information needs		Training needs	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Source of produce	90 (49.5)	92 (50.5)	60 (33.0)	122 (67.0)
Pricing of produce	85 (46.7)	97 (53.3)	47 (25.8)	135 (74.2)
Market Channel	107 (58.8)	75 (41.2)	61 (33.5)	121 (66.5)
Packaging	89 (48.9)	93 (51.1)	84 (46.2)	98 (53.8)
Handling	77 (42.3)	105 (57.7)	73 (40.1)	109 (59.9)
Preservation & Storage	101 (55.5)	81 (44.5)	109 (59.9)	73 (40.1)
Processing	105 (57.7)	77 (42.3)	112 (61.5)	70 (38.5)
Credit/Loan	112 (61.5)	70 (38.5)	90 (49.5)	92 (50.5)
Health and Nutrition	118 (64.8)	64 (35.1)	60 (33.0)	122 (67.0)
Field Survey, 2017				
*Figures in parenthesis are percentages				

Table 3. Percentage distribution of challenges in tomato marketing.

Variables	Challenges		Very severe	Severe	Not severe
	Yes	No			
Improper marketing	90 (49.5)	92 (50.5)	40 (44.4)	46 (51.1)	4 (4.4)
Transportation of produce	112 (61.5)	70 (38.5)	41 (36.6)	50 (44.6)	21 (18.8)
Storage facilities	113 (62.1)	69 (37.9)	41 (36.3)	48 (42.5)	24 (21.2)
Middlemen	97 (53.3)	85 (46.7)	33 (34.0)	46 (47.4)	18 (18.6)
Packaging of produce	103 (56.6)	79 (43.4)	32 (31.1)	55 (53.4)	16 (20.4)
Pricing	108 (59.3)	74 (40.7)	61 (56.5)	34 (31.5)	13 (12.0)
Grading	69 (37.9)	113 (62.1)	21 (30.4)	29 (42.0)	19 (27.5)
Perishability of produce	111 (61.0)	71 (39.0)	30 (27.0)	58 (52.3)	23 (20.7)
Market	85 (53.3)	97 (46.7)	27 (31.8)	32 (37.6)	26 (30.6)
Source: Field survey, 2017					

The most important constraints to tomato marketing were lack of storage facilities (62.1%), perishability of the produce (61%), and inadequate transportation (61.5%). Other constraints were low pricing (59.3%), inadequate packaging (56.6%), and problem of middlemen (53.3%). The least constraints to tomato marketing was inadequate

grading (37.9%). This is in line with several previous study mentioned by Shehu and Salman (2017) that tomato is characterized mainly by the problem of seasonality and perishability amongst others. Contrary to the study of Meniga 2014 who stated in his study that the most important problems in the study area are price fixing by a certain market and price instability, respectively [5].

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that majority of tomato marketers are located in the Northern part of Nigeria though we have few other ones in the other part of the country. Majority of the marketers were males this boils down to the fact that Northerners are the majority being interviewed and in the North their females are not exposed to go out due to Purdah. The major areas of information needs of the marketers were on health and nutrition, source of credits and loan and available market channels for tomato. Marketers do not indicate serious training needs related to marketing except for processing, preservation and storage of tomato. This is an indication that information is germane to marketing. Major challenges to marketing of tomato are the perishable nature and problem of storage. Therefore we recommend that there should be advocacy and awareness creation on importance of health and nutrition among tomato marketers. Also efforts on how to reduce perishability nature could be done by breeders so as reduce the water content of tomato to reduce its perishability.

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