

RESEARCH ARTICLE

AGRIPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT? A VERITABLE TOOL FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF NIGERIA AGRICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

In the past few years, there has been deliberate effort to move from agriculture to agribusiness in Nigeria. Government at all levels realised that a vital corridor to rejuvenate Nigeria agriculture and to make it more attractive particularly to the teeming youths and a more profitable venture is through agricultural entrepreneurship. Agricultural entrepreneurship also known as agripreneurship have the potential to contribute to a wide range of socioeconomic development of Nigeria and Nigerians such as providing employment and livelihood for majority of the people, foreign exchange earnings, contributing significantly to GDP, poverty reduction, income generation, and improvements in nutrition, health and overall food security in the national economy. Agripreneurship has potential to generate growth, diversifying income, providing widespread employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in rural areas. This paper focused on essential principles of agripreneurship, entrepreneurship skills, and needs of agripreneurship development in Nigeria along with major reason for promoting agripreneurship development in the country.

Key words: Agripreneurship, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship Skills, Potential Areas, Employment Generation, Poverty Reduction and Agribusiness.

INTRODUCTION

Although, Nigeria depends heavily on the oil industry for its budgetary revenues, Nigeria is predominantly still an agricultural society. More than 70 % of the population engages in agricultural production even though at a subsistence level. Agricultural holdings are generally small and scattered. The agricultural sector has been the mainstay of the economy since independence and despite several bottlenecks; it remains a resilient sustainer of the populace. In the 1960s, Nigeria was the world's largest exporter of groundnut, the second largest exporter of cocoa and palm produce and an important exporter of rubber, cotton (Falola and Heaton 2008). Variations in Nigeria weather makes it possible for different cash crops and food to be produced. The main types of food crops are potatoes, sorghum, cocoyams, beans, sweet potatoes, yams, millet, cassava, corn, cow-peas, rice, plantains, bananas, and different vegetables and fruits. The Most important cash crops in Nigeria are citrus, cocoa, palm oil, cotton, palm kernel, groundnuts (peanuts), rubber and benniseed. These were major Nigeria foreign exchange earner in the 1960s and early 1970s until petroleum surpassed them in the 1970s. Nigeria exported its agricultural produce to countries such as Germany, United States of America, France, United Kingdom and Canada among others. An important part of the farming sector in Nigeria includes timber lumbering, fishing, cattle rearing, and poultry, they all contributed over 2 % to the gross domestic products in the 1980s.

In 1987, the United Nation Food and Agricultural Organization estimated that there were about 18,000 camels, 700,000 donkeys, 26 million goats, 13.2 million sheep, 250,000 horses, 1.3 million pigs and 12.2 million cattle which are owned by small holder farmers mostly in the Northern part of Nigeria. In the early 1970s the output from the fisheries subsector ranges between 600,000 to 700,000 tonnes annually. However, by 1990s the output had fallen to 120,000 tonnes per year. This was as a result of the activities of the oil companies in the South-South of Nigeria where pollution had degraded the environment. Since the advent of oil exploration in Nigeria, there has been a steady decline in agricultural production. The oil sector brought about increased revenue for the Federal Government which was far more than the revenue from agricultural sector. This in-turn led to adverse effects on the production levels of both food and cash crops because farmers are no more encouraged by the government to increase or even sustain the production levels they were before the discovery of oil. Hence, agriculture became unattractive and there was massive movements of the youth and elderly to the cities. Collectively, these developments worsened the low productivity, both per unit of land and per worker. Agriculture provided 41 % of Nigeria's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1999. This percentage represented a decrease of 24.7 percent from its contribution of 65.7 percent to the GDP in 1957. The decrease continues because, as economic development occurs, the relative size of the agricultural sector usually decreases. Recently there has been a concerted effort on the part of government to stop the decline in agricultural production through massive investments and encouragement of the teeming youths to go into agribusiness.

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More recently, agriculture employs about two-thirds of Nigeria's labour force, contributes significantly to the GDP and provides a large proportion of non-oil earnings (CIA, 2013; Falola and Heaton 2008). Due to the changing socio, economic, political, environmental and cultural dimensions all over the world and nations' options for survival and for sustainably ensuring success in changing their respective economic environments has become increasingly critical. It is also worth noting that the emergence of the free market economies globally has resulted in the development of a new spirit of enterprise "Agripreneurship" and the increased individual need for responsibility for running their own businesses (Alex, 2011). Agripreneurship is connected with finding ways and means to create and develop a profitable farm business. The terms, entrepreneurship and agripreneurship are frequently used in the context of education and small business formation in agriculture. Dollinger (2003) defines entrepreneurship in agriculture as the creation of innovative economic organization for the purpose of growth or gain under conditions of risk and uncertainty in agriculture. Gray (2002) on the other hand defines an entrepreneur as an individual who manages a business with the intention of expanding the business and with the leadership and managerial skills necessary for achieving those goals. In the face of growing unemployment and poverty in rural areas and slow growth of agriculture there is need of entrepreneurship in agriculture for more productivity and profitability of agriculture. The Agripreneurship program is necessary to develop entrepreneurs and management workforce to cater for agricultural Industries across the world (Bairwa *et al.*, 2014b). Agripreneurship is greatly influenced mainly by the economic situation, education and culture (Singh, 2013).

BASIC TERMINOLOGY RELATED WITH AGRIPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Agripreneur: In general, agripreneur should be proactive, curious, determined, persistence, visionary, hardworking, honest, integrity with strong management and organizational skills. Agripreneurs also known as entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs may be defined as innovators who drive change in the economy by serving new markets or creating new ways of doing things. Thus, an agripreneur may be someone who undertakes a variety of activities in agricultural sector in order to be an entrepreneur.

- J **Agripreneurship:** Agripreneurship is the profitable marriage of agriculture and entrepreneurship. Agripreneurship turn your farm into an agribusiness. The term Agripreneurship is synonym with entrepreneurship in agriculture and refers to agribusiness establishment in agricultural and allied sector.
- J **Agriclinics:** These are envisaged to provide expert advice and services to farmers on technology, cropping practices, protection from pests and diseases, market trends, prices of various crops in the markets and also clinical services for animal health which would enhance productivity of crops/animals and increased income to farmers.
- J **Agribusiness Centres:** These are envisaged to provide farm equipment on hire, sale of inputs and other services. These centres will provide a package of input facilities; consultancy and other services with the aim

of strengthen transfer of technology and extension services and also provide self-employment opportunities to technically trained persons.

NEED FOR AGRIPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

Since the inception of New Economic Reforms, adoption of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) and world trade organization (WTO) in 1992-95, it is expected that rural area will grow at par with urban area. Performance of agriculture during first phase of economic reforms till 1998 remained driving force for this notion among all the spheres of academia, administration and government (Singh, 2013). However, things went on different path in the later years and performance of agriculture has not remained satisfactory. During the oil boom of early seventies, agriculture used to be treated as just an activity of land tilling and crop harvesting but growing waste land, depleting natural resources, growing migration by rural youth to urban areas, negative perception of the children of farmers towards farming, and emerging technologies in agriculture have necessitated redesigning of agricultural activities. Applying the thought and practice of entrepreneurship in the field of agriculture generates wide range of economic benefits like – increased agri productivity, creation of new business ventures, new Jobs, innovative products and services, development of rural areas and increased wealth. Traditional farmers who are unaware of scientific agriculture and effective agri management systems are unable to cope with delaying monsoons, drought, crop debts, fake seeds and shortage of fertilizer, as a result resort to abandoning agriculture. The managerial, technical and innovative skills of entrepreneurship applied in the field of agriculture may yield positive results and a well-trained agripreneur may become a role model to all such disheartened farmers. Sah (2009) state that developing entrepreneurs in agriculture will solve the entire problem like (a) Reduce the burden of agriculture (b) Generate employment opportunities for rural youth (c) Control migration from rural to urban areas (d) Increase national income (e) Support industrial development in rural areas (f) Reduces the pressure on urban cities.

Entrepreneur's Qualities and Entrepreneurial Skills for Agripreneurship:

Entrepreneurs are those people who exhibit common traits such as single-mindedness, drive, ambition, creative, problem solving, practical, and goal-oriented. An entrepreneur is an individual who recognizes an opportunity or unmet needs and takes the risk to pursue it. He needs to develop these abilities, managing productivity and seeking out new markets (Singh, 2013). Personal qualities of an agri-entrepreneur significantly affect the agribusiness (Brockhaus and Horwitz, 1986; Nandram and Samson, 2000). Self-criticism, leadership, market orientation and creativity are important for successful entrepreneurship development. Entrepreneurship skills are considered to be those competencies required to accomplish tasks and activities related to the farm business. These can be developed by learning and experience. Hanf and Muller (1997) suggest that in a dynamic environment with fast technical progress, open minded farm entrepreneurs will recognise more problems than they are able to rationally solve. Man *et al.*, (2002) categorized entrepreneurial competences in six key areas which includes opportunity recognition skills, relationship

building, organizing, strategic competences, conceptual thinking and problem-solving skills. Lauweres (2002) study of weaknesses in entrepreneurship and selected seven critical success factors which are management and strategic planning, knowledge of the ecosystem, capable and professional staff, understanding of the value chain perspective, craftsmanship, ability to learn and seek opportunity and enterprising personal characteristics. Thus, management skills are the complete package of skills that a farmer would use in order to develop the farm business. Kallio and Kola (1999) in a study of farmers in Finland attempted to determine what factors gave farmers competitive advantage over other farmers, suggest that there are seven characteristics of a successful farm and farmer

- J Profitable production seemed to be associated with continuous evaluation of production, incomes and expenditures.
- J Constant development of cognitive and professional skills i.e., Continual Professional Development (CPD).
- J They benefit from a positive work ethic.
- J Goal-oriented operation, i.e., the ability to set goals, to reach them and to set new ones.
- J Utilization of recent information that is relevant for the individual farmer's own circumstances and the needs of the farm.
- J Favourable starting points for the enterprise, meaning good condition of machinery, buildings, land and an appropriate balance between pricing of product and investments in production.
- J Cooperation with others in the supply chain.

Drucker, (2018) reported that successful farmers differ from others in terms of three personality traits. They have more belief in their ability to control events, problem-solving abilities and social initiative. Agripreneurs is a dynamic business manager performing various agri based activities using different resources viz. physical resources, financial resources, human resources and information, in order to accomplish a certain goal.

Main Reasons For Promoting Agripreneurship In Nigeria: Nigeria is located in the western part of Africa between latitudes 4 16'N and 14 37'E. It occupies a total land area of 92 million hectares out of which 82 million hectares is arable. 41 % of the arable land is cultivated and a population of 194 million people (NPC, 2016). By virtue of its geographical extent, it spans different climatic and ecological zones. The variable climatic conditions and physical features have endowed Nigeria with a very rich biodiversity. The mean annual rainfall ranges from about 450 mm in the North East to about 3500 mm in the coastal South East, with rain falls within 90 to 290 days respectively. The mean annual temperature ranges from 27 C in the South to 30 C in the North with extreme of 14 C and 45 C and an altitude range of 0 – 1000m above sea level (FGN, 2010). Nigeria's wide range of climate variations allows it to produce a variety of food and cash crops. The country has six distinct agro-ecological zones transiting in south-north direction from the Atlantic coast to the Arid Savanna of Sahel. These are the Mangrove Swamp, Rainforest, Derived Savanna, Guinea Savanna, Sudan Savanna and Sahel Savanna zones. Sunshine hours and day length are ideally suited for round the year cultivation of crops.

Nigeria is rich in wild fauna resources and can therefore boast of a high biodiversity. There are 22,000 vertebrate and invertebrate species, about 20,000 insect, 1,000 bird, 1,000 fish, 247 mammal and 123 reptile species. The diversity of Nigeria's wild animals can be attributed to the country's tropical location, size and its ecosystems (FAO, 2000). These varieties of ecosystems range from rainforests in the south to moist savannah in the central part of the country and dry arid savannah in the far north. There are also freshwater, brackish and marine ecosystems occurring, while features of montane vegetation have been found at high altitudes in the eastern borderlands (Falade & Adebajo, 2008). The country's rich fauna is also as a result of the diverse vegetation types of these ecosystems. There are mammalian species such as the African Elephants, African buffalo and hippopotamus existing in the rainforest. Other large mammalian species found here are the large duikers, Chimpanzee, and red river-hog. The savannah areas house species such as the hartebeest and warthog and most of the carnivores. Grass cutters, giant rats and tree squirrels are among the vast variety of small mammals that exist in the savannahs as well as a range of primates (wcsnigeria.org, 2012). The lowland rain forest provides habitat also for about 200 species of birds (FAO, 2000). Four of the bird species; Anambra waxbill, Ibadan malimbe, Jos Plateau indigo-bird and the Rock Fire-Finch are endemic to the country, making them globally important species for conservation. Nigeria is also noted as a global hotspot for some species of primate. A great diversity of this is found especially in the Gulf of Guinea forests of Cross River State. Some of these species are endemic to Nigeria, like the white-throated monkey, Sclater's guenon and the Niger Delta red colobus. In the second quarter of 2020, agriculture contributes 24.6% to GDP, 18% of total exports earnings between the second half of 2018 (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics) and provides employment to more than 70% of country's work force.

ROLE OF AGRIPRENEURSHIP IN NATIONAL ECONOMY: Agripreneurship plays various roles in the growth and development of national economy through entrepreneurship development which increases the income level and employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas (Bairwa *et al.*, 2012a). Agripreneurship also play following role in the economic system (Sah, 2009). It helps in inducing productivity gains by smallholder farmers and integrating them into local, national and international markets. It helps in reducing food costs, supply uncertainties and improving the diets of the rural and urban poor in the country. It also generating growth, increasing and diversifying income, and providing entrepreneurial opportunities in both rural and urban areas.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE: Nowadays, easy access to technology, emergence of micro financing, liberalized government rules, awareness and training programmes on agri and allied sectors and finally changing mindset of the highly qualified people to go for self-employment in the field of agriculture have contributed significantly in enhancing the potentiality for agripreneurship in Nigeria (Bairwa *et al.*, 2014a). Agriculture have several areas of entrepreneurship which include the activities like, Dairying, Sericulture, Goat rearing, Rabbit rearing, Floriculture, Fisheries, Shrimp

Farming, Sheep rearing, vegetable cultivation, nursery farming, farm forestry (Pandey, 2013). The possible areas of entrepreneurship in agriculture are: -

- J) **Agro produce processing units:** These units do not manufacture any new product. They merely process the agriculture produce e.g., Rice mills, Dal mills, Decorticating mills etc.
- J) **Agro Produce manufacturing units:** These units produce entirely new products based on the agricultural produce as the main raw material e.g., Sugar factories, Bakery, Straw board units etc.
- J) **Agro-inputs manufacturing units:** These units produce goods either for mechanization of agriculture or for increasing manufacturing plants, e.g., Fertilizer production units, Food processing units, Agricultural implements etc.
- J) **Agro service centres:** These include the workshops and service centre for repairing and serving the agricultural implement used in agriculture.
- J) **Miscellaneous areas:** Besides the above-mentioned areas, the following areas may prove to be encouraging to establish agri enterprises such as setting up of Apiaries, Feed processing units, Seed processing units, Mushroom production units, Commercial vermin-compose units, Goat rearing farmers club, Organic vegetable and fruits retail outlet, Bamboo plantation and Jatropha cultivation.

CONCLUSION

Agripreneurship is the need of hours to make agriculture a more attractive and profitable venture. It is clear that there is a great scope for entrepreneurship in agriculture and this potentiality can be tapped only by effective management of agri elements such as soil, seed, water and market needs. An individual with risk bearing capacity and a quest for latest knowledge in agriculture sector can prove to be a right agripreneur. The agriculture sector has a large potential to contribute to the national income while at the same time providing direct employment and income to the numerically larger and vulnerable section of the society. Agripreneurship is not only an opportunity but also a necessity for improving the production and profitability in agriculture and allied sector.

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