

# PDF - THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF CASSAVA PRODUCTION - researchcub.info

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

This study is aimed at finding out the cost of economic cultivation of cassava in Itu Local Government Area of Akwalbom State. It is one of the world's most important staple food crops and provides a major source of carbohydrate to those who feeds on it. Many development oriented policies have been implemented in Nigeria, especially in the agricultural sector since independence. The Federal Government has made some institutional and policy reforms targeted at improving the socio-economic status of the smallholder farmers. These include Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP) and the Cassava Multiplication Programme (CMP) and the School to Land Programme mounted by the Rivers State Government. Available reports showed that many aspects of agricultural production, such as cultivation, marketing, processing, etc were covered (ADP, 2005). The Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) is an offshoot of the CMP. Nnanna (2010) contended that RTEP is a farmer oriented programme whose beneficiaries are poor households and smallholder farmers but the overall objective of RTEP is to enhance national food self-sufficiency, improve rural households' food security and income for poor farmers within the cassava belt which include the Southern and Middle belt States of Nigeria (Onyeneke, 2008). Cassava is an important source of dietary carbohydrate, and provides food for over 60 million people in Nigeria (Abdulahi, 2003). Cassava's adaptability to relatively marginal soils, erratic rainfall; its high productivity per unit of land and labour, the certainty of obtaining some yield even under the most adverse conditions and the possibility of maintaining continuity of supply throughout the year (Nweke, 1994), make this root crop a basic component of the farming system in many areas of Nigeria including Rivers State. Famine rarely occurs in areas where cassava is widely grown, since it provides a stable food base to the food production system. Apart from its use as a staple food to human beings other uses include animal feed formulation, agro-industrial uses (e.g. starch, ethanol, adhesive, fructose/glucose syrup), the peels in organo-mineral fertilizers formulation (Ojeniyi, 2001; Akanbi, et.al.; 2006, Iyagba, 2010). Cassava has become the magic crop in Nigeria as a result of the Presidential initiative on cassava some years ago with good export potential.

Agriculture is the backbone of Itu farmers and cassava production is their area of specialization. Cassava originated from Brazil and was introduced into tropical West Africa by the Portuguese in the 16th and 17th centuries (Woyengi – Ina 1969). Cassava production in Itu Local Government Area is as old as the community itself. Sweet cassava (*Manihot Utilisima*) is a member of the Euphorbiaceae species which originated from South America and is cultivated in all warm regions of the world (IR VINE 1969).

Cassava was not known in wild state and its evolution as a species is directly linked to selection by man under cultivation. A famine reserve by Colonial governments such as Java and the British in West Africa and Southern India and of cassava processing export industries were established in Makker (Hinton, 1988) given extended maturity duration, cassava cultivation is limited to the tropics and sub tropical.

In Itu, this root crop is only second to yam. This importance is traced to the colonial period when cassava was often a famine reserve crop. Some farm holdings in cassava cultivation to the present day support this view. However, cassava today is a commercial crop inter planted so often with other crops. Hardwood stems cuttings usually about 30mm long are planted either on mounds or ridges or on the flat bed. Manuring the soil improves the yield, but little attention with early weeding is beneficial. Cassava is consumed in many

forms such as garri, fufu, tapioca, flour, boiled or roasted for consumption and can be consumed or boiled to pigs, and other herbivores. The leaves are eaten as vegetable.

In Itu, Akwalbom State generally, there exist extensive trade in garri, cassava is widely produced, just like cash crop with existing market in future. Development of cassava production will require strengthening of the market for the crop. Finance is one of the problems that farmers from Itu encounter because most of the cassava farmers lack finance to purchase planting materials and to hire labour to support the farming operation. Sometimes government give grants, but farmers misused the fund.

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