

## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR JOB CREATION IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

This paper considers the relevance of Agricultural Education as a veritable tool for job creation against the background of increasing unemployment rate among school leavers, and the resultant negative effects on the national economy. The author looked at the concept of Agricultural Education, Agricultural Education as a veritable tool for job creation and areas of job creation in Agricultural Education. The paper also examines factors militating against job creation and ways of enhancing Agricultural Education for job creation. Recommendation made on ways to sustain job creation in Agricultural Education.

### **Introduction**

Agriculture in Nigeria has developed through the primitive apprenticeship and subsistence systems to modern and commercial agricultural enterprises. Most agricultural practitioners today see farming as a business. Nigeria is endowed with great agricultural potential and resources but these are yet to be adequately tapped to meet developmental needs. Food needs and demand have always remained higher than supply, leading to scarcity and high cost of essential food items. By and large, agriculture and its products will continue to be main stay of our economy. About 80

percent of the total population is engaged in agricultural employment in Nigeria, while up to 60 percent of the population continues to live as indigenous farmers in rural areas (Efianayi, 2005). Consequently, the federal and various state governments have put considerable effort and resources into agricultural growth and development for job creation and self-reliance. They have conducted both in the school and out of school education programmes through their various agencies and institutions so as to develop agriculture for job creation (Oharisis 2005).

Agriculture is seen by Omoruyi, Orhue, Aderobo, and Aghimien (2004) as the production of crops and animals for man's use and that agricultural production involves series of activities beginning with the cultivation of the land for the growing of crops and rearing of animals as well as the marketing of the farm commodities. To them agriculture is a broad based enterprise or industry with many components of business and job creation.

The Federal Ministry of Agricultural, Water Resources and Rural Development (1985), noted that agriculture is the mainstay of the Nigeria economy with assigned roles to perform in the course of the country's economic growth and development. Among the roles ascribed to the agricultural sector are those of providing adequate food for an increasing population, supplying adequate raw materials to the industrial sector, constituting the major sources of employment and foreign exchange earnings and providing a market for the products of the industrial sector. These important roles necessitate adequate education in agriculture because it can gainfully engage the teeming unemployed populace.

### **The Basic Concept of Agricultural Education**

The Federal Government of Nigeria in recognition of the importance of agriculture in the national economy, introduced pre-vocational agriculture in the junior secondary curriculum in order to equip the young students with the

necessary pre-vocational or entry skills in agricultural occupations.

According to Ochi (2003), the broad objectives of the curriculum include:

- i) To stimulate students interest in agriculture.
- ii) To assist students acquire and integrate basic knowledge and skills in agriculture.
- iii) To expose students to the field of agriculture.
- iv) To prepare students for occupation and for further studies in agriculture.

Egbule (2004) defined Agricultural Education as the type of education that is employed in training learners in the process of agricultural productivity, as well as in the techniques for the teaching of agriculture. Agricultural Education is also concerned with that aspect of learning that prepare people and personnels to become teachers of agriculture extension agents and other professionals in areas that required a broad knowledge of agriculture. It among other things focuses on the development of leadership skills needed in planning and achieving long range goals and objectives, including improved agricultural production, conservation of natural and human resources and provision of education programmes for personal family and community growth and development.

The concept of agricultural education according to Ochi (2005) may be defined in terms at:

1. The training designed by agricultural science teachers

- general proficiency in vocational agriculture.
2. Training or re-training which is given in agricultural education department of post primary and post secondary schools under public supervisor and control.
  3. Provision of systematic learning experience which are designed to equip the student teachers with skilled, competencies, abilities, techniques, attitudes, knowledge and meaning practical training required for use in vocational agriculture.

**Agricultural Education as a Veritable Tool for Job Creation.**

From the origin, agriculture has been the major sources of employment. The search for food by the earliest man kept him busy on full time. His attempts at crop husbandry and animal domestication also kept him quite busy. Today, agriculture is not just an occupation, it is the singular industry in Nigeria with the greatest number as employees, all kept busy in various forms of agricultural production at different levels. Over 75 percent of the Nigerian working populace are engaged in agriculture as poultry farmers, crop production farmers, cattle rearers, fishermen, food processors and others.

**Areas of Job Creation in Agricultural Education**

Training in vocational agriculture in institutions of learning should be seen as a design by governments to equip youths

with specific knowledge and skills as to be able to employ themselves on graduation. Vocational agriculture programme is designed in areas of agriculture such as crop science, animal’s husbandry, soil science, horticulture, agricultural economics, fishery, forestry and wildlife. Other areas include Agricultural engineering, Agricultural extension etc.

According to Aghimien and Ojo-Nosa (2003), a well trained vocational agriculturist who has the zeal and commitment can use the knowledge and skills acquired in any of the above for self-reliance and job creation but can on the long run, be an empower labour, in the following fields:

1. **Crop Production:-**  
Production/cultivation of food crops, like rice, maize, guinea corn, beans, yams, groundnut and cassava be embarked upon by graduates of vocational agriculture. These crops have short production cycles which make it possible to produce them at least two times in a year under natural rainfall. These crops are also in great demands throughout the year as they form the basic staple food of many Nigerian. Huge capital outlay is not required before one can go into the production of these crops.
2. **Production of Vegetable Crops:-**  
Gainful self employment skills can be under taken on the production of vegetable crops such as tomatoes, pepper, amaranthus,

fluted pumpkin, cabbage, lettuce and others which are of great demand everyday for different purposes. Another advantage of vegetable production is that production can be carried out throughout the year especially with the adaptation of simple irrigation procedures. With good production plans, vegetable producers can generate income all year round.

3. **Livestock Production:-**

Somebody who chooses to engage in the production of poultry birds such as fowls, turkey, duck and guinea fowls either for eggs or meat and also pigs, will be fully occupied throughout the year which guarantees income at regular intervals. Moreover, these enterprises can be undertaken with little capital and small space of land.

4. **Fish Production:-** As a part of the integrated farming approach, a graduate of vocational agriculture involved in poultry production can be more gainfully employed through the rearing of fishes in ponds and/ or tanks. Fishes such as catfish and tilapia can utilize waste food material for food thereby, reducing cost of feeding to minimum. Moreover, fishes are of high demand in market with no discrimination of any kind. More importantly, ponds can even be constructed within a living

environment to persons who wish to be engaged in fish production as means of sustenance.

5. **Provision of Farm Services:-** A graduate of agricultural education can be engaged in the provision of farm services such as pest and disease control, transportation of farm commodities, land preparation with special machines and veterinary services.

Others areas are:-

6. Establishment of horticulture garden
7. Agricultural products processing.
8. Marketing of farm inputs and farm commodities.

**Factors Militating Against Job Creation in Agriculture in Nigeria.**

Adeokun and Alao (2002) identified the following as factors hindering job creation in agriculture:-

- a. Unsuitable government agricultural policies and programme.
- b. Civil service bureaucracy
- c. Social cultural factors

According to them, other problems include under funding of agricultural development projects, natural hazards, transport cost, inadequate local processing and storage facilities and the neglect of the roles of women in agricultural development.

**Ways of Enhancing Agricultural Education for Job Creation**

The following are ways of enhancing agricultural education for job creation.

1. **Access to Farmland:-**

The government and authorities in the rural communities should put policies in place that will give farmlands to men and women who are ready to own farms. Also, more forest reserves can be released for agricultural production. It is also important that the land use decree of 1978 be amended by Federal Government to make farmland easily accessible to rural farmers including graduates of agricultural education.

2. **Financial Empowerment:-**

Finance is very vital in agricultural production as it can take care of all other resources. For easy access to agricultural loan by young graduates, the various banks should be encouraged by government to establish branches in rural areas where men and women engaged in food production can obtain loans. The micro credit financing programme of government should not only be made available to traders and other small scale businesses, but also focus on food production.

3. **Provision of Basic Amenities:-** The government at all levels including non-government organization should set up projects and establish basic social amenities in rural areas that

will make life better for rural dwellers.

4. **Provision of Subsidy:-** The Federal, State and Local Governments should give farm subsidy to agricultural education graduates. The provision of subsidized seedlings, fertilizers and farm tools should reach the young agricultural education graduates before planting season.

5. **Encouraging Young Graduates to go into Agriculture:** This can be achieved by provision of basic amenities in rural areas, establishment of farm settlement scheme and employment opportunities in rural areas.

6. **Encouraging Farmers in Areas of Quick Investment in Agricultural Production:** These areas include production of arable crops such as maize, rice, guinea corn, cowpea and cassava production or vegetable crops such as tomatoes, peppers, amaranthus etc and fish production.

**Conclusion**

The production of enough food for the ever growing Nigeria population is a task that must be accomplished, if the country is to claim true independence. At present, Nigeria is witnessing near food crisis which is evidenced of the rising price of basic food in the nation. Therefore, agricultural education as a veritable tool

for job creation requires the harnessing of the agricultural production potentials of men and women.

To achieve high capacity building for sustainable growth and job creation in agriculture, there should be good policy formation and implementation that will change attitude and make information and materials resources available to farmers. Thus, it is hoped that agriculture will continue to be the main stay of Nigeria economy and contribute more than ever before to the overall food basket of the nation and job creation.

### Recommendation

1. The existing agricultural training institutions should be well equipped with the necessary modern tools, equipments, improved seeds, chemicals and different livestock species to expose students to practical agriculture.
2. Agricultural Education Programme should be made compulsory at all levels of the nation's education system. Tertiary institution students in faculties/schools other than agriculture can be made to study agriculture as a general studies programme, so that on graduation, such students could go into full time or part time farming in future, thus creating job for them.
3. There must be consistency in government agricultural policies.
4. Incentive should be given to deserving students who have excelled in skills display so that more students should feel more committed to the subject.
5. Policy maker must develop the political will to support investment in research and extension to ensure development of appropriate technologies for farmers. Investment in research should not be viewed as a waste as there can never be any development without research.

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