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The Adoption of Agripreneurship as a Mitigating Measure to Unemployment in Nigeria: A Topical Review

Uche, C. ^α & Familusi, L. C. ^σ

Abstract Agriculture as an enterprise is going through transition globally. It is assuming new shape and scope and no more the ordinary cultivation of crops and rearing of animals or an enterprise for the rural people. The concept of agripreneurship is the combination of agriculture and entrepreneurship. Agripreneurship is the option to adopt in the quest to make agriculture an enterprise of appeal in contemporary business engagements. If agriculture must transit from its largely subsistence status to becoming a competitive enterprise in the assessment of entrepreneurs, incorporation of business concepts in handling issues of agriculture is the way to go. The study was mostly a review work that focussed on using agribusiness to boost job creation, increase productivity and the income bases of farmers. This was considered because a significant number of Nigeria's population are engaged in agriculture and the development of agribusiness and agripreneurship will go a long way in curtailing unemployment that is prevalent in the economy, ensure food security and grow the economy. However, the review noted that this option is faced with various constraints and limitations in the area of experience, access to credit and infrastructure among others. Agripreneurship can contribute to social and economic development, reduction in poverty index, ensures good nutrition and food security. In addition, it will lead to diversifying the economy and income bases, providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Keywords: *agripreneurship, agriculture, enterprise, farmer, employment, economy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In a logical assessment, a nations' economy consists largely of two principal sectors: agriculture and industry. Agriculture to a large extent is rural based and industry bran. According to Price water house Coopers (PwC) (2016), agriculture's contribution to Nigeria's real GDP in the fourth quarter of 2015 was 24.18%. This it reported was due to the introduction of mechanised farming and the agribusiness value chain. The Government encouraged this development in agriculture as a precursor to poverty alleviation through agribusiness aided by investments from commercial farmers. With the fall in the price of crude oil in the international market in recent times, the Government is emphasizing agricultural exports as an Alternative foreign exchange earner. The articulation and

introduction of entrepreneurial principles into agriculture will be a strong driver of this programme and improve on what has been achieved so far in the agricultural sector.

Agriculture today in Nigeria is facing challenges that are yet to be addressed such as inadequate infrastructure, difficulty in accessing credit and absence of training for smallholder farmers on opportunities that the enterprise offers among other constraints in modern farming techniques. Mitigating these will assist in improving Nigeria's food security, develop agribusiness, grow the GDP and raise foreign exchange earnings (PwC, 2016). Other challenges are soaring food prices that are technically beyond the reach of the common man, changes in climatic systems that have changed patterns of agricultural practices and adaptable crops, rapid urbanisation that has altered production and consumption patterns; the list is endless.

These developments have ushered in changes in the food markets, created new opportunities and challenges for the farmers, especially the smallholders. With the recognition of the importance of agriculture in the economic development continuum and growth, market and business oriented agriculture seem to be prominent factors that will introduce dynamism in the enterprise. Agripreneurship then, is a key in this regard (Nwasiwe 2017). The dwindling potential and fortunes of Nigeria's agriculture place urgent need on the development of a system that can support the agricultural sector that is already well constrained by inadequate technologies and institutional weaknesses among others. For the agriculture sector to remain competitive in the global economy, new ideas must be developed and processes for value creation in a sustainable manner devised. (Uneze, 2013)

Agriculture as an enterprise is going through transition globally. It is assuming new shape and scope and no more a mere cultivation of crop and rearing of animals or an enterprise for the rural population. Other aspects like value addition, high-tech agriculture, global marketing, organic farming etc. have redefined agriculture (Palanivelu and Madhupriya, 2013). These have led to improved performance of the sector and enhanced human resource development initiative. Many people previously viewed agriculture as an enterprise that is laden with hard work and little profit, this is a

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misconception. Agriculture is a dynamic enterprise, offering numerous profitable opportunities for engagement along the value chain.

Nigeria's Agricultural policy is targeting food security, import substitution to mitigate the massive food import and conserve foreign exchange, job creation and enhancing economic diversification and growth. These objectives can be achieved if we run agriculture as a business and encourage private-sector led engagements as the main objective driver. This commercialization orientation will involve the application of technologies, development of input supply chains, market linkages and financial services that engage the farmers. These are critical to job creation, economic diversity, and sustainable economic growth (Ado, 2017). Therefore, it is of great importance to develop and present agriculture in the context of product development, value addition, and, as a business that is knowledge driven.

The addition of business knowledge to agriculture births agribusiness and, the incorporation of entrepreneurial principles into agribusiness have evolved agriprenurship. Therefore, the concept of agriprenurship is the combination of agriculture and entrepreneurship. An agriprenur like an entrepreneur must be able to detect and create business opportunities that he or she can exploit. Agriprenurship is an employment strategy that will ensure self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency. Its development through training is a necessary factor in the promotion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises particularly, for the first generation agriprenurs (Nagalakshmi and Sudhakar, 2013). There are numerous opportunities from the farm to- the- table begging to be exploited. Agriprenurs must be determined and persistent, visionary and organized with good management skills. He or she must be an innovator who can initiate changes by developing and serving new markets. Agriprenurship is the profit oriented marriage of agriculture and entrepreneurship; it turns a farm into an agribusiness (Birwa *et al*, 2014). This presentation aims at enlightening people on agriculture and how to develop and use their entrepreneurial skills to create viable and sustainable profit making enterprises from agriculture over time.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was entirely a review one that made use of secondary data that were culled from different reliable sources. It focussed mainly on Nigerian and the place of agriprenurship in the scheme of Nigeria's economic development. Nigeria as a nation is one of the States in the sub-Sahara Africa with a population of more than 180 million. Nigeria's economy outside reliance on petroleum is significantly dependent on agriculture with several agri-business opportunities yet to be exploited through agriprenurship initiatives.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

a) Agriculture and Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur whose main business is agriculture or agriculture-related is an agriprenur (Dobson and Markley, 2010). Nassir we (2017) explained Agriprenurship as application of entrepreneurship principles in agriculture and, entrepreneurship as a concept emphasizes the transformation of an idea into a business or, the expansion of an existing or established business. Entrepreneurs from his perception are usually creative people who embrace opportunities and accept risks, changing business strategies to adapt to changing environments. Citing Kahn (2012) the report indicated that entrepreneurs are often innovators. However, in reference to Wongtschwski *et al*(2013) the study further opined that farmers, while usually being innovative and creative, are often limited by inadequate experiences, access to services, markets, and skills that could engender realistic chances to succeed as entrepreneurs.

Nwassiwe (2017) in Kahn, (2012) also noted that these limitations exclude other barriers and externalities such as economic and social barriers, policies, and regulations. These perceived limitations can be mitigated through a practical application of business principles to agriculture. Referring to an Anonymous writer (2016), the work stated that Agri-business development will benefit the economy in various ways: it will generate large-scale employment and engage idle human and natural resources, encourage capital formation through the mobilization of idle savings, decentralize economic power and engender equitable distribution of wealth, promote linkages for industrial and economic development and enhance a country's exports.

Unite, (2013) posits that the peculiarities of Nigeria's agriculture sector make it very dire for agriprenurship development. Being the mainstay of Nigeria's economy and taking up a significant share of the employment space, agriculture and agribusiness should be treated as an emergency. This then implies that Agriprenurship is a necessity for socio-economic enhancement through creation of agribusinesses, development of agricultural commodities value chains and the overall economic growth. A paradigm shift from agriculture to agribusiness is essential to rejuvenate the Nigerian agriculture with a view to making it a much more attractive and profitable enterprise.

Adipose *et al* (2015) proved this point in their campaign for cassava as a multi-faceted crop, proving that every agricultural crop holds promising features for an enterprising mind. From cassava alone, they were able to develop and show case several products to the rural farmers from the 'ordinary' cassava crop. To the local farmers and business minded participants in the

workshop that was organized, that was unimaginable. The table below shows the various products derived and show cased at the workshop from cassava alone.

Table 1: Derivatives of processed Cassava in agriprenurship value chain line

| Source of product | Derivative | Remark |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Cassava | High quality flour | Baking raw material |
| | Toasted granules(garret) | A popular dish |
| | Odourless cassava paste(fife) | A popular dish |
| | Cassava chips | A processing raw material |
| | Tapioca | Snack |
| | Starch | Edible/ used in textile industry |
| | Cassava/wheat rolls | Snack |
| | Cassava/wheat chin | Snack |
| | Cassava flour cookies | Snack |
| | Cassava strips | Snack |
| | Cassava flour doughnuts | Snack |
| | Cassava threads | Snack |
| | Cassava short crust pastry/ pan cake | Snack |
| | Cassava croquettes/ meat balls | Snack |
| | Cassava crisps/fritters | Snack |
| | Cassava bread/meat | Snack |
| Cassava meat cake/French fries | Snack | |

Source: Adipose et al, 2015

Over eighteen products from cassava alone. Cassava is not isolated in this innovative exploits and neither are its derivatives limited to these only. Cassava is also a raw material in the pharmaceutical companies and the industries. There are several other ancillary products and services that can be developed from the cassava crop alone. Other agricultural products also hold the same feature however underdeveloped or undeveloped. All that is needed is entrepreneurial and inquisitive mind and its application in agriculture which for now is at low ebb in Nigeria.

Agriculture is assumed to be a low-tech venture that has limited dynamics and embarked on by smallholder farmers who are less innovative. This however has changed over the last decade because of economic liberalization, reduction in protection of agricultural markets and a fast evolving and critical society. Agricultural firms must take advantage of the changes in the market, consumer habits, environmental regulations, additional requirements for product quality, value chain management, food safety, and so on. These changes have made it possible for new entrants, innovations and portfolio entrepreneurship. (Nagalakshmi and Sudhakar, 2013)

An agriprenur must therefore identify opportunities and be innovative. This type of approach to agriculture provides opportunities that will enhance the hitherto unsustainable agriculture practice of mere subsistence. By implication, an Agriprenur has to consider the full range of agribusiness opportunities within the food system such as processing and packaging, logistics and services and even the recycling of agriculture wastes (Carr and Rollin, 2016). Succinctly,

agriprenurship is the discovery of new products and services or production processes, strategies and organizational forms, new markets for new products and; inputs that did not previously exist (Needy, 2011). These activities that are agriculture related have been ignored over the years for very scarce white collar jobs.

Ado, (2017) observed that agriculture is the highest contributor to Nigeria’s GDP with an estimate of over 40% from the colonial period to about 29% presently and followed by services and the petroleum sectors that contributed about 15%. Agriculture therefore is pivotal to the country’s economic development and should be properly linked in efforts to rejuvenate the economy.

The production of agricultural produce, its distribution and supply provide opportunities for private sector participation. There are several opportunities for agro-industries in farm operations such as production, distribution and supply of inputs like fertilizers and other agro-chemicals etc. There is therefore the need to encourage the local manufacture of inputs hitherto imported from other countries to create jobs. The production and marketing of farm machineries, tools and equipment will provide further opportunities for private sector initiatives (Ado, 2017). Other areas of opportunities are the food processing and marketing sector which are not yet optimally exploited. The agricultural sector still is battling with wastes and losses resulting from inadequate processing and storage.

Ado (2017) in Minong et al (2005) identified over a dozen enterprises in Nigeria’s agriculture sector. The enterprises identified are: input production and supply, food crop production, fisheries, forestry and commodity

processing and storage. Other categories are commodity marketing, manufacturing and agricultural commodity export support services. This list however excludes the cash crop sector that is yet to be maximally exploited. Should this sector be given the attention it demands, the multiplier effect on the Nigerian economy will drastically reduce the index of unemployment, scarcity of foreign exchange that has been a protracted issue in recent times, reduce the statistics of food insecurity and grow the economy.

Carr and Rollin (2016) in UNCTAD (2015) have noted that there are challenges to the development of Agripreneurial culture in developing countries such as inadequate information, limited skills, insecurity, inadequate resources and infrastructure among others, with these, it is difficult to establish successful commercial enterprises. The need for effective policies

was also emphasized to promote small-scale agriculture and non-agricultural sectors.

Nevertheless, an agripreneur like an entrepreneur must possess some innate qualities to conquer these challenges and make a success. He or she must be proactive, persistent, visionary with strong management and organizational abilities must be innovative and creative. (Needy, 2011). These can be learnt by training which provides the requisite information, experience and knowledge that will aid better decision making. They can be acquired through formal institutions or informal avenues such as public lectures, field work and demonstrations, workshops, seminars etc (Tripathi and Agawam, 2015). The figure below shows some necessary skills the agripreneur must be equipped with to be competitive and successful as presented by Tripathi and Agarwal (2015).

| | Category | Underlying skills |
|----|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Professional Skills | a. Plant and animal production skills b. Technical skills |
| 2. | Management Skills | a. Financial management Skills b. Human resource management skills c. Customer management skills d. General planning skills |
| 3. | Opportunity Skills | a. Recognising the business opportunities b. Market and customer orientation c. Awareness of threats d. Innovation skills e. Risk management skills |
| 4. | Strategic skills | a. Skills to receive and make use of feedback b. Reflection skills c. Monitoring and evaluation skills d. Conceptual skills e. Goal setting skills f. Strategic decision making skills g. Strategic planning skills h. Goal setting skills |
| 5. | Cooperation and networking skill | a. Skill relating to cooperating with other farmers and companies. |

Source: Tripathi and Agarwal (2015)

Figure 1: Necessary skills for an agripreneur

b) *Agripreneurship in the Value Chain*

Poverty drains resources from families, Agripreneurship helps them build resources. (Dobson and Markley, 2010.). How can this be achieved? Agriculture can create wealth along the value chain through production, value addition, and export of processed or unprocessed goods among others. In the value chain, there are many areas in agriculture that entrepreneurs can exploit in on-farm and off-farm activities. The on-farm activities include production, processing (feed and seed processing), farm input manufacturing, and agro service ventures. Off-farm ventures will include agric-tourism entrepreneurship (Uneze,2013) and other service areas like transportation, storage and packaging, workshops and service centres

for the maintenance of agricultural implement in the agriculture value chain among others(Birwa et al 2014). Post-harvest technology like processing, packaging and storage will stabilize food production and ensure against excessive dependence on food imports (Ado, 1997) even as it creates more openings for employments.

In Nigeria, the economic benefits of many agricultural products are not yet optimized. This is because of limited knowledge of value addition. Others are inadequate technologies, poor infrastructure and inconsistent government policies. This has created two basic key agricultural gaps in Nigeria: the inability to meet domestic food requirements and the inability to export quality products required for market success (Ado, 2017). Value addition should increase the

economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity. The report submits that value addition technologies include processing and preservation, dehydration and drying, freezing, packaging, labelling, etc. and emphasized that it is important to be innovative in farming and agric-food processing because these are prerequisites to remain competitive. (Ado, 2017). Technological innovation will be a catalyst to boost productivity and growth in the agribusiness sector (PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC, 2016).

Though there are abundant agripreneurial opportunities in the value chain, Nib *et al* (2016) observed that some factors constrain rural farmers from becoming agripreneurs. These constraints were categorized into socio-cultural, knowledge-base, and economic using what was described as the Kaisers rule

of thumb as applied by Nib and Koori (2013) in which any of the identified factors that loads 0.4 and above implied influence on agripreneurship drive. The weights of the identified limitations/influences are shown in the table below. The identified economic factors that constrained rural farmers from becoming agripreneurs included high interest rate on loan, high competitive market, poor returns to agricultural investment, and inadequate access to loan. The table may not be exhaustive in its content. However, the factors outlined affected aspects of agripreneurship drive and any factor that may be impacting agripreneurship is a potential threat to the value chain. Land tenure system and technical knowhow in various categories were also seen to exert some influences on agripreneurship and by implication the value chain.

Table 2: Identified Constraints to Agripreneurship as reported by Nib *et al* (2016) in Ebony State, Nigeria

| Variable Socio-cultural | Factor 1 Socio-cultural | Factor 2 Knowledge base | Factor 3 Economic |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Land tenure system | 0.558 | 0.225 | 0.153 |
| High interest rate on loan | 0.023 | -0.055 | 0.732 |
| Lack of investment infrastructures | 0.832 | 0.039 | 0.221 |
| Lack of technical know-how | -0.006 | 0.508 | 0.006 |
| Language barrier | 0.216 | 0.119 | -0.135 |
| High competitive market | 0.042 | 0.212 | 0.481 |
| Poor policy recommendation | -0.114 | 0.024 | 0.085 |
| High rate of disease and insect infestation | 0.129 | 0.154 | 0.370 |
| Poor return from agricultural investment | -0.002 | -0.079 | 0.458 |
| Poor training by extension agents | 0.006 | 0.670 | 0.007 |
| Lack of access to research results | 0.075 | 0.946 | 0.056 |
| Lack access to loan | 0.114 | -0.069 | 0.756 |
| Poor access to education | 0.093 | 0.025 | 0.023 |

Source: Nib *et al*, 2016

Needy (2011) has outlined major agricultural products and classified them into four broad groups: foods, fibers, fuels, and raw materials. Other useful products produced by plants include resins, dyes, drugs, perfumes, bio fuels and ornamental products such as cut flowers and nursery plants. This can lead to

the development of sustainable and well-serviced markets and maintain a viable raw material supply chain. Nib *et al* (2016) in the table below showed some agripreneurship opportunities that exist in the value chain in few selected agricultural products and the level of participation in Ebony State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Opportunities that exist in the agriculture value chain as published by Nib *et al* (2016) in Ebony State, Nigeria

| Agripreneurial Components | Opportunities/investment areas | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Farm input supply 76(63.33) | Agro chemicals | 19 | 25.00 |
| | Breeding stock(plants & animals) | 28 | 36.84 |
| | Farm implements | 51 | 67.10 |
| | Veterinary services | 7 | 9.21 |
| Farm production 97(80.83) | Arable(& cash) crops | 74 | 76.29 |
| | Livestock | 43 | 44.33 |
| | Fisheries | 16 | 16.49 |
| Farm processing/Distribution 64(53.33) | Roots and tubers | 47 | 73.44 |
| | Cereals | 24 | 37.50 |
| | Nuts/legumes | 15 | 23.44 |

Source: Nib *et al* (2016)

The table above as published by Nib *et al* (2016) is not exhaustive. The immense opportunities that

exist in fruits and vegetables were not mentioned. It should be borne in mind however that for each

agricultural product whether plants or animals, there exist several agripreneurship opportunities to be developed. In the report, Nib et al(2016) however posited that the agribusiness environment was diverse with many opportunities and if fully exploited will usher in growth in the agricultural sector.

c) *Agripreneurship and Employment Generation*

To encourage and enhance economic growth and development, the Indian government sometimes ago initiated and pursued a growth and development policy plan that encouraged entrepreneurship and self-employment. The Nigerian government in principle has severally towed the same pathway. However, the initiative was riddled with inconsistencies, inadequate articulations and frequent policy truncations as regimes come and go. To transit from paid employment to self-employment has been an important agendum in the economy of many developed nations. To be self sustaining economically, individuals must transit from paid employment to self-employment (Palanivelu and Madhupriya, 2013). Nigeria is in a good position to encourage this transition using agriculture as the launch pad because a significantly large number of the population are engaged in the agriculture sector already. The transition may not pose serious problems if agribusiness is positioned to take up the challenge.

With the rise in unemployment and poverty in Nigeria and limited economic growth options in other sectors, there is need to develop entrepreneurship in agriculture to create jobs, raise productivity and grow the economy since for now, agriculture employs the highest amount of labour in the country and sustainable opportunities outside agriculture are limited. The application and practice of entrepreneurship in agriculture will generate a wide range of benefits such as increased productivity, development of new agribusiness ventures that will lead to Job creations, innovations in products and service delivery, and increases in wealth (Birwa *et al* 2014). Agripreneurship can contribute to social and economic development in the areas of reduction in poverty index, good nutrition and food security in the economy. In addition, it will lead to diversifying the economy and income bases, providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Anon (2016) in Ado (2017) noted that the ban on importation of certain agricultural products are opportunities for additional investment by the private sector however, Nigeria still imports what it can comfortably and cheaply produce impacting negatively the employment status of the country. Greater opportunities are wasting in the crop sector where the blends of products that can be generated are limitless. According to the report, investors can produce for special markets by just changing the form of a commodity before marketing, change the packaging and labelling for the market etc. thus; Value addition can

create jobs which are critical needs in tackling unemployment at this moment of economic recession.

IV. CONCLUSION

In Nigerian for now, Agripreneurship is a need to make agriculture attractive and a life line for the economy. Nigeria's present economic experience calls for diversification and a paradigm shift from petroleum based economy and its attendant negatives. Real sector growth like agriculture should be supported to boost employment, reduce poverty and food insecurity. Apparently, there is huge scope for entrepreneurship in agriculture that can be tapped. Agripreneurship will provide direct employment and income to a large section of the populace. Agripreneurship outside offering opportunities is also a necessity to improving agricultural productivity and trigger the growth of allied sectors

V. RECOMMENDATION

Nigeria must in the quest for economic development and diversification make agriculture the fulcrum of industrial take off. Enabling environments must be created by the government that effect and focus should be on mitigating the constraining factors against agriculture and entrepreneurship development.

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