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Implication of Land Grabbing Activities on Cassava Output in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the implication of land grabbing activities on cassava output in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The survey research design is adopted. The population comprises all the cassava farmers in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State. However, a total of 80 cassava farmers were sampled using purposive sampling technique in order to ensure that it is only the real owners of the dispossessed lands were used in the study given the nature of land ownership in the study area. Descriptive statistics and simple regression models were used in analyzing the data. Results show 49 years as the mean age of the respondents and their households' size was 5 persons and 51.2% of the respondents were male. From the result of the simple regression analysis, it was discovered that total land size of 19.49ha in hectares (-3.930769*) was statistically negative in influencing the 5125kg output of cassava, produced in the study area. It was discovered that the lands were mainly grabbed by the State government through legal means based on the Land Use Act which stated that all lands belong to the government and the farmers were not duly compensated and most of the grabbed lands were converted to built-up lands especially for recreational purposes and other constructions which had little or no direct benefits to the farmers. Lack of land security was the major constraints to the cassava farmers. It was recommended that compensatory lands be released to the farmers as well as incentives granted in order to facilitate improvements in cassava production in the area.*

Keywords: *Land Grab, Cassava Productivity, Cassava Farmers Owerri-North LGA*

INTRODUCTION

Land is an important resource in farming and it provides the very platform on which sustainable lives and livelihoods are built on. But unfortunately, land grabs have resulted to its reduction thus leading to low productivity of cassava farmers. Unfortunately most of these lands grab are not used for agricultural purposes. Agriculture plays a very important role in the Nigeria economic development; it also contributes to employment, food production, as well as industrial input (Agwu N., Nwachukwu and Agwu I., 2010). The roles played by agriculture are being

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threatened by the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses not related to agriculture. Land is an important resource in farming (Babalola and Olayemi, 2013); and it provides the very platform on which sustainable lives and livelihoods are built and as a result, the land on which people build their homes and organize their communities is directly linked to their quality of life (Stickler and Zomer, 2011). Land, according to Raufu and Adetunji (2012), is a major resource for the livelihood of the poor and non-poor. Akinola and Adeyemo (2013) posit that land is the most important factor of production. The demand for land for agricultural purposes is increasing globally, implying a limitation of these resources (Abah, 2013). The unique feature of land is its fixed nature and this has generated a lot of policies administration in its use rights and transfer (Akinola and Adeyemo, 2013).

Land in Africa, according to Friends of the Earth Europe (FEE) (2010), is regarded not simply as an economic or environmental asset, but as a social, cultural and ontological resource. Foreign Investment in agricultural lands goes across the developing world especially in Africa where land is comparatively cheap and easily available (FEE, 2010). Africa is being considered as 'Agriculture's final frontier' (Woertz, 2012). Fischer, Velthuizen and Nachtergaele (2002) state that about 80 percent of the world reserve of agricultural land exists in Africa and South America.

In Nigeria, land is officially held by the State government and as a result of this, local communities do not have a say in the allocation of land. State government give concessions to companies for any use; be it agricultural, industrial or real estate purposes and sometimes, these lands are not put into beneficial use (Nigeria Land Use Act 1978). Byamugisha (2013) points out that in most African countries, there are inadequate administrative frameworks and legal right to fully protect land rights and entitlements of local communities and indigenous people. These, therefore make African lands vulnerable to land grabbing and places crop farmers in a weak position in their legal claim to ownership and for adequate compensation in case of large acquisition of lands by investors.

Land grabbing involves the coercive transfer of land ownership from traditional or customary uses which is usually small holder agriculture to corporate agriculture, housing development or nature conservation (Vicoli, 2015). Over the years, land grabs have shifted production away from crops destined for local consumption towards crops that are for export or for the production of bio-fuels and siting of industries thus displacing local farmers and limiting their productivity level. According to Emenyonu, *et al*. (2017), about 70 percent of grabbed lands

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were converted to built-up lands and other construction on land and 26 percent of the lands were used for other non-agricultural establishments leading to low productivity on crop farmers as they are discouraged to continue farming as most of the productive lands are being taken away for non-agricultural uses. The Nigeria Land Use Act of 1978 gave total control over land to governing bodies. It stipulates that all land in urban areas shall be under the control and management of the Governor of each State, and all other land shall, subject to the Act, be under the control and management of the Local Government within the area of jurisdiction of which the land is situated as from the commencement of the Act. The land management under the Act also provides an appropriate enabling environment for prospective investors, private individuals and other corporate bodies for land acquisition thus leading to land grabbing by the government as well as large acquisition of lands by private bodies. It has been noted by Friends of Earth for Africa, (FEA) and FEE (2010) that in Nigeria, recent land acquisition by the State using foreign capital and expertise are estimated to amount to 100,000 hectares and such acquisition are mostly brokered by the State government or State owned institution such as Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

Many land grabs deprived communities of land and create environmental problems through intensive agriculture and increased water demand. In some poor communities, local smallholders forced to abandon their ancestral lands have to relocate, either to cities or clear forest or peat land to continue farming. As a result of this, many farmers have been displaced from their lands thus resulting to loss of livelihood, loss of welfare, food insecurity and migration.

These poses a great problem for local farmers as they are unable to stand for their right as they have little or no say in the conversion of their arable lands. Recently in Imo State, during the last administration of Owelle Rochas Okoroacha, there was massive land grab as a result of the existing Land Use Act which gives the State governing body the right to use land as they pleased, and as such the lands were taken away from local crop farmers, thus leaving them vulnerable with little or no other alternative. Crop productivity level for rural and small scale crop farmers has dropped and as a result, most of the youths are not interested in farming, leaving only the elderly one to farm. Despite the existence of the phenomenal land grabbing in Imo State, there is little or no study that has examined the implication of land grabbing activities on cassava productivity. This is because cassava has been a major staple tuber crop in Nigeria. Therefore, this study is posed to address these questions: what are the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area? What are the strategies employed in land grabbing in the study area? What are the effects of land grabbing on cassava

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output in the study area? What are the constraints' facing the farmers in the study. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine the implication of land grabbing activities on cassava output in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

METHOD

The research design is a survey. The population comprises all the cassava farmers in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State. A total of 80 cassava farmers were sampled using purposive sampling technique in order to ensure that it is only the real owners of the disposed lands were used in the study given the nature of land ownership in the study area. Cassava productivity in kg is the dependent variable while land grabbed in hectares were the explanatory variable.Simple regression analysis were employed to understand the implication of land grabbing activities on cassava output in the study area.

Imo State lies in the South East of Nigeria with Owerri as its capital. The economy of Imo State depends primarily on agriculture and commence. Their cash crops include oil palm, raffia palm, rice, groundnut, melon among others and food crops such as yam, cocoyam, cassava and maize are also produced in large quantities. Owerri North is a Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. It has its headquarters in the town of Orie Uratta. It is semi-urban government area and encircles Owerri Municipal like a peninsular. There are six major roads that lead out of the municipal and it cuts across Owerri North Communities. It is comprised of eight towns/districts which are: Egbu, Emekuku, Emii, Ihite-Ogada, Naze, Obibi-Uratta,Ulakwo and Orji. Their major occupation is predominantly farming.

Frequency count, simple percentage and simple regression analysis were used to analyse the data. Simple regression analysis is a statistical tool used in estimating the relationship between the dependent variable and the explanatory or independent variable. It is focused on estimating the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables (Koutosoyiannis, 2001).
The implicit form is given as

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X_{1-n} + e$$

Where: Y = dependent Variable
α = constant
X_{1-n} = Independent variable
β = parameters to be estimated
e = error term

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The explicit form is given as

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where

Y = Cassava output (kg)
X_1 = Land size(ha)
e = error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Cassava Farmers (n=80)

Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Gender	Male	41	51.2	
	Female	39	48.8	
Age	21-30	17	24.3	
	31-40	20	26.7	
	41-50	28	35.0	39
	51-60	9	8.6	
	≥ 60	6	5.4	
Marital Status	Single	17	24.3	
	Married	48	60.0	
	Divorced	8	10.0	
	Separated	3	2.7	
	Widowed	4	3.0	
Educational Level	No Formal Edu	17	21.3	
	Primary	26	32.5	
	Secondary	28	35.0	
	Tertiary	9	11.2	
Household Size	1-3	26	32.5	
	4-6	36	45.1	5
	7-9	8	8.1	
	10-12	10	12.3	
Other sources of Income	Trading	35	41.1	
	Civil servant	25	32.2	
	Artisan	20	26.7	
Farming Experience	1-10	13	16.3	
	11-20	61	76.5	
	21-30	05	2.5	
	31-40	03	5.0	
Average Farm Size	0-2	78	97.7	
	3-5	02	2.3	

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Source: Survey, 2020

From the table 1, 51.2% of the respondents were males, while 48.8% were females. This implies that majority of the farmers were males and this is as a result of the men who traditionally have more right to arable land by lineage authority where lands are allocated to male headed households. Adedoyin (2005) confirms that men dominate the workforce in cassava production but women play other functions. The table further reveals that only 35% of the farmers are within the age bracket of 41-50 years while 25.2% are within the age bracket of 31-40 years with a mean age of 39 years. This implies that most of the farmers in the study area are mostly middle aged who are in their economically active stage and as such, can undergo the stress associated with farming activities. It conforms to the findings of Agbamu (2006), who posits that age is an important characteristic in decision making process of an innovation.

It is deduced from the table that majority of the farmers (60.0%) are married while 21.3 % are single implying that majority of the farmers are married. This has an influence on cassava production positively because they have more family labour force for farming and this finding agrees with Uddin (2014) in his study who stated that married people are predominantly engaged in various activities so as to improve their livelihood and that of their families. The level of farmer's education is essential for agricultural production. The study asserts that majority (35.0%) had secondary education, 32.5% had primary education and 11.3% had tertiary education. This indicates that a greater percentage of the farmers are literate and this will enable them to be open to new innovations and techniques in cassava production as this will help improve output. This is in consonance with the finding of Enitan (2010) who states that education is an important variable that influences individuals and household's rate of adoption of new and improved technology as well as their choice of food commodities.

The study also shows that 45.1% of the farmers had a household size of 4-6 persons with the mean number of 5 persons. This implies that most of the respondents have large family sizes which also constitute as source of labour supply used in cassava cultivation. This is in agreement with the findings of Ebukiba (2010), who finds out that 66% of cassava farmers use family labour as a result of larger family size. Most of the respondents had other sources of income to compliment the revenue obtained from their farming activities. About 41.1% are into trading, 32.2% are civil servants while 26.7% are artisans. Majority of the cassava farmers have a farming experience of 76.5% within the range of 11-20 years which implies that they have been into farming and cultivation of cassava for a long time and it agrees with Obinne (1991), who states that farming

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experience enhances productivity and has shown to encourage rapid adoption of farming innovation. It can be seen that 97.7% of the farmers have a farm size within the range of 0-2 hectares implying that most of the farm sizes are small and as such, are mostly into subsistence farming. Table 2 shows the strategies employed in grabbing the lands, the size of land grabbed and the reasons why the land was grabbed.

Table 2: Land Grab Strategy, Purpose and Size of Land Grabbed

Variables	**Frequency (n= 80)**	**Percentage**
Land Grabbers		
a. Government	54	67.5
b. Rich Individuals	10	12.5
c. Traditional Councils	11	13.8
d. Local Companies	2	2.5
e. Foreign Companies	3	3.7
Land Grab Strategy		
a. Legal Means	54	67.5
b. Illegal means	26	32.5
Purpose/Intended Use		
a. Road Construction	13	16.3
b. Government Ministries/offices	35	43. 8
c. Shopping Complex	24	30.0
d. Aesthetic/Recreational purpose	8	9.9
Size of Land Grabbed (hectares)		
0-2	65	89.7
> 2	15	10.3

Source: Survey, 2020

The table 2 shows that 67.5% of the lands were grabbed by the State government and this is in consonance with the Land Use Act of 1978 which states that lands belong to the government and as such, can easily take any land for any purpose. The table also depicts that majority of the lands (67.5%) were grabbed through legal means by the State government although without compliance to due process and as such, many lands were taken with impunity and 32.5% of the lands were grabbed illegally by private investors and other wealthy individuals. Table 2 also showed that the land grabbed was majorly used for government ministries/offices, followed by shopping complex, road construction and recreational purposes. This implies that the land grabbed was

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not used for any agricultural purpose but for non-agricultural ventures with little or no benefit to the disposed farmers. This invariably, had a negative impact on cassava production and farming as a whole in the area. The result also shows that 89.7% of the lands grabbed were within the range of 0-2 hectares thereby reducing the size of the land available for farming. This implies that food production especially cassava cultivation reduced drastically after the land grab and this has undermine livelihood activity and the output of cassava in the area. The table 3 shows the estimated effect of land grab on the output of cassava in the study area.

Table 3: Estimated effect of Land Grabbing on Cassava Output.

V**ariables**	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	**t-Statistic**	**Prob.**
C	65.02013	1.406645	46.22354	0.0000
LNDSIZE	-3.930769	3.265000	-1.203911	0.2323
R-squared	0.018243	Mean dependent var	64.06250	
Adjusted R-squared	0.005656	S.D. dependent var	10.40611	
S.E. of regression	10.37664	Akaike info criterion	7.541674	
Sum squared resid	8398.624	Schwarz criterion	7.601224	
Log likelihood	-299.6669	Hannan-Quinn criter.	7.565549	
F-statistic	1.449402	Durbin-Watson stat	0.161824	
Prob(F-statistic)	0.232265			

R-Squared = 0.018243.
F statistic = 1.449402
Akaike Information criterion 7.541674
Durbin-Watson Statistics0.161824
Source: Field data survey, 2020
***, ** = significant at 1% and 5% respectively

The result on Table 3 shows the estimated effect of Land Grab and cassava output in kg. From the result of the simple regression analysis, the land size in hectares was found to be statistically negative in influencing the output of cassava produced in the study area. It is significant at 1% but with a negative sign which implies that a unit increase in the land grabbed decreased cassava output by 3.93%. This implies, as lands are grabbed by government and other institutions, cassava output in the study area will be reduced since productive lands available for farming will be reduced drastically. It is also not counter intuitive, as it follows a priori expectation, because as the quantity of cassava output decreases then more lands are grabbed by the government. The result of the analysis could also be underpinned on the fact that rural farmers cultivate on small farm size. This result agrees to the finding of Emenyonu *et. al* (2017), who state that land grabbing has a significant effect on food crop production. The F- ratio is significant at 1% and this implies that the function can be used for further analysis and was adequate.

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The model chosen was not only based on the strength of the R-square but rather on the considerations of the signs of the coefficients with respect to economic theory as well as the lowness of Akaike Information Criterion and Durbin-Watson Statistics. The R^2 of 0.018243 implies that 18% of the variation in the dependent variable was accounted for by the independent variable in the model. The lowness of R^2 could be that some relevant explanatory variables are not included in the model. Some of these explanatory variables could be number of times farmers' lands were grabbed, distance of the grabbed land, a dummy if farmers had alternative land for farming or not. Table 4 shows the various constraints encountered by the respondents in the study area.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents Based on the Constraints Encountered in the Study Area.

Constraints	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Lack of land security	80	100
Land tenure system	78	97.5
Incongruent land policies	67	83.8
Inadequate compensation	76	95.0
Loss of lives and properties	78	97.5

Source: Survey, 2020. Multiple responses recorded

Multiple responses were recorded as most of the constraints were experienced by almost all the respondents in the area and prevailing among them is the issue of lack of land security, land tenure system as well as lack of compensation given to them after their lands were taken from them without due notice by the State government, other wealthy individuals and traditional councils. These constraints faced by the respondents greatly affected their productivity and made them very much vulnerable to the State government land grabbing activities. In terms of land tenure system, gender discrimination is a huge problem because lands are owned and inherited by men and as such, women only have use rights and often lack access to land and are most times, relegated to cooking, feeding of the farm hands and selling of some of the proceeds gotten from the farm. There are no effective land tenure system reforms that can protect the farmers from having their lands taken away from them and giving women the right to use and transfer lands and this conforms to the findings of Boudreaux and Sacks (2019) who state that it is usually difficult for women to maintain or possess lands. As a result of lack of land security, the State government was able to grab lots of land with impunity and no due process or even proper compensations to the affected farmers. This is in consonance with a publication made by Aliyu

(2019) that majority of the lands were grabbed by the State government through land speculators who hoards up these lands and afterwards sell them at exorbitant prices to the detriment of the farmers who are unable to purchase back their lands.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implication of land grabbing activities on cassava output in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. A total of 80 cassava farmers were purposively selected in order to ensure that it is only the real owners of the disposed lands were used in the study given the nature of land ownership in the study area. Frequency count, simple percentage and simple regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The findings reveal that land grab had a significant effect on cassava output. It is therefore advised that, compensatory lands should be released to the farmers and incentives granted in order to facilitate improvements in cassava production and livelihood of the framers in the study area.

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