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## Challenges of Youth in Promoting Rural Farming Enterprises, a Case Study of Kwande Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The survey was conducted in Kwande Local government Area of Benue State, Nigeria to ascertain the challenges of youth in promoting rural farming enterprises. Questionnaires were used to collect data from a sample of thirty (30) respondents. Descriptive statistics, mean score and standard deviation were used to analyze the data for the study. Results indicate that a greater percentage (75.00%) of the respondents were males, about 98.90% had formal education in school with majority (87.50%) belonging to non-formal organization, having a mean farming experience of about 11 years. Major challenges faced by rural youths in promoting farming enterprises were low prices of farm produce, irregular and untimely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizer, poor access to improved seeds, lack of access to sufficient land for farming, high cost of labour saving technologies, poor agricultural extension agent-farmer contact, lack of incentives from government to encourage youth to farm among others. The study recommends that rural youths should be encouraged to remain in agriculture through adequate and timely provision of farm inputs such as fertilizer, agro-chemicals, improved varieties of crops as well as labour saving technologies to promote farming enterprises and to boost productivity. It also highlights that adequate provision of agricultural extension services to the rural youths in farming remains paramount in order to have access to improved technologies that will enhance greater output thus increasing household income which improves standard of living.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Rural, Youth, Inputs, Enterprises

### Introduction

According to Erenie (2002), youth is a state of transition between childhood and adulthood characterized by the possession of attributes such as energy, intelligence and hopes which enable them to improve their knowledge and capabilities. Youth farmers can create, promote and help to conserve the biodiversity of food crops and livestock, transferring the knowledge from the current generation to the next. At the same time, many youth farmers are also developing quality products not only for their self-consumption, but also available in recess markets (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation [CTA], 2014).

According to Ugwoke *et al.* (2005), youths have been part of the overall agricultural development process in Nigeria because of the immense contribution of agriculture to the economy. This is because a larger population of youths represents the link between the present and the future as well as a reservoir of labour. Youths constitute about 40% of the Nigerian population (National Population Census [NPC], 2006)

Africa has an exceptional population profile of 200 million people living in Africa are between the ages 15 to 24, constituting over 20% of the African population; 70% of African youth resides in rural areas and account for 65% of labor in agriculture. Young people make up 36% of the working population, and account for 60% of the total unemployed (International Labor Organization (ILO, 2012). About 80% of Nigeria's labour force is engaged in agriculture but Government efforts to make agriculture more attractive and profitable to youth have not yielded positive results. Rather there was a noticeable increase in the migration of the youth to urban center's looking for alternative and better employment (ILO 2012; Poulton and Kanyinga, 2013).

Rural youths are the future of agriculture, with a growing world population and a decreasing

agricultural productivity; rural youths play an important role in ensuring food security for future generations (FAO, 2014). Youth in rural areas provide opportunity for generating the farming entrepreneurs (Chikezie *et al.*, 2012). This is due to the fact that they have the potential to overcome some major constraints in order to expand agricultural production because they are often more open to new ideas and practices than adult farmers (Daudu, 2009). According to World Farmers' Organization (WFO, 2013), rural youths play a significant role in acting as a catalyst for change in farming development, given their propensity and willingness to adapt to new ideas, concepts and the energy to implement innovations. Retaining youths in agriculture has the overall aim of transforming the sector from purely subsistence to commercial farming. With improved agricultural productivity, more and better jobs are likely to be created (World Bank 2008). Decent livelihoods/employment in agriculture can be created through upgrading the existing jobs in agriculture or by creating new ones (FAO, 2010)

According to Proctor *et al* (2015), constraints to rural youths in farming include shortage of production resources such as land, finance, etc, negative attitude about agriculture, limited agricultural knowledge and skills as well as leadership and managerial skills, limited youth groups and associations/cooperatives and youth's involvement in decision-making is still very low. Others include attraction of quick gains especially from white collar jobs, lack of youth policies, lack of support from elders for youths in agriculture, lack of experience and skill sharing, lack of market accessibility, lack of supportive social services and infrastructure, unwillingness of educated youths to engage in agriculture, lack of incentives and drudgery are some of the reasons why the youth are disinterested in agriculture (IFAD, 2011). The challenges facing youth especially in the north are numerous, but there are still an outweighing number of opportunities in youth farming in Nigeria.

Therefore the youth present an opportunity for a sustained effort to participate in Nigeria's development process because they possess greater energy, workforce and potential and have the capacity to drive positive change. Stimulating growth of employment in the agricultural sector remains paramount in countries with a large agricultural sector, and improvements in agricultural productivity can generate more and better jobs in most developing countries (World Bank Repott, 2008).

According to the Young Professionals Platform on Agricultural Research for Development ([www.ypard.net](http://www.ypard.net) retrieved 10/11/17 6:47pm), bringing the voice of the youth to the table, disseminating information on opportunities in agricultural development, sharing success stories of young role models in agriculture and advocating for greater youth representation and inclusion in policy development are steps in the right direction which can promote a sustainable agricultural enterprises. It is also critical to establish media partnerships to provide more interesting and glamorous portrayals of agricultural careers. In addition, youths must be made aware that ICT, social media and agriculture are not mutually exclusive and can seamlessly integrate. Another strategy is investing in education at all levels from primary to tertiary levels; school curricula should be linked to on-going policy debates and developments in the agricultural field.

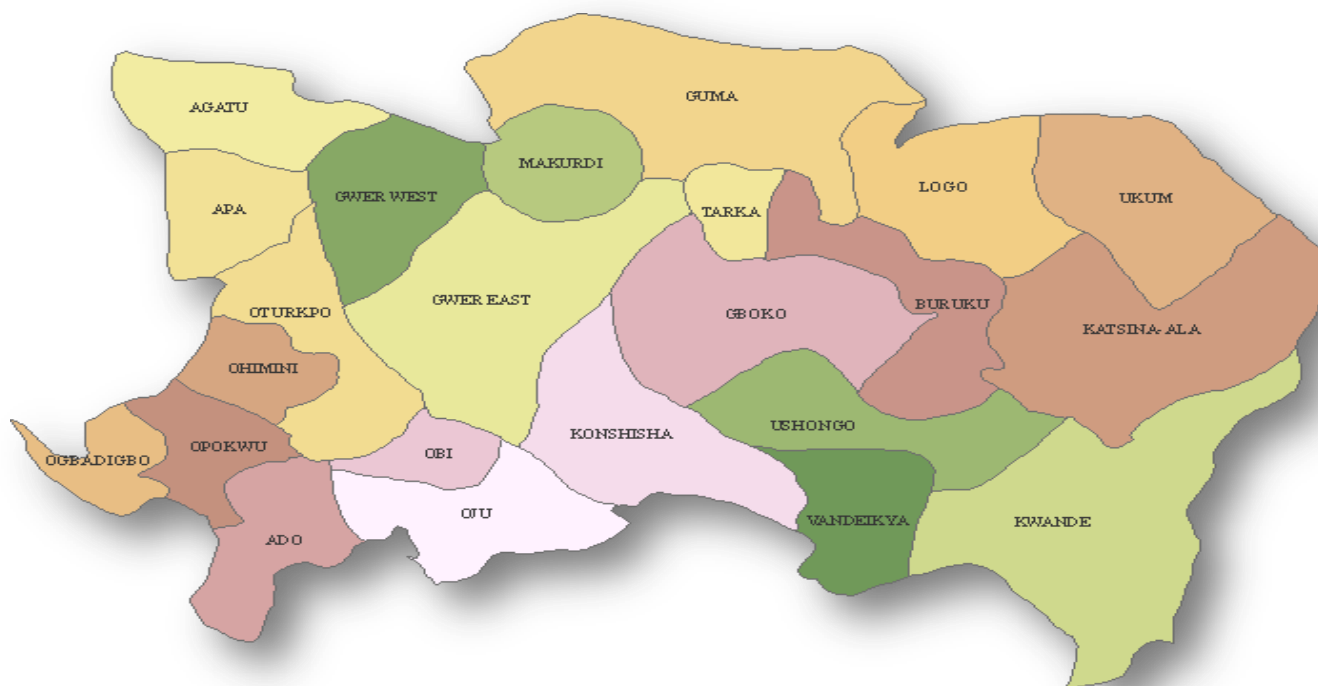
Finally, policy makers must develop and encourage the development of feasible schemes and programs which involve multi-partners, take cognizance of and address the peculiar challenges of each country and most importantly seek inputs from the very youths they are meant to assist. In view of the foregoing, the present study therefore was conducted to identify the challenges faced by youth in promoting rural farming enterprises and proffer possible solutions.

### Methodology

Benue State lies within the lower river Benue in the middle belt region of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with five other states namely; Nasarawa to the north, Taraba to the east, Cross-River to the south, Enugu to the south-west and Kogi State to the west. The State also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroon on the south-east. Agriculture is the mainstay of the inhabitants which engages over 75% of the population. The State is the nation's acclaimed FOOD BASKET OF THE NATION because of its rich agricultural produce which includes yam, rice, beans, cassava, sweet-potato, maize, soybean, sorghum, millet, sesame, cocoyam, etc. The State accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's soybean production Benue Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (BNARDA, 1999). Tree crops such as mangoes and oranges of various species are also produced in commercial quantity in the study area. They also rear a wide range of livestock such as pigs, goats, sheep and chicken. Many of the inhabitants also engage in trading, while a reasonable number of them are civil servants.

Primary and secondary data were obtained and analyzed in the research. The population of the study comprises of eight (8) wards in Kwande L.G.A (Latitude 6.887, Longitude 9.235 and Altitude 241 mm above sea level). Simple random sampling technique was used where 30 respondents from the population of study were selected due to the large number of the population. Two communities were selected from the LGA namely; Mbakwen and Mbawer from Kwande LGA. Fifteen (15) respondents were selected from each of the communities, giving a total number of thirty (30) respondents used for the study. The data collected through questionnaires and documentary source were cautiously examined and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation.

Map of Benue State



**Results and Discussion**

About 75.00% of the respondents were male, while 25.00% of the respondents were female. There were more male youths in the study areas who are involved in farming. This may be as a result of strenuous nature of farming activities. Results also show that majority (67.50%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 21-40 years, while 32.50% falls within the age bracket of  $\leq 20$  years. This implies that the respondents were energetic and in their productive years, hence greater involvement in farming activities for economic empowerment. This finding agrees with Okwoche *et al* (2012) who stated that youths in their active years are energetic and innovative to participate more in agriculture.

Results generated further reveal that majority (73.80%) of the respondents had secondary education, while 13.80% and 11.30% had tertiary and primary education, respectively. This shows that majority of the respondents were literate. The need for education in agriculture cannot be over emphasized since the level of education of a farmer do not only increase his productivity but also enhances his ability to adopt innovations. The findings disagree with Beyue and Ernest (2013) who noted that farmers do not need any formal education.

Results also reveal that 55.00% had a household size of 6 - 10 persons, while 23.80% had household size of 1- 5 persons, among others. Having large household size is advantageous because it provides labor for community farming.

Results also show that 50.00% of the respondents had 1.1 - 2.0 ha of farmland, while 43.80% had less than 1.0 hectares, among others. This implies that the respondents had access to small portion of farmland which they use in farming activities. This agrees with Proctor *et al* (2015) who noted that a large proportion of rural youth's farm on a smaller scale which could be due to shortage of resources for production such as land, finance, labor, etc.

The majority (92.40%) of the respondents had farming as a

major occupation, while 2.50% were carpenters, among others (Table 1). This indicates that farming is the major occupation of the respondents in the study area. This finding agrees with Abdullahi *et al* (2010) who stated that majority of the youths had farming as their major occupation.

Majority (90.0%) of the respondents did not receive remittance from family members/relatives, while 10.0% received remittance from family members/relatives. This indicates that many of the respondents did not receive remittance from family members/relatives which may lead to lack of proper and adequate farm resources/inputs such as land, fertilizer, agrochemical, etc.

The remittance received was less than ₦5000 from family members/relations in 6.30% of the respondents, while 2.50% and 1.30% had ₦5001- ₦10000 and above ₦10000 respectively. This implies that the respondents were unable to get reasonable amount of money from their family members/relations annually which could assist them in buying farm inputs for greater productivity.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of the respondents (n=30)

| Economic Characteristics of Respondent | Percentage (%) |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Sex</b>                             |                |
| Male                                   | 75             |
| Female                                 | 25             |
| <b>Age</b>                             |                |
| Less than 20                           | 32.5           |
| 21-40                                  | 67.5           |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                  |                |
| Married                                | 36.3           |
| Single                                 | 63.7           |
| <b>Level of Education</b>              |                |
| No formal education                    | 1.10           |
| Primary education                      | 11.30          |

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Secondary education               | 73.8  |
| Tertiary education                | 13.80 |
| <b>Household Size (Numbers)</b>   |       |
| 1-5                               | 23.80 |
| 6-10                              | 55.0  |
| 11-15                             | 11.20 |
| 15 and Above                      | 10    |
| <b>Farming Experience (Years)</b> |       |
| 1-5                               | 18.80 |
| 6-10                              | 42.5  |
| 11-15                             | 21.30 |
| Above 15                          | 17.40 |
| <b>Farm Size (Hectares)</b>       |       |
| ≤1.0                              | 43.80 |
| 1.1-2.0                           | 50    |
| 2.1-3.0                           | 2.40  |
| Above 3.0                         | 3.80  |
| <b>Type Of Farming</b>            |       |
| Crop production                   | 57.50 |
| Livestock production              | 6.20  |
| Mixed farming                     | 36.30 |
| <b>Major Occupation</b>           |       |
| Commercial driving                | 1.30  |
| Carpentry                         | 2.50  |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Farming  | 92.40 |
| Teaching                                       | 2.50  |
| Trading  | 1.30  |
| <b>Non-farm Occupation</b>                     |       |
| Okada Driving                                  | 8.80  |
| Hair Dressing                                  | 18.50 |
| Carpentry                                      | 7.50  |
| Tailoring                                      | 60.20 |
| <b>Membership of Formal Organization</b>       |       |
| Yes  | 13    |
| No   | 87    |
| <b>Contact with Extension Agents</b>           |       |
| Yes  | 12.50 |
| No   | 87.50 |
| <b>Remittance from FamilyMembers/Relations</b> |       |
| Yes  | 10    |
| No   | 90    |
| <b>Amount of Money Received (Naira)</b>        |       |
| <5000  | 6.20  |
| 5001-10000                                     | 2.50  |
| Above 10000                                    | 1.30  |

Sources: Field survey: 2016

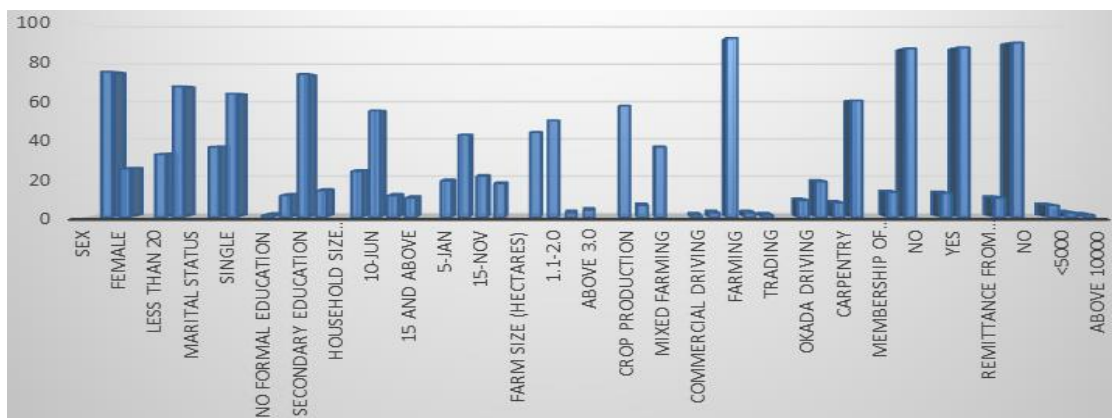


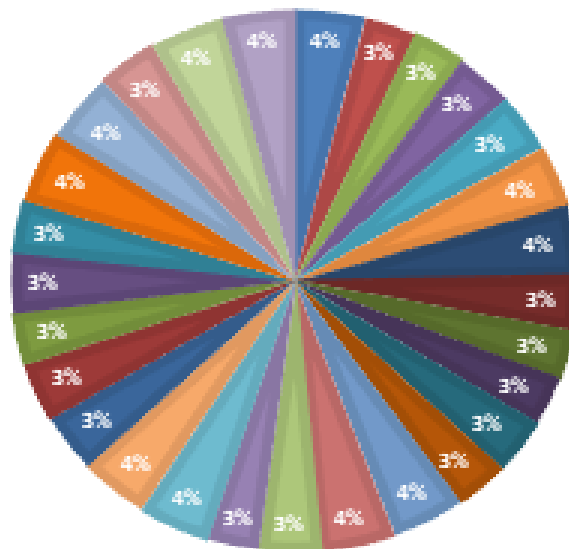
Table 2: Mean Score of Respondents According To the Challenges

| Challenges  | Mean Score | Std.Deviation |
|---|------------|---------------|
| Lack of access to sufficient land for farming   | 1.67       | 0.4761        |
| Limited access to credit facilities   | 1.23       | 0.6478        |
| Lack of support from family/friends to start up a farm  | 1.30       | 0.4726        |
| Limited farmers' youth groups and association/cooperatives  | 1.41       | 0.4899        |
| Unwillingness of educated youths to engage in agriculture because it makes use of local farm implements | 1.47       | 0.4989        |
| Limited agricultural knowledge and skills   | 1.57       | 0.4955        |
| Lack of physical infrastructures such as electricity, roads in rural areas                              | 1.73       | 0.44          |
| Poor market information   | 1.36       | 0.4819        |
| Poor agricultural research and advisory services  | 1.23       | 0.6478        |
| Lack of start-up capital  | 1.23       | 0.6478        |
| High cost of improved crop varieties  | 1.41       | 0.4899        |
| Non- availability of storage facilities   | 1.30       | 0.4726        |
| High cost of farm inputs such as fertilizer, agrochemicals, etc   | 1.73       | 0.44          |
| Attraction of quick gains especially  | 1.8        | 0.421         |

|  |      |        |
|--|------|--------|
| from white collar jobs   |      |        |
| Poor transportation network  | 1.47 | 0.4989 |
| Lack of incentives from government to encourage youth farmers                        | 1.23 | 0.6478 |
| Poor agricultural extension agent-farmer contact                                     | 1.73 | 0.44   |
| Challenge of climate change/variability  | 1.67 | 0.4761 |
| Lack of basic amenities such as pipe born water, etc                                 | 1.47 | 0.4989 |
| Unavailability of irrigation facilities  | 1.47 | 0.4989 |
| High incidence of pest and diseases infestation                                      | 1.30 | 0.4726 |
| Low prices of farm produce   | 1.47 | 0.4976 |
| Poor yields of crops   | 1.30 | 0.4726 |
| Inadequate training opportunities for youths in the rural communities                | 1.8  | 0.421  |
| Inadequate provision of social infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, etc       | 1.73 | 0.44   |
| High cost of labour saving technologies  | 1.47 | 0.4976 |
| Irregular and untimely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizer, improved seeds, etc | 1.8  | 0.421  |
| Lack of collateral required to obtain loan from Bank of Agriculture                  | 1.73 | 0.44   |

### CHART TITLE

- Lack of access to sufficient land for farming
- Limited access to credit facilities
- Lack of support from family/friends to start up a farm
- Limited farmers' youth groups and association/cooperatives
- Unwillingness of educated youths to engage in agriculture because it makes use of local farm implements
- Limited agricultural knowledge and skills
- Lack of physical infrastructures such as electricity, roads in rural areas
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- Poor agricultural research and advisory services
- Lack of start-up capital
- High cost of improved crop varieties
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- Unavailability of irrigation facilities
- High incidence of pest and diseases infestation
- Low prices of farm produce
- Poor yields of crops
- Inadequate training opportunities for youths in the rural communities
- Inadequate provision of social infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, etc
- High cost of labour saving technologies
- Irregular and untimely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizer, improved seeds, etc
- Lack of collateral required to obtain loan from Bank of Agriculture



Major challenges faced by rural youths in promoting rural farming include Lack of access to sufficient land for farming (M= 1.67), Limited access to credit facilities (M=1.23), Lack of support from family/friends to start up a farm (M=1.30), Limited farmers' youth groups and association/cooperatives (M=1.41), Unwillingness of educated youths to engage in agriculture because it makes use of local farm implements (M=1.47), Limited agricultural knowledge and skills (M=1.57), Lack of physical infrastructures such as electricity, roads in rural areas (M=1.73), Poor market information (M=1.36), Poor agricultural research and advisory services (M=1.23), Lack of start-up capital (M=1.23), High cost of improved crop varieties (M=1.41), Non-availability of storage facilities (M=1.30), High cost of farm inputs such as fertilizer, agrochemicals, etc (M=1.73), Attraction of quick gains especially from white collar jobs (M=1.80), Poor

transportation network(M=1.47), Lack of incentives from government to encourage youth farmers (M=1.23), Poor agricultural extension agent-farmer contact (M=1.73), Challenge of climate change/variability (M=1.67), Lack of basic amenities such as pipe born water, etc (M=1.47), Unavailability of irrigation facilities (M=1.47), High incidence of pest and diseases infestation (M=1.30), Low prices of farm produce (M=1.47), Poor yields of crops (M=1.30), Inadequate training opportunities for youths in the rural communities (M=1.46), Inadequate provision of social infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, etc (1.73), among others (Table 2). All the standard deviation on challenges faced by rural youths in promoting farming enterprises in Kwande L.G.A of Benue State, Nigeria was less than one. This shows the uniformity as regards to responses of the respondents on challenges faced by rural youths in farming. This implies that the

respondents were highly constrained by numerous factors which hinder their effectiveness in family farming. This agrees with Proctor *et al* (2015) who noted that constraints to rural youths in agriculture include lack of market accessibility, lack of support from family and friends. They further reported that despite all the challenges being faced by rural youths, there is no choice but for youths to remain in agriculture which serves as source of employment to them.

### Recommendations

Most of the youths in the study area were males, single with mean age of 24 years, having one form of formal education or the other as well as farming as a primary occupation. Major challenges faced by rural youths in farming enterprises include low prices of farm produce, irregular and untimely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizer, lack of improved seeds, lack of access to sufficient land for farming, high cost of labor saving technologies, among others. The study further shows that the youths were highly constrained by financial, institutional and logistic problems.

The study recommends that government at federal, state and local levels should encourage youths to remain in agriculture through adequate and timely provision of farm inputs such as fertilizer, agro-chemicals, and improved varieties of crops as well as labor saving technologies in order to boost productivity. Provision of agricultural extension services to the rural youths in farming remains paramount for easy access to improved technologies that will enhance greater output thus increasing household income which improves standard of living.

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