

## Towards Embracing Sustainable Capacity Building Needs in Cocoa Rebirth Programme for In-school and Out-school youths in Nigeria

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### Abstract

In some past decades, the production of cash crops like cocoa is as important as the turn which petroleum production takes recently. The advent of crude oil and oil boom led to economic down turn of cocoa in Nigeria. But recently, there is the advocacy for the regeneration of Nigerian cocoa industry through capacity building needs of farmers and youths. The Nigerian government has focused on the Cocoa Re-birth initiatives for ways of reviving the cocoa industries. By applying the analytical framework of agricultural system innovation, this paper traces the problems in the cocoa agro-industrial system which led to its down turn. It focuses on the roles which the government played in building farmers capacity in Nigeria in order to improve cocoa production and, implicitly, the education sector (teaching sub-sector) to improve youth awareness, knowledge and participation in cocoa production especially now that the circumstances of poverty, unemployment and deprivations are prevalent in Nigeria which make young people to depend on their parents and others till about 40 years of age. Cocoa farmers and youths participation in Cocoa Rebirth Programme would help in bringing back the lost glory and overall cocoa production success. While farmers strive towards excellence in regenerating cocoa production, and with the government providing them the tools to succeed is an essential component of their growth and development as professionals. The revitalization of the Nigerian cocoa industry through Cocoa Re-birth would empower farmers and youth in agriculture with adequate capacity for nation building.

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**Keywords:** Capacity Building, Rebirth, In-School Youth, Out -School Youth, Cocoa Industry

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### INTRODUCTION

Cocoa or cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) is a perennial tree crop which originated from South Africa. *Theobromacacao* belongs to the family of Sterculiaceae. Cocoa is a tropical low land crop which grows best at annual temperature of 170°C and rainfall of at least 1140mm. Cocoa has been the leading agriculture export and a major cash crop in Nigeria from the following fourteen states as the cocoa producing states, namely Edo, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi, Adamawa, Taraba, Abia and Delta. There are no simple solutions to the diverse and complex problem that currently plaque the cocoa industry. It is good to focus on growing a healthy crop in a sustainable way, utilizing management methods that are cheap and reducing dependence on costly inputs like pesticides and fertilizer. Over 80% of all cocoa is produced by smallholder farmers. Cocoa provides employment in many rural communities and pays for school fees of farmers' children. Smallholder cocoa is grown mostly under shade trees either inter cropped or grown in a semi-natural agro-forestry setting and hence is a particular habitat for many species (biodiversity)

The myriad of problem of out- of school youths unemployment and systemic decline in teaching and cocoa production for in- school youth demands immediate, radical and transformative changes to reverse the culture of the current situation of cocoa industry. Nigerian youth policymakers should be spurred into devising important strategies that will respond to the challenges within the agricultural system, and most importantly building capacity for cocoa farmers. The teaching subsector would do a great job in rebirth program for in-school youth. Joining farmers club would impart the out- of- school and farmers in the revitalization of the Nigerian cocoa industry through cocoa re-birth. Youths are seeking white collar jobs in cities because of low productivity, poor security of land tenure, high risks from disease out breaks, thefts, adverse weather etc and these are responsible for shortage of farmers at present and in future.

### Gap in literature

Despite the prospect of cocoa industry before 1970, its decline started around this early 70s till date. Alamu (2013) stated that cocoa production in Nigeria

fell from second largest producer to fourth position among the league of cocoa producer. Cocoa production which was just a subsector in agricultural production not only fell but the whole agricultural sector was negatively affected. Federal government came up with many policies and programmes to resuscitate both the cocoa production and agricultural production, among such programmes are Agricultural Development Projects (ADPS) in 1975, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 (Ojo, 1988), Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) in Nigeria (Olafare, 2016) and Cocoa Rebirth Programme (National Cocoa Development Committee (NCDC), (2005) examines the impact of the Nigerian cocoa-rebirth initiative and makes suggestions that are critical for strengthening the innovation system in a traditional sector. The study demonstrated that though an innovation system in the cocoa industry is far from being realized and that the policy intervention of the cocoa rebirth initiative can be potent as an instrument of innovation. Towards this end, the findings suggest that policy emphasis should aim at organizing the cocoa re-birth initiative as an innovation focused programme that enables interactive learning among actors in cocoa research, production and industrial processing.

#### **Youths: In- school and out- school**

The United Nations defines youth as individuals from 15-24 years of age. The youth constitute the major resource base for any country which wants to embark on any meaningful agricultural and rural developments projects. For youth to successfully participate in agriculture sector access to both information and education are crucial. However, there are some problems that tend to reduce or hamper youth from taking active part in agriculture youth have always had a negative attitude towards agriculture because they think it is an occupation of people with lower status. Most youth programmes are usually not systematically planned, monitored and evaluated, consequently, they hardly ever archive the objectives of up-lifting the standard of living of most youths. (Torimiro, 2006) In- school education or formal education influences people's beliefs and their values because the things we are taught directly influence their knowledge and consequently their desires. In addition to knowledge of agricultural production and processing techniques and the relative know how, young farmers need access to information about finance, land and markets and access to appropriate education and training which is quite limited in rural areas. There are some youth programmes meant for the development and strengthening of the youths. The purpose of the programmes is usually four fold, embodying educational, economic, social and recreational aims, all designed to help young people to develop into good citizens. Educational aims for youth are to:

- i. Develop power of good leadership in boys and girls

- ii. Develop character and self confidence
- iii. Develop method and accuracy in their work
- iv. Teach youths to solve their everyday problems in a systematic manner through co-operative means where possible guide them towards educational (basic, vocational, professional) and appropriate career development (Torimiro, 2006)

Why youth must be involved in agriculture and cocoa production:

1. Cocoa production matters to the development of the economy in fighting against poverty. Cocoa production is a subsector of agric production. Agricultural production is four times effective than other sector in reduction of poverty. Nigeria should count on agric/cocoa production in producing nutritious food for improving livelihoods of a booming population
2. Cocoa production can be a gold mine for young entrepreneurs
3. The cocoa economy and cocoa rebirth initiative; In Nigeria rebirth programme should make cocoa production more attractive to young farmers
4. Cocoa production is currently running with small scale holders. Cocoa production should involve more graduates, which must be creative, innovative and risk takers who are motivated to assist small holders to overcome their constraints, increase production and connecting to markets. African youths should be more engaged in agriculture and natural resources management policy processes for sustainable rural development. Strong regional and global demand for agricultural products as well as untapped land and labour productivity are favorable conditions for agric to become the engine of socio-economic development and provide more and better jobs for youths in Africa (World Bank, 2013a)

#### **Cocoa -Rebirth**

In Nigeria's economy, oil and agriculture had been of great importance despite the fact that oil has gained much focus in the industry; agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy. In recent years agriculture contributes at least one-third of Nigeria's GDP (average of 35% of GDP from 2001 to 2004), (CBN, 2004). Cocoa production is a major agricultural activity in Nigeria; and R&D aimed at improving cocoa production and value-addition has long existed at Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) and notable Faculties of Agriculture in Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Agriculture. (Adeoti, 2014). The term "Rebirth" is the regeneration of something that has been destroyed, awakening, return of resurgence (Muhammed, 2013). The objectives of the Cocoa Rebirth programme are to increase cocoa production substantially and improve its quality, improve cocoa farmers income, diversify foreign exchange earnings and improve the national economy. The expectation of federal government is that the commitment towards cocoa rebirth

programme will transform to high production of cocoa and also to bring back the loss glory of the crop, instead, its production dropped and many farmers abandoned the crop. Today in Nigeria, people are suffering: there is unemployment, high inflation and decline Gross Domestic Product (GDP), due to economic recession (National Cocoa Development Committee (NCDC) 2005).

Generally, an economic downturn in any nation is associated with high rate of unemployment, slow GDP and high inflation. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2015) has released a report on Nigeria economy in the secondary quarter including GDP, inflation, employment and unemployment, capital importation and other key fundamentals. Nigerians have become jobless with unemployment figures of 1.46 million recorded in the third quarter of 2015, with about 70% youth population through agriculture (NBS) (2015).

During the present situation of economic recession in Nigeria, set of initiatives are necessary to be put in place for effective participation of in-school-youths and farmers in cocoa rebirth program in southwestern Nigeria. Initiatives may be regarded as ideas and activities generated and utilized for effective participation of farmers in cocoa production (NCDC,2005).

#### **Problems of Cocoa Production**

1. Lack of fund or inadequate funding of young farmers, couple with high cost of input and equipment poses a lot of problems which can cause retrogression for young farmers and youth in cocoa production. Adeyemo (2006) opined that the agricultural purposes for which loans can be guaranteed by the guarantee scheme fund are connected with the establishment of plantation of or production of cocoa, oil, rubber, coffee, tea and other cash crops.
2. Diseases of cocoa, such as mistletoes cause great decline in yield or output. Black pod /capsid and certain insects destroy a lot of pods and cocoa trees
3. Low soil fertility due to land tenure system of land acquisition which is a problem of cocoa industry. Fertilizer use is very crucial which the major source of nutrients to crops is. Chemical fertilizers are supplemental nutrients added to soil to increase soil fertility. Organic matter such as crop residue and animal residue are of great importance.
4. Some Agricultural development banks do not pay instant cash (delayed payment) and they cause a lot of frustration for farmers. Uncertainty in market and environmental insecurity are problems of cocoa farmers
5. Low participation on Nigerian youth in land – based sectors is very low. This is so because of the perception of the activities in the primary production sector(agriculture and natural resources) which are

characterized by drudgery, minimal financial returns and are meant for the least educated in the society (World Bank, 2013a).this perception is reinforced by the labour intensive nature of agriculture. It is observed that investment in natural resources are long term in nature, with a slow turn- over rate requiring longer periods to yield benefits.

6. Old plantation problems are evident: Many cocoa farms are old and have low yields; the farmer may have to decide whether to renew or regenerate his plantation. As a rule of the thumb, a healthy cocoa tree produces a minimum of 25 pods per year, which yield at least one kilogram of dry cocoa beans per tree. Trees producing less than ten or less pods a year are unproductive and should be replaced if trees have reached an age of over 30 years old, they should be replaced

#### **CONCLUSION**

This paper revealed that there are some combinations of a number of factors that can lead to aggregate cocoa yield. These are availability of land, accessible funds, an increase in adequate supply of input and sustained increase in real producer and world prices. such as fertilizers and chemicals. In addition, stake holders should carry out mass replanting exercise to replace old stocks of cocoa trees on plantation along with incentives that will encourage young people to invest in cocoa farming (Olise,2011).All stake holders should support the federal and state government effort to replant ageing cacao trees adopting Cocoa Re-birth Programme. This is a way of boosting and developing Nigeria 's cocoa industry.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.Problems of inadequate funding of young cocoa farmers and high cost of input such as fertilizers and chemicals should be looked into. Chemicals that can combat major diseases of cocoa, such as mistletoes that cause great decline in output should be sold at subsidized rate. Black pod /capsid and certain insects which destroy a lot of pods and cocoa trees should be dealt with adequate training of the young farmers on application of fertilizers and chemical.
2. At the present time in Nigeria, where there are no jobs for many youths, cocoa research institutions and government should be more involved in the sensitization campaign and awareness of cocoa rebirth programme among in school youth and even out school young graduates that could educate and trigger youths interest in cocoa production. In recent years the revitalization of the cocoa industry through the cocoa re-birth initiative has been a major focus of government.
3. There should be a strong involvement of youth in rural development, agriculture and natural resources. However, the World Bank estimates that the higher access to finance, better infrastructure, improved

technology, and irrigated land, Africa's young or old farmers and agribusinesses have the potential to create a trillion –dolar food by 2030 (WorldBank, 2013b)

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