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Promoting Rice Productivity in Cross River State: Linking Data and Policy

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Introduction and background to Cross River State

Cross River State is located in the south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state was created on May 27, 1967 with Calabar (the first capital of Nigeria) as the state capital (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). Though a key oil producing state, agriculture and tourism are important sectors of the state economy with 70% of the population engaged in agriculture. The state covers an area of 23,074 square kilometers with a population of 2.89 million (NPC, 2006).

Figure 1: Local Government Areas of Cross River State



Source: Ekpo (2016)

Key Messages

- Rice yield in Cross River State which decreased from 2 MT/ha (2008-2011) to 1 MT/ha (2011 and 2012) returned to 2 MT/ha between 2013 and 2015.
- The gains in the rice sector are partly attributable to an increase in the number of rice farmers and the active support of government/development partners through projects targeting the rice sector.
- Improvements are needed to continue sustaining these programs and to increase the number of beneficiaries.

The climate of Cross River is rainforest-like with at least four distinct ecological zones. These range from mangrove to swamp forests towards the coast, tropical rainforests further inland, and savannah woodlands in the northern parts of the state. The climate is suitable for the production of a variety of subsistence and cash crops including palm oil, cocoa, rubber, cassava, yam, cocoyam, rice, maize, plantain, banana, pineapple, cashew and pumpkin (Cross River State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2015).

Following the end of the civil war in 1970, there was an urgent need to increase food production and cushion the effects of hunger and starvation in the state. This led to the establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MANR) of the state. It was comprised of the departments of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Veterinary, Livestock, Fisheries, Engineering, Tree and Food Crops Forestry and Agricultural Finance. This was later re-organized into the present departments of Administration, Finance and Supply, Livestock, Produce, Veterinary, Fisheries, and Agricultural Services. In 1985, the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) was established, taking over the extension arm of the Ministry, and in 2007, the Forestry Commission was established, embedding forestry into the Ministry of Environment. The vision of the Ministry of Agriculture is to make Cross River State the leading state in agricultural production and agro-allied industries, to promote economic wellbeing and prosperity for the state's people.

Cross River State shares common boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon in the east, Benue State in the north, Ebonyi and Abia States in the west, Akwa Ibom State in the southwest and the Atlantic Ocean in the south. The administrative structure of the state consists of 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs), each headed by a chairperson (see Figure 1).

The Cross River State Government programs for agriculture under the Agriculture Promotion Policy

In an effort to foster agriculture and boost food security in the state, the government of Cross River State has set up a number of programs and implementation plans under the agricultural promotion policy. The government established the Rice Company Management Board to act as off-taker. Currently, the slow takeoff of the project is a major concern. The state also created the Rice City Program on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement with Thai Rice Investors to engage in rice research,

seed production, grain processing and branding and export. Land has been acquired and land infrastructural development is ongoing.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)/Cross River State Government (CRSG) Anchor Borrowers Program is being promoted to provide loans to farmers through the Bank of Agriculture, although it is limited by the slow release of funds. The program has successfully registered 12,600 farmers, of which 5,400 are currently participating in the first phase (CBN/CRSG, 2016). Beyond provision of loans, the project provides farmers with rice seeds, fertilizer and pesticides contracted through input suppliers.

The state's programs extend from training and access to extension services provided by the Agricultural Development Project (ADP). Some of the constraints are the slow release of funds by the bank and few benefitting farmers (less than 30%). The State Ministry of Agriculture also intends to use the Agro Silos in Yala Local Government Area as off-takers to guarantee a market to farmers. The silos are functional and owned by the federal government but are franchised to the state. They have a capacity of 100,000 MT (FMARD, 1991). The Rice Clusters program is being implemented in 16 LGAs to enable actors in the rice value chain to enjoy economies of agglomeration and increase rice production in the state.

Rice in Cross River State

Rice is a priority crop of the Cross River State Government. Although Cross River State is not among the major rice producing states in Nigeria, the emphasis on rice aims to boost production, create jobs and improve farmers' livelihoods and income (Cross River State Planning Commission, 2009, p. 17). Table 1 shows the yield, land area cultivated and output for rice in Cross River State over the period 2006-2015.

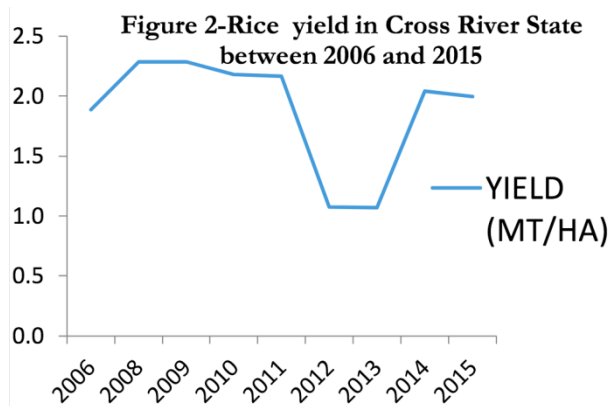
Table 1: Yield, land area, output, in Cross River State, Nigeria, 2006 - 2015

Table 1-Yield, land area, output, in Cross River State, Nigeria, 2006 - 2015			
Years	Yield Mt/Ha	Land area '000 Ha	Output '000 Mt
2006	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008	2.29	20.1	45.93
2009	2.29	20.1	45.93
2010	2.18	89.89	196.19
2011	2.16	90.97	196.77
2012	1.08	90.2	97.1
2013	1.07	93.55	100
2014	2.04	25.2	51.5
2015	1.99	26.8	53.45

Source: Generated by authors from FMOA: Agricultural Productivity Survey, 2006 – 2015

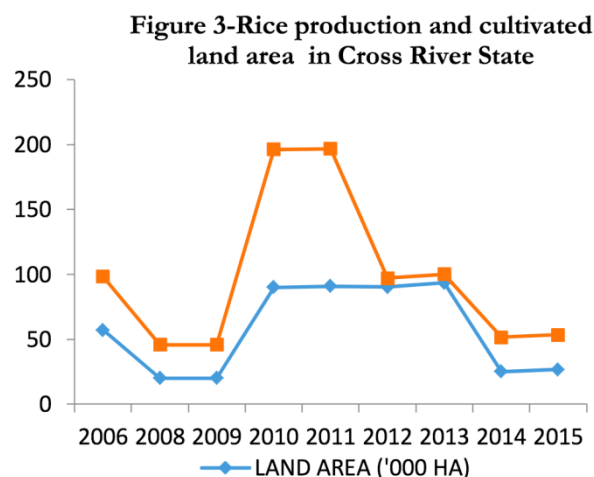
Figure 2 shows rice yield was more or less steady at 2 MT/ha during the periods 2008-2011 and 2014-2015. There was a sharp decrease in yield from 2 MT/ha to 1 MT/ha for the 2011-2012 period. It remained constant at 1 MT/ha between 2012 and 2013 and thereafter increased back to 2 MT/ha between 2013 and 2014. The decrease in yield between 2012 and 2013 might have resulted from the flood that occurred over the same period.

Figure 2



Source: Generated by authors from FMOA: Agricultural Productivity Survey, 2006 – 2015

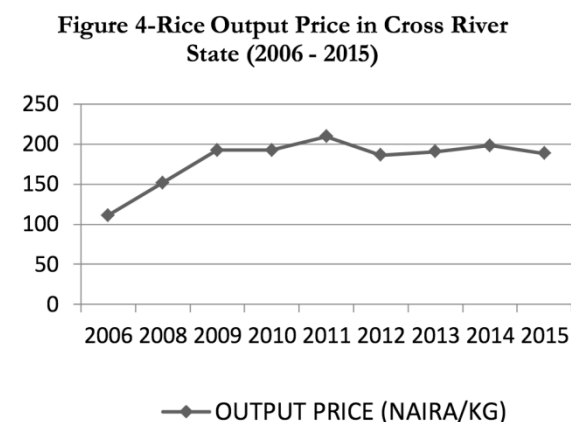
Figure 3



Source: Generated by authors from FMOA: Agricultural Productivity Survey, 2006 – 2015

Figure 3 shows that cultivated land area remained roughly constant over the three periods of 2008-2009, 2010-2013 and 2014-2015. There was a sharp increase in cultivated land area between 2009 and 2010, which then remained constant until 2013 and dipped between 2014 and 2015. On the production side, output experienced a considerable increase between 2009 and 2010 followed by a strong decline during the flooding year 2012. Rice production appears to be lower in the last five years compared to production levels in 2010.

Figure 4



Source: Generated by authors from FMOA: Agricultural Productivity Survey, 2006 – 2015

Figure 4 shows that while the price of rice increased on average from 100 naira/kg to 200 naira/kg between 2006 and 2009, it remained constant at 200 naira/kg from 2011 to 2015. Furthermore, the extent to which farmers received the actual output price is uncertain, as rural farmers selling paddy often face significantly lower prices than the market price for rice (Liverpool-Tasie, 2016).

Explaining the rice productivity situation in Cross River State

The expansion of the cultivated land area and growth of rice production at the turn of the decade can be linked to a number of factors. First: the increase in the number of rice farmers. Another is the involvement of development partners the most notable of which are highlighted below:

Commercial Agriculture Development Project (CADP) is a World Bank Assisted Program which has empowered female and youth as well as other Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs) on accelerated rice value chain production in Cross River. In addition, it promotes the production of other value chains such as oil palm and cocoa and the processing of same.

West Africa Agricultural Productivity (WAAPP) is a World Bank Assisted Program under the auspices of the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The overall objectives of WAAPP is to promote regional integration by providing a sub-regional framework for ECOWAS countries to collaborate in implementing National and Regional agricultural strategies related to the generation and diffusion of innovations in technologies, institutions, processes, organizations and markets.

In the state, the rice value chain platform distributed 250kg rice foundation seeds of Faro 52 and 9.0 MT certified rice seeds of Faro 44.

The Community Based Natural Resources Management Program (CBNRMP), funded by

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is aimed at improving the livelihoods and living conditions of rural household in the Niger Delta through capacity building and institutional strengthening with emphasis on women and youth.

Maximizing Agricultural Revenue in Key Enterprises (USAID MARKET II) is aimed at improving the livelihoods of rice farmers through capacity building using Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) and Farmers Business School and linking them to inputs dealers, financial institutions and off-takers. This program has facilitated capacity building for 5,040 farmers.

Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is aimed at improving the livelihoods of rice farmers through capacity building using Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) and linking other service providers such as inputs dealers, financial institutions and markets under GIZ, 3,800 farmers have been trained in the state.

SASAKAWA GLOBAL 2000 is a Japanese NGO which is intervening in rice production in Cross River State. The objective of SASAKAWA is to improve livelihoods through capacity building. 1,700 rice farmers have been successfully trained on rice production in the state and linked to input dealers, financial institutions and off-takers.

Challenges to rice productivity growth

The successes experienced in the rice sector in Cross River State around 2010 could be revived and made even greater. However, 10 challenges to rice productivity growth in the state are highlighted below.

- Price fluctuation
- Poor logistics and transportation facilities
- Poor road network (difficult terrain) and general infrastructure
- Limited operational capital
- Limited control of insect pests and diseases

- Limited change in farmers' attitudes to adoption of improved technologies
- Poor dissemination of agricultural information
- Poor access to market information
- Low soil fertility and limited use of soil tests before application of fertilizer
- Seasonality
- Sustaining and improving rice productivity growth in Cross River State

Cognizant of its objective to use the rice sector to improve farmers' livelihoods and income, the Cross River State Government needs to address the key challenges to rice productivity in the state. Though not traditionally focused on rice, the state government and its development partners (with experience supporting rice production in other parts of the country) should guide the development of this subsector. In addition to addressing the challenges of access to input and output markets and market information, the government can also establish a rice stakeholder platform for policy dialogue. This will ensure political commitment for the implementation of the promising strategies of the government and development partners and increase stakeholder participation in decision making processes. The platform could take the form of a rice network with an active forum for regular information exchange.

It is important to incorporate capacity building/training of rice-farming stakeholders and to strengthen the rice growers associations to enhance operation and maintenance. On the ground, it will be important to provide training on modern appropriate small-scale processing methods such as parboiling and milling technology. Training on organization management, and effective participation by cooperatives would also be beneficial. In the same vein, the creation of cooperatives to enhance productivity is needed. The government can support small-scale farmers to procure processing facilities.

Conclusion and key recommendations

This note essentially uses data from various sources including the Ebonyi State Government and the Nigeria Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services' annual wet season agricultural performance survey. It focused on rice, a priority commodity for the government of Cross River State. An attempt was made to draw a connection between actual patterns of output, cultivated land area, rice yield and on-going intervention programs in the rice sector. Results reveal a high variability in yield, cultivated land area, and output over the last 10 years. The current effort of the state to foster agriculture and boost food security through programs that benefit farmers is impressive, but it needs to be sustained. Improving and sustaining rice productivity in the state requires a number of efforts which include increasing stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process, strengthening rice growers' association, training on small-scale processing methods and the creation of cooperative. The off-take agreement with the Rice Company Management Board should be fast tracked. The number of farmers benefiting and participating in CBN/CRSG Anchor Borrowers Program should be increased from its current level of 30%. This note reveals the importance of data for informed policy making. It helps to identify important policy and programmatic gaps that need to be addressed by the state government.

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