

Households Food Security in Imo State, South-East Nigeria: The Role of Non-farm Income Diversification

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Abstract - This research examined income diversification's impact on food security among rural households in Imo State, Nigeria. The study selected 150 respondents from five local governments in Imo State. Primary data for the study was collected using semi-structured questionnaires and farmer interviews. Various statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, multinomial regression, and Food consumption score, were employed to analyze the data. According to the results, the responders' average age was 40 years old., with the majority (62.7%) being male and 79.3% married. Additionally, 70.7% of the respondents had secondary school education. The most common off-farm activity among the respondents was trading, accounting for 58.7%. The food security status of the respondents was classified as either acceptable, borderline or poor, with a food security incidence rate of 26% for the acceptable group, 39.33% for the borderline and 34.67% for the poor. The results of the multinomial regression analysis indicated that education, level of diversification, income and farming activity were all significant in determining the households' food security. Some of the recommendations include the provision of accessible and quality education by the government, and the promotion and enhancement of involvement of farmers in agricultural value addition to boost their income in rural areas.

Keywords: Diversification; Food consumption score; food security; non-farm

1. INTRODUCTION

More than 70% of the world's poor and food-insecure population are smallholder farmers who reside in rural communities in low-income countries [1]. Ironically, they provide nearly 80% of all food produced in Africa and 70% of all food produced globally [2], [3]. Even while agriculture in Nigeria contributes significantly to GDP and is a major source of income for many people, the sector confronts several challenges, which has led to a decline in performance over the past ten years [4]. A few of these falling variables are herdsmen attacks, inadequate market integration, lack of government emphasis, climate change, farmer limits and choices about workforce availability, and financial worries [5], [6].

The unpredictable nature of agricultural income flows also affects farmers in developed nations, where they are encouraged to adopt a variety of income-generating tactics, such as off-farm diversification or farm-level diversification. [7], [8]Rural non-farm diversification is the process by which people and households in rural areas engage in a variety of economic activities outside of conventional agriculture to increase their income [9], [10]. These non-farm activities might include a variety of industries, such as small-scale businesses, trade, services, and remittances. The ability to reduce the risks of being overly dependent on agricultural income, especially in areas subject to unpredictable weather and shifting market values, is one of the attractiveness of diversifying income from non-agricultural activities [11].