



# Analysis of Land Tenure System Among Rice Farmers in Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Received: 15 August 2012,  
Accepted: 28 September 2012

## Abstract

The research analyzed the land tenure system among rice farmers in Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Two hundred and forty (240) farmers were sampled by a multi stage sampling procedure and used as respondents for the study. Well structured questionnaires were used for data collection. The main means of data analysis were percentages and correlation. Findings revealed that 46.7 percent of the respondents were within the age range of 31-40 years. Majority (77.9%) of the respondents were married and full time farmers. The predominant system of land ownership among the respondents was by inheritance. Land fragmentation was perceived to be the major constraints to land ownership in the study area. The results further showed that farm size correlated positively and significantly with annual income ( $r=0.519$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and the yield significantly and positively correlated with marital status ( $r=0.243$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), annual income ( $r=0.604$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and farm size ( $r=0.727$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The problems of land tenure system that affects rice production as revealed by the study were Land fragmentation, Excessive land ownership, Land litigation and Expropriation. The study recommended that legislation given rice farmers title to land should be enforced by government in consideration of the fact that rice production need to improve to meet the demand of the teaming populace in the study area.

### Keywords:

Land Tenure System, Rice, Farmers, Awe Local Government Area, Yield

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## INTRODUCTION

Land has remained a considerably important factor of production since the creation of man and a fundamental factor of production in the agricultural sector. It has an essential role to play in increasing as well as sustaining agricultural production. The extent to which this role is performed is determined in part by methods of land acquisition and arrangements for the ownership and use of land. According to Arua and Okorji (1998) Land tenure in Nigeria can be classified into three main types, namely: communal, individual (private) and public (state). Examples of communal land tenure, as well as some examples of private land tenure, are found in customary or indigenous land tenure systems, while other examples of private land tenure and all examples of state land tenure are found in the statutory nomenclature, which is analogous to the "Western" or Euro-American land rights systems. Communal land tenure systems are more common in areas with relatively low population density; individual landownership predominates in densely populated communities. Public land tenure is not common in the rural communities of eastern Nigeria despite the Land Use Decree (Act) of 1978.

Customary land tenure systems in Nigeria are related to family and inheritance systems, and are based on the concept of group ownership of absolute rights in land, with individuals acquiring usufructuary rights. Customary land rights establish the basis for access to land resources and the opportunity to use land for productive purposes (Famoriyo, 1980). Famoriyo (1973) notes that under the customary rules of tenure, three principles were observed: first, each individual member of a landholding family was entitled to a portion of land – enough to feed himself and the members of his family; second, no member of the community could dispossess another of his or her stake in family land; and third, no one could alienate family members' interests in family land without the knowledge and consent of those members.

Tenure systems under customary law vary but, in principle, are restricted to usufruct rights. These may or may not be alienable, generally,

or saleable, in particular. They may be perpetual or for certain periods only, or they may be solely for the lifetime of the holder (Poguchi, 1962). Although title to land is generally unrecorded, family and individual rights are usually well known and accepted within the community (Fabiyo and Adegboye, 1977). Under the Nigerian customary land tenure system, there are different kinds of rights to land, including the rights of the individual, the rights of the group and the rights of a sovereign nature (Famoriyo, 1979; 1983).

Land assumably constitutes a principal factor in agricultural production all over the world and provides a basis for crop production in Nigeria and sub-saharan Africa. According to Chikezie (2008) land is a gift of nature which includes the soil, rivers, forest etc. Land is a fixed factor of production and remains the very basis of human existence and the foundation of our food chain (Sheng, 1989). The importance of land lies in the fact that all man's activities either directly or indirectly depends on it. Hence, its availability, distribution, acquisition, utilization, affordability and sustainability determine man's degree of success in feeding his family, and maintaining his home, schools, etc.

Rice is an increasingly important crop in Nigeria. It is relatively easy to produce and is grown for sale and for home consumption. In some areas there is a long tradition of rice growing, but for many, rice has been considered a luxury food for special occasions only. Onuk *et al.* (2010) observed that rice, in recent times, has emerged as a major household food item moving from a ceremonial to a staple food in many Nigerian homes within the last two decades, such that some families cannot do without rice in a day. With the increased availability of rice, it has become part of the everyday diet of many in Nigeria. There are many varieties of rice grown in Nigeria. Some of these are considered 'traditional' varieties whereas others have been introduced within the last twenty years.

Rice is cultivated in virtually all the agro-ecological zones in Nigeria. Despite this, the area cultivated to rice still appears small. In 2000, out of about 25 million hectares of land cultivated

to various food crops only about 6.37% was to rice giving an average national yield of 1.47 tons per hectare (World Bank, 1991). Nwachukwu *et al.*, (2008) reported that as a staple food in Nigeria, rice accounts for 40% of the diet of the country population but production has been growing at a slow rate relative to consumptions within the last years.

Rice is not grown in isolation. All Nigerian farmers have a variety of crops including sorghum, maize and sweet potatoes, and many keep animals as well. Animals are grazed on open land and are fed on the crop residues. In the north of the country there is an understanding between the nomadic Fulani people and agricultural farmers; Fulani farmers bring their cattle herds onto the fields after harvesting, allowing them to eat the crop residues, and fertilize the fields with manure. The Fulani are nomadic, following migration patterns which maximize the grazing for their cattle. In the south they are not tolerated to such a wide extent, and agricultural farmers tend to believe them to be destructive; this can lead to disputes between settlers and nomadic farmers.

In order to grow rice, farmers need a number of resources, most basically land, especially those seeking to increase their production. Access to productive resources, services and inputs is essential for rural households if farmers are to be raised out of poverty and enabled to contribute to sustainable development. Access to land could be a critical factor in improving the situation of rural farmers as it is a resource of food production and for engaging in market oriented activities. Land ownership (Land tenure system) is also critical for raising the social status of farmers, and for facilitating their access to benefits and services such as credit and extension (San, 1999).

Youssef (1995) had stated that land tenure system were undergoing the stresses of modernization that too often further restricts farmers' access to land. Although most rice farmers in the study area have access to land for agricultural activities, however, the farm size may be small and less fertile to allow for large scale farm production. This implies that access to farm

land does not only constitute a problem but also the quality of land obtained. These conditions have also been observed by Makoto *et al.*, (2009) stated that since most farmers in developing countries can hardly cope with the stress of modernization that too often further restricts their access to community land, they are left with small pieces and less fertile land.

The research was conducted to analyze the land tenure system among rice farmers in Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This is with a view to describe the socio-economic characteristics; identify the method of land acquisition; identify the perceived constraint to land acquisition and determine the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and yield of rice in the study area.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Description of study area**

The research was conducted in Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa state in Nigeria. Awe is located within latitudes 8° North and 9° East of the equator. It shares boundary with Guma local government area of Benue state to the west, Ibi local government area of Taraba state to the north, Keana and Obi local government area of Nasarawa state to the west and located 92km away from Lafia the state capital in the southern part of Nasarawa state.

The climatic condition is generally warm, humid with two seasons in a year (raining and dry seasons). The raining season commences around April and May to October while the dry season takes off from October to April. Awe local government has 12 districts and the major occupation for majority of the people is farming and the major crops grown include rice, yam, sesame, sorghum, maize etc.

### **Sampling technique**

The population for this study consisted of all rice farmers in the study area. The sample size of 240 respondents was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage one village was purposively selected from each of the twelve (12) districts to give a total twelve

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to their Socio-Economic Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)		
20-30	28	11.6
31-40	112	46.7
41-50	64	26.7
51-60	26	10.8
61-70	10	4.2
Sex		
Male	178	74.2
Female	62	25.8
Marital status		
Single	53	22.1
Married	187	77.9
Occupation		
Farming	188	78.3
Trading	20	8.3
Civil servants	16	6.7
Artisan	16	6.7
Educational level		
Primary	162	67.5
Secondary	42	17.5
Tertiary	28	11.7
Non formal	8	3.3
Annual income (Naira)		
<50000	8	3.3
50000-150000	88	36.7
150001-350000	90	37.5
350001-550000	26	10.8
550001-750000	6	2.5
>750000	22	9.2
Farm size (Ha)		
<10	114	47.5
10-20	86	35.8
21-30	16	6.7
31-40	12	5
41-50	8	3.3
>50	4	1.7
Yield of rice (Bags)		
1-30	132	55
31-60	64	26.7
61-90	20	8.3
91-120	22	9.2
>120	2	0.8
Farming experience (Years)		
<10	112	46.7
11-20	108	45
21-30	18	7.5
>30	2	0.8

(12) villages. Secondly random selection of twenty (20) respondents was done from each of the twelve (12) villages to give a total of two hundred and forty (240) rice farmers for the study.

### Method of data collection

Primary data were collected through the use of well structured questionnaires which were administered to the respondents. Information collected includes socio-economic characteristics, method of land acquisition or land ownership and problems associated with land ownership in the study area. Inferential and descriptive statistics such as frequency, tables, and percentages were used for data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Socio-Economic characteristics of the respondents

The results in table 1 showed that 46.7 percent of the farmers were within the age range of 31-40 years. This result agrees with the findings of Yusuf *et al.*, (2007) that most farmers are within their active years and can make positive contribution to agricultural production. The result in table 1 also showed that (74.2%) of rice farmers were males whereas 25.8 percent were females. This agrees with the view of Nkanta (2004) who opined that males dominate in small scale farming enterprises than their female counterparts. The result also revealed that 77.9 percent were married farmers whereas 22.1 percent were single. This implies that hired labour is reduced as farmers' household may be sufficient to assist them on their farm activities. Results in Table 1 also showed that majority (78.3%) of respondents were full time farmers whereas 8.3 percent, 6.7 percent and 6.7% were traders, civil servants and artisans respectively. Table 1 shows 67.5 percent of the respondents had primary education whereas 17.5 percent had secondary. It was revealed that only about 11.7 of the respondents attained post secondary education whereas 3.3 percent had no formal education. The findings also revealed that 37.5 percent of the respondents earned N150001- N350000 per annum whereas only 9.2 percent earned above

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N750000 per annum. This may be as result of land ownership by inheritance with its attendant problem of land fragmentation which gives access to only small pieces of land that can hardly be put to large scale commercial agriculture.

### Method of land ownership among rice farmers in the study areas.

Table 2 shows that majority (61.6%) of the respondents owned their land by inheritance. This implies that the size of land owned by an individual diminishes with time due to sharing among successive generations of members in a family. Parkson (1970) reported that land tenure system by inheritance denied willing farmers of good farm land for large scale production of rice. This invariably means that the customs progressively lower the yield and hence lower the quantity of rice produced per farmer in the study area. This agree with Migot-Adholla *et al.*, (1991) who reported that for sub-Saharan Africa the distinguishing features of different tenure regimes concern restrictions on the individual holder's ability to transfer land and the categories of persons to whom land may be transferred. The same authors assert that because land is an integral part of the social system, and legitimate use is traditionally determined by birth, affinity, common residence and social status (or some combination of these), transactions may be limited to the members of the lineage. This hinders the emergence of market transactions in land whereby access is ideally determined by supply and demand factors as well as entrepreneurial ability. It also hinders the emergence of "modern" (implicitly "Western") property rights systems founded on principles of contractual

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to their Methods of Land Ownership

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Inheritance	148	61.6
Purchase	24	10
Gift	60	25
Tenant	4	1.7
Government allocation	4	1.7

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents According to their Perception of Problems Confronting in the Study Area

Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Fragmentation	120	50
Land litigation	28	11.6
Excessive land ownership	76	31.7
Expropriation	16	6.7

Source: Field Survey, 2011

law and economic efficiency. This system of land ownership could also affect farmers' adoption behavior and land improvement practices embarked upon. Njoku (1990) had indicated a positive relationship between land ownership and adoption level. This means that the type of land tenure system existing in a particular locality will determine the type and level of adoption of a particular innovation. Even with the initiation of agrarian reforms, the politics of land ownership often work to ensure that most productive land remain in the hands of a few, especially the wealthy who incidentally don't put the land to agricultural use.

Table 2 also revealed that 25 percent of the respondents owned their land through free gift. This implies that if not by inheritance, most farmers could only appreciate the need of offering this land to friends who wish to farm rice. These results agree with Oladele (2009) who reported that land is mostly owned by inheritance, purchase and free gift. Ten percent of the respondents owned theirs by purchase whereas 1.7 percent by government allocation and tenant.

### Problems of land tenure system in the study area

Results in table 3 revealed that majority (50%) of the respondents perceived land fragmentation to be the major problem of rice production in the study area. This is expected considering the fact that land ownership by inheritance is common in the study area. These results agree with the findings of Kolawole (2011) who reported that the traditional land tenure system have effects on rice production due to excessive fragmentation, this may leave farmers with several small sizes of land holding scattered

over an area and therefore, may be very difficult and uneconomical to mechanization. Table 3 also revealed that other problems resulting from method of land ownership in the area are excessive land ownership (31.7%), land litigation (11.6%), and expropriation (6.7%).

**Relationship between socio-economic characteristics and the yield of rice**

Results in Table 4 show that farm size correlated positively and significantly with annual income ( $r=0.519, p<0.001$ ). This implies that increase in farm size is accompanied by corresponding increase annual income. Yield significantly and positively correlated with marital status ( $r=0.243, p<0.001$ ), annual income ( $r=0.604, p<0.001$ ) and farm size ( $r=0.727, p<0.001$ ). This shows that being married with higher income in addition to more farm sizes increase the yield of the respondents.

Farming experience was significant but negatively correlated with occupation and farm experience ( $r=-0.243, p>0.001$ ) while farming experience correlated significantly and positively with annual income ( $r=0.366$ ) farm size ( $r=0.300$ ) and yield ( $r=0.258$ ) at 1% level of significance. This implies that farming experience increases the income of the respondent resulting from additional farm sizes and increases in the yield thus the more experienced a farmer is the more the chances of getting more proceeds from the farm.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Findings revealed that 46.7 percent of the respondents were within the age range of 31-40 years. Majority (77.9%) of the respondents were

married and full time farmers. The predominant system of land ownership among the respondents was by inheritance. Land fragmentation was perceived to be the major constraints to land ownership in the study area. The results further showed that farm size correlated positively and significantly with annual income ( $r=0.519, p<0.001$ ) and the yield significantly and positively correlated with marital status ( $r=0.243, p<0.001$ ), annual income ( $r=0.604, p<0.001$ ) and farm size ( $r=0.727, p<0.001$ ). The problems of land tenure system that affects rice production were Land fragmentation, Excessive land ownership, Land litigation and Expropriation. The study revealed that rice production is characterized by prevalence in small scale fragmented farming unit which affects large scale commercial farming. Effective land distribution is the only way for increasing food production.

Based on the findings, the study recommends the introduction of farmers' settlement scheme to offer farmers opportunities of owning sizeable farm land for production. In order to implement this reform programmes, government has to provide human and financial resources for the following redistribution of land ownership, administration of the reforms and provision of supporting services such as special extension services, supply credits and marketing services. The customary land tenure system affect rice production and discourages permanent land improvement and mechanization resulting in poor rice production in the area. Therefore, owners operator of land tenure system should be encouraged so that young people with enough capital and management skills can invest in rice production thereby boosting its productivity.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age	1.000								
Sex	.044	1.000							
Marital status	-.007	-.020	1.000						
Occupation	-.042	-.063	.016	1.000					
Educational level	-.158	-.087	-.005	.293**	1.000				
Annual income	.061	.068	.067	.252**	.210*	1.000			
Farm experience	.135	.110	.004	.243**	.199*	.366**	.300**	.258**	1.000

Source: Field Survey, 2011

\* Correlation is significance at 0.01 levels.

\* Correlation is significance at 0.05 level

Farmers should be advised by relevant stakeholders to register their farm land with relevant government agencies, by so doing problems associated with land litigation can easily be solved. Also, through formation of social organization such as cooperative groups, farmers pull their resources for large scale production of rice.

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