

Socio-economic Characteristics and Returns of Dates Palm Marketing in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State, Nigeria: agricultural policies, resource economics and agribusiness.

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Abstract

The study examined the socio-economic characteristics and returns of date palm marketing in Gombe metropolitan markets. Questionnaires were distributed to forty respondents randomly selected. Data were collected from ten respondents in each of the market location. Descriptive statistic and marketing margin was used to analyse the data. The results shows that 37.5% of the respondents were young within the age of 21-30, those with Quar'anic educational qualification constituted 45% of the total respondents, marketers who were married constituted 75% while those with household size ranging from 6-10 had the highest percentage of 40. Mean while, years of marketing experience for those ranging from 1-5 had the highest percentage of 62.5 and the marketing margin of 20% was realised from both small tin (0.11kg) and big tin (0.22kg). The major constraint among others faced by the marketers was pest and insect attacked with 62.3%. It was therefore recommended that appropriate means of products preservation should be introduced in dates palm marketing.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Characteristics, Dates palm, Returns, Marketers

Introduction

Date palm is one of the oldest fruits on earth. The origin of Medjool palm is unknown, records shows that it was grown in Egypt in the fifth century B.C, this fruits were widely traded at that time and were regarded as "the fruits of Kings". In the history of Mesopotamia such as Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria, the valley (Pakistan), Italians and Greece. It is known to been cultivated in the Middle East more than 500 years ago (Abuzinada, 1982). Millions of data palm that grow in United States are *Phoenix dictylifera* is one of the oldest fruit trees in the world and is mentioned in the holy Quar'an and bible. It is the commonly eaten and marketable species of data palm worldwide (Murzolk, 1995).

There is strong demand for high quality date in Marocco. Current consumption of date is 120000 million and the total demand is 160000 million while the total domestic production is 90000 million. However there is a significant market demand as well as low domestic supply of high quality dates (Asgah, 1988).

It is important in the diet and economy of the Sudan and Sahel savannah of Nigeria. The Nigeria Institute for Oil palm research (NIFOR) provides support research and development to the entire palms industry in Nigeria (Abdel, 1982). The economy sector provides food and raw material for the confectionery, personal care products industry. The sector also provides employment for large part of the some African countries (Hassan, 1987).

Dates palm *Phoenix dictylifera* is one of the cheapest fruits sugar in the world. In Nigeria, data palm marketing has been practiced for many years. But despite, the popularity of data palm among all state of production, its level of marketing is declining. Data palm marketers are not aware of modern system that can increase the efficiency of this type of business, due to their social character and ignorance. An efficient marketing system of data palm is important in order to achieve a desired result on fruit security (dates palm) in Nigeria.

Date palm is a crop which is consumed in almost all part of the world. In Gombe, the consumption of date palm is not an exception, this is due to the fact that date palm is sold all over the state most especially in the study area by retailers in their shops, retailers with tables those do not have shops, hawkers with wheel barrow and those with trays. In addition, the consumption of date palm is very high during fasting and Sallah (El-kabir) period. This is accompanied with the fact that Muslims form majority of the population in the study area which is Gombe metropolis, Gombe state, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic characteristics of date palm marketers in the study area. The specific objectives are: to examine the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents in the study area, to determine the cost and returns of date palm marketing in study area and to identify the constraints to date palm marketing in the study area.

Methodology

The study Area

The study area is Gombe metropolis in Gombe State which is located on longitude 11^o 10'E and 10^o 15'N of green witch meridian above sea level with the sudan savannah ecological zone of Nigeria. The mean annual rainfall ranges from 600mm-1200mm and the maximum and minimum temperature of 22.7^oC and 33.5^oC respectively. The vegetation cover is open savannah wood land with trees up to six meters or more. Gombe Local Government Area is bounded in the north by Kwami L.G.A., in the south by Akko L.G.A. and east by Yamaltu Deba L.G.A. Tashan Dukku livestock market is the largest livestock market in the metropolis. The markets serve the surrounding towns of Kwami, Kumo, Dadin-kowa and Akkoyel in the north, south, east and west respectively.

Sampling Techniques

Four markets in the study area were purposively selected which were Gombe Old market, Gombe Main Market, Pantami market and Kasuwan mata market. The criterion for the selection of the sampled markets was that they are the main markets in Gombe metropolis. And 40 date marketers were randomly selected as a sample for the study by means of balloting, where 10 date palm marketers were randomly selected from each of the markets.

Types and Sources of Data

The data relevant to the research work was those that revealed the socio-economic characteristics of date palm marketers in the study area. Data like age, marital status, educational level, household size, marketing experience of the respondents and the constraints to date palm marketing they face in the study area. The data were collected using questionnaire in the four markets in the study area

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics which includes frequency distribution and percentage.

Results and Discussions

Factors that Influence Date Palm Marketing

There are some factors that contributed significantly to marketing of date palm in the study area. These factors include age, household size, educational level, marital status, quantity sold and constraints.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Date Palm Marketers

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
21-30	15	37.00
31-40	12	30.00
41-50	8	20.00
51-60	5	12.50
Educational Level		
Quar'anic education	18	45.00
Primary education	13	32.50
Secondary education	9	22.00
Marital Status		
Married	29	72.50
Single	8	20.00
Divorce	3	7.50
Household Size		
1-5	15	37.50
6-10	16	40.00
11-15	5	12.50
16-20	3	7.50
21-25	1	2.50
Marketing Experience		
1-5	25	62.50
6-10	4	10.00
11-15	6	15.00
16-20	4	10.00
21-30	1	2.50
Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

Table 1 above shows that an appreciable number of the marketers fell within the age bracket of 21-30 years representing 37.5% of the total respondents. About 90% of the respondents were young with the age of 21-40 year, which is considered as economically active age, whereby the respondents will be willing to adopt new technologies that may improve their marketing 45% of the total respondents had Quar'anic education, 32.5% with primary education and those with secondary education constituted 22.5% of the respondents in the study area. This implies that majority of dates palm marketing is been carried out by Muslims in the study area. The table also indicated that majority of the respondents in the study area were married with 72.5%, those that were single constituted 32.5% of the total respondents and those that were divorce constituted only 7.5% of the total no of respondents in the study area. 40% of the respondents had the household size that ranges from 6-10, those with household size ranging from 1-5 constituted 37.5 of the total respondents in the study area. Majority of the marketers had 1-5 years experience which constituted 62.5 % of the respondents in the study area. While those that fall with the range of 11-15 years constituted 15%, those with 6-10 years 16-20 years had 10% each and marketer with 21-30 years of experience had 2.5%.

Marketing Margin of Date palm in Gombe Metropolis

Marketing margin refer to the difference in price paid by the consumer and price received by the producer for a commodity at the different stages of the marketing system. The table below shows marketing margin of date palm in Gombe metropolis.

Table 2: Marketing Margin of Date Palm in Gombe Metropolis

Quantity of dates palm	Average selling price (N)	Average supply price (N)	Average marketing margin (%)
Bag (120kg)	26,000	23,358	10.16
Mudu (1.75kg)	350	320	8.57
Big Tin (0.22kg)	100	80	20.00
Small Tin (0.11kg)	50	40	20.00

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

Table 2 above shows that Small tin (0.11kg) and Big tin (0.22kg) had the highest marketing margin of 20% each and 10.16% for Bag (120kg), then 8.57% for Mudu (1.75kg). This indicates that petty traders that that sold 0.11kg and 0.22kg realized the higher returns than those selling 120kg and 1.75kg of date palm.

Conclusion

The study was designed to analyse the socio-economic characteristics and returns of date palm marketing in Gombe metropolitan markets and it has been concluded that date palm marketing was profitable. Majority of the marketers were Muslims who were married and those who benefit more on the business were petty traders. And it has been recommended that marketers should be provided with information on the appropriate methods of preserving date palm in order to make good use of the period of abundance and reduce infestation from insect pest. Also marketers should form cooperative society in order to benefit from government loans.

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