TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND INFORMATION UPTAKE IN THE CONDUCT OF CASSAVA FUFU MARKET

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A COMPONENT OF THE

INVESTIGATIONS ON BUILDING A FOOD MARKETING POLICY EVIDENCE BASE IN NIGERIA

This paper was developed under a networked research programme funded by the UK Department for International Development. The paper provides the views of the authors only and not necessarily those of the other contributors to the programme or the funder. The Department for International Development can accept no responsibility for any information provided or views expressed.

MARCH, 2005
1.0 INTRODUCTION: LOCATION AND COMMODITY CHAIN CONTEXT

1.1 General context of study

A previous DFID funded study (A0898) has examined the cassava fufu market in southwest Nigeria. The study focused on understanding the market network and channel, transport, weight and measures, (Dipeolu, et. al. 2001); credit provision, gender and ethnicity, (White et. al. (2002); food safety, agro processing and value addition (Sanni, 2003); role of government agencies and other external actors (Adebayo, et. al. 2003). The main gaps noted in these studies are the issues of alternatives to traditional market institutions, market information and market security. It is opined that this project provides an opportunity to fill these gaps and build on existing knowledge of the marketing system for cassava fufu.

1.2 Contributions of this study to understanding market access and food supply for the poor

Cassava fufu is widely consumed in rural and urban areas in Nigeria, especially among poor households. It is a cheap and ready source of vital energy among these categories. But processing is important for cassava because of the short shelf life of the roots after harvesting (typically less than two days). Even more important is the need to target cassava fufu marketing such that the product reaches the final consumer with minimum delay (the shelf life of the wet paste is about 7 days). An understanding of the issues identified in this study will provide policy makers a better view for ensuring that adequate and safe foods are available to urban and rural consumers.

Objectives

- Identify the gaps in the understanding of the structure, conduct and performance of the cassava fufu market
- Examine the market information system for cassava fufu
- Determine the efficiency of traditional institutions in the management of cassava products
- Explore security issues in the conduct of the cassava fufu market

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methods of data collection and analysis

A checklist of key information required to shed light on the key issues being investigated in this study was drawn up mainly from personal
experience in fufu market research, the literature and peer comments from the first Nigerian Food Market Network’s meeting held in December, 2004 in Abuja. Primary data was collected using the checklist as a guide in leading discussions with key informants representing the range of stakeholders in the market (Market Administration, Transporters, Fufu Processors, Traders, Cart pushers, Cassava Farmers and sellers, Stall owners, Open space fufu sellers, Local Government Officials and their contractors and members of the Odua Peoples’ Congress operating in the market). This was complemented with observations over a period 3 market days and focus group discussions disaggregated by activities in the market. Data analysis was mainly qualitative seeking trends and patterns emerging from the data. Additional data was collected after comments were received from Project Coordinators on the initial draft report. These additional data were used to explore in greater details the emerging patterns and trends from the data. A draft version of this report was presented at the second meeting of the Nigerian Food Market Network and Stakeholders’ Forum held February/March, 2005 at Abuja. This final version has been revised to incorporate the important comments from the meetings.

2.2 Positionality of the Researcher

My entry into the Fufu Market is purely as a researcher whose main interest is seeking an understanding of the fufu marketing system such that economic or technical interventions in the marketing chain would not negatively impact on local processors and cassava farmers. My years of service as a field level extension officer in Ogun state and thereafter as a rural development researcher has given me a bias towards these groups (local processors and farmers) in studying and discussing development issues.

3.0 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

3.1 Basic report of findings

a. Location of study

Location

Ifo fufu market is located in Ifo Town along the Lagos-Abeokuta highway in Ifo Local Government area (LGA) of Ogun State. It is a major assembly
market for wet paste fufu. It serves the marketing needs of fufu from processors who come from towns and villages within an estimated 40km radius of the town. Most of the fufu assembled in this market is targeted to various locations in Lagos metropolis.

**Layout of Ifo Fufu market**

There are 9 concrete sheds in the market, each of which is split into 24 half-wall stalls. Nine of the stalls were allotted to lafun and starch sellers while the remaining is occupied by wet paste fufu sellers. Cassava roots are sold in the open space adjacent to the larger shed (Figure 1)
Relative accessibility

The location of the market along the Lagos-Abeokuta highway makes it very easy for market actors from both Ogun and Lagos States to patronize the market. Most of the buyers found in the market come from various locations in Lagos such as Apapa, Ajegunle, Agege and Mushin. Sellers are mainly from Ilaro, Arigbajo, Pakoto, Ifo and other surrounding villages.

Pattern of inflow and outflow of market actors

The market becomes fully operational as early as 7am. By this time, cassava processors begin to arrive from villages within 40 km radius of the market and able-bodied young men (ages range between 14 and 40 years old) are engaged in off-loading, re-packaging and re-loading of cassava roots and fufu wet paste in the market.

3.2 General characteristics of cassava fufu marketing chain in Ifo Market

Table 1 summarises the key actors and their roles in the fufu market. This study focussed mainly on the wholesalers, retailers, itinerant sellers, packaging/baggage handlers, stall owners, market association and Local government operating in the Fufu Market at Ifo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Gender Roles

The specific roles of the different groups found in the fufu market disaggregated by gender are presented in Table 2. It is important to note that ownership of a vehicle is considered a major sign of wealth by the various groups in the markets. The vehicle owners in the fufu market are the key officials of the various associations in the market. This suggests either that the relatively wealthy actors in the market get elected to the Associations’ Offices or that becoming an officer of an association accords privileges that makes a market actor a vehicle owner in the market. When these positions were posed to different groups in the market, they declared the former with an understanding smile.

Furthermore, even though it is observed and confirmed that driving is clearly a male only activity in the market, many of the female officials of the market associations also own vehicles which are driven by men.
Table 1. Key actors, their composition and their specific roles in the cassava fufu market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Local term</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Relative wealth/poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassava farmer</td>
<td>agbe</td>
<td>Cultivates and sells cassava roots either directly to processors or through intermediaries</td>
<td>Men and women</td>
<td>Mainly Ohori, Yoruba</td>
<td>All categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transports - Head portage</td>
<td>Olokada or onimoto</td>
<td>Transfer cassava roots from point of harvest to point of processing</td>
<td>Mainly men for motorised transport but all categories for head portage</td>
<td>Yoruba, Ohori, Igede</td>
<td>Poor for non-motorised, increasing order of wealth with level of motorised transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processors</td>
<td>oni fufu</td>
<td>Convert cassava roots to wet fufu paste</td>
<td>Mainly women engaging children and other women as paid or unpaid labour</td>
<td>Yoruba, Ibo</td>
<td>All categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transports - Mostly motorised</td>
<td>onimoto</td>
<td>Transfer fufu wet paste from point of processing to points of sale</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Mostly Yoruba, Hausa</td>
<td>Not poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesaler</td>
<td>alarobo</td>
<td>Buys larger quantities usually for many processors or other forms of arrangements</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Yoruba, Ibo</td>
<td>Not poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailers</td>
<td>oni fufu</td>
<td>Buys small quantities - sometimes in a deferred payment arrangement with a wholesaler or processor. May cook before sale</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Yoruba, Ibo</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerant sellers</td>
<td>oni fufu</td>
<td>Mostly cooks a small quantity and use head portage directly or use children to hawk the ready-to-eat fufu</td>
<td>Women sometimes engaging the services of children</td>
<td>Yoruba, Ibo</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/bukateria owners</td>
<td>olounje</td>
<td>Either buys wet paste and cook for sale to customers or buys ready-to-eat fufu for resale</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>All groups</td>
<td>All categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging/baggage handlers</td>
<td>alaru</td>
<td>Found mainly in assembly market for packaging and repackaging wet paste fufu</td>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>Yoruba, Hausa, Ibo</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Associations*</td>
<td>Egbe oni fufu, Egbe onimoto, Parakoyi</td>
<td>Dictate and negotiate prices and rates, represents their respective groups. Settle conflicts. Sometimes responsible for security</td>
<td>All categories</td>
<td>All categories</td>
<td>All categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>ijoba ibile</td>
<td>Charge rates, sometimes build and maintain market locations. Sometimes responsible for security. Settle conflicts</td>
<td>All categories Mainly men</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Relatively wealthy or simply seen as more powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Olunjye, olomi</td>
<td>Meets some basic needs of all market operators</td>
<td>All categories</td>
<td>All categories</td>
<td>Mainly poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These are associations of the various groups in the rows above. Market Administration however has representatives of all the associations in it.
Table 2. Specific roles of different gender in the Fufu Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Men                  | 20 – 70 years | 1. Selling cassava roots  
2. Cart pushing  
3. Packaging cassava products  
4. Transporting cassava products |
| Women                | 20 – 70 years | 1. Buying, selling and reselling of fufu and raw cassava |
| Children (both sexes) | 14 – 18 years | 1. Cart pushing  
2. Hawking of other food products (usually for their mothers) |
| Boys                 | 12 – 18 years | Loading and off-loading Lorries |
| Key Officials of all associations (both sexes) | 20 – 60 years | Owners of the vehicles operating in the market |

Roles of ethnicity and Ethno-domination in the market

Overall, the Ifo fufu market is run by the Yoruba people (Table 3). This is simply because Ifo is a Yoruba town, subject to Yoruba traditional authorities headed by the Oba (Olu of Ifo). In terms of visibility (estimate of population) market is dominated by Yoruba people followed by Igbo people. In terms of activity, the fufu wet paste section is dominated by Igbo and Yoruba peoples; cassava roots is dominated by Ohori, Yoruba, Igede and Igbo peoples, lafun processing and selling, starch processing and selling and tapioca selling are dominated by Yoruba and tapioca processing is done be a Beninese woman.

Table 3. Roles of main ethnic groups found in the fufu market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Transportation, wholesale, stall owners, retail cart pushing, security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igbo</td>
<td>Selling and buying of cassava roots and fufu wet paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohori</td>
<td>Selling of cassava roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igede</td>
<td>Selling of fufu wet paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Cart pushing, driving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is an active cross-border trade in tapioca along the West African Coast from Lagos to Accra. It was found that there is no particular area of the market assigned to tapioca sellers. The tapioca sellers are dispersed throughout the market. There are no associations or groups of tapioca sellers. It was revealed by the Otun Iya Oja (a Chieftain of the Market Women Group) that tapioca processed in Togo is smuggled into Nigeria through Agbalata Market in Badagry (a Nigeria-Benin border town in Nigeria) via Cotonou in the Republic of Benin. She said that tapioca is smuggled into Nigeria because they understand that there is a ban on the importation of cassava products by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (This claim is not true. It is possible that traders mistook harassment by Customs Officials for a ban on importation of cassava products by the FGN). The black market is very active in the border towns for changing the naira in to CFA and vice-versa.

The Beninese woman processing Tapioca in Ifo market is only taking advantage of the demand for tapioca in Nigeria to process and sell to traders from Lagos thereby reducing the inherent risks of smuggling.

**4.0 STUDY FOCUS**

**4.1 Components of the fufu market chain and institutions/regulatory environment**

控制市场空间

市场空间由Baba ‘Loja (或Iya ‘Loja,如果该职位由女性担任)控制。Baba ‘Loja是市场总监，代表由Oba (Olu of Ifo)授予的传统权威机构。他被公认为市场中所有参与者的最高权威，包括地方政府官员。在这些高级官员缺席的情况下，其角色可以由副手 (Balogun Oja/Seriki Gbogbo gbo或Otun Iya ‘Loja) 可以由副手 (Balogun Oja/Seriki Gbogbo gbo或Otun Iya ‘Loja) (Figure 2).

申请希望获得市场空间的申请人将与部门负责人 (Olori/Alaga) 联系，该部门负责人将为申请人制作案例，然后由Baba ‘Loja或其副手分配空间（这可以是一个摊位或一个开放空间）。市场的领导决定申请人将根据现有空缺停留。市场内的空间分配会吸引由地方政府 (LG) 任命的承包商支付的费用。
responsible for maintenance of stalls and other facilities and remittance of an agreed sum to the LG.

**Figure 2. Organisation of the Ifo Fufu Market**

**Market Turnover**

During three consecutive visits to the market, it was established that operations at the fufu market usually ends at about 4.30 p.m. At this time, an estimated 150 bags (25kg each of fufu) is left over. On the other hand, cassava roots are never left over. Sellers somehow find a way of disposing all the cassava roots brought to the market in any particular day. It seems that a deferred payment arrangement is usually struck towards the end of the market period where the buyer stands at great advantage at dictating the lowest price of the day for cassava roots.

In the case of leftover wet fufu paste, various methods are adopted by market operators to preserve it till the next market day. The most common method is by pressing to reduce the moisture level such that the paste becomes a cake which has a longer shelf life. Another method is by
packaging in water and airtight polythene bags. Some of these are however sold before the next market day. Where sellers are unable to sell the fufu paste or cake for up to 8 days, the product becomes inedible. The colour would have changed from white to yellow. In this case, the paste or cake is discarded as waste. This is not a common occurrence in the market. Leftover fufu pastes usually attract cheaper prices.

**Laws and regulations guiding access and conduct of the fufu market**

Fufu processors explained that there is a law guiding the quantity of bags of wet fufu paste that could be brought to the market on any specific market day. This law is a collective decision of fufu processors to allow the association better to manage the price negotiations between them and the fufu sellers.

The law is binding on all fufu processors bringing fufu wet paste to the market irrespective of their tribe or position in the market hierarchy. The first level of monitoring is at the village level where the Heads of the Fufu Processors at this level ensures that all processors under her care comply. Failure to comply is reported ahead of the offering. At the market, it becomes the responsibility of the Section Head to monitor and ensure compliance.

The sellers of cassava roots do not have a similar law determining the quantity of cassava root that can be brought to the market. However, there are laws specifying the fees and taxes paid in the market. Two of these are by all categories of sellers of cassava and cassava products in the market.

These are:

1. **Parakoyi** (currently N40) payable every market day to the office of the Baba’Loja. Part of this money is used for sweeping the market and removal of wastes at the end of each market day.

2. **LGA tax** (usually N10/bag of cassava product) collected by the Contractors appointed by the LG. This is different from rent payable by market participants for allocation of space.

3. The Head of the Cassava Roots section collects a fee from transporters (Lories). He charges between N60 and N100 on each full lorry load of cassava root.
4. The Head of the Cassava Roots section also collects 10% of total fee charged from other sub-section heads in the transportation section of the market.

5. In addition, most market actors pay Association Due. The association due for the transporters has not been collected for sometime now because new officers are yet to be elected.

**Market chain and market information system for cassava fufu**

Figure 3 depicts the marketing channels for cassava fufu. The short shelf life of the products makes it imperative that the product should reach the final consumer as soon as possible. The fufu market is operated such that this is achieved with minimum level of waste. Fufu processors and transporters remain the key that ensures that this marketing arrangement functions with minimum friction. First, processors ensure that the final stage in the processing of wet fufu tallies with the day preceding the market day. From this period, the transporters come in as the main instrument to facilitate delivery at the market and from the market onward to secondary markets and the final consumers in various parts of Lagos.

![Figure 3. The cassava fufu marketing chain in Ifo Fufu Market](image-url)
This cycle requires that information is available to all the key market actors as required. For instance, stall owners need to have a good idea of the quantity of wet paste fufu to expect on each market day, the traders from various locations in Lagos need to prepare ahead for any modifications in price at each market day and the transporter need to be aware of when to pick up and make deliveries.

The market associations are the main source and manager of information in this marketing arrangement. As such, each group of market actor has its own association all of which meets under the umbrella of an overall head of the market (Baba ‘Loja). When important information is intended for the entire market, the Baba’Loja summons a meeting of all Unit Secretaries through whose offices the information is shared.

**Market Information**

The main information that different category of actors in the market seek is the price of their products and services. They are usually interested in knowing when it is increasing or decreasing. Market actors also seek information on other market outlets where their products can either be bought or sold.

The most important channels that market actors look out to for information are the transporters, the general office (Baba ‘Loja’s Office) and their colleagues. Usually individual actors’ personal network becomes a major asset here. Where there is a change in market price of any product or service in the market, those closer to the Baba ‘Loja often have the advantage of early knowers in the information system.

Overall, because of the nature of the job of transporters, they are usually in touch with at least two ends of a link in the marketing chain. They therefore stand out as the main group that provide early warning system on return from a trip to either end of the marketing chain.

All the market actors interviewed agree that mobile phones are good in spreading market information and all those who do not have would love to have one. Most of the poorer actors lament their inability to afford it. Some who can buy the hardware complain of the high cost of maintaining it.
Degree of transparency of market operation

The fufu market operation appears to be very transparent. Leadership crises could be observed from the repressed tones and knowing glances exchanged when issues bordering on transition from one set officers to another are mentioned throughout the period of the study.

The information in Table 4 was sought particularly to affirm the degree of transparency in the market. Almost every other market actor could provide information on the prices of goods or services provided by other actors in the market chain.

Table 4. Prices charged for different services and products at various levels in the fufu market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product/Service</th>
<th>Price attainable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying 25kg bag of wet fufu paste</td>
<td>₦ 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-Selling 25kg of wet fufu paste</td>
<td>₦ 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25kg cassava roots</td>
<td>₦ 580 – ₦ 650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cart pushing (25kg load)</td>
<td>₦ 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging and loading (25kg load)</td>
<td>₦ 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head portage (25kg load)</td>
<td>₦ 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport to Agege, Lagos</td>
<td>₦ 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport to Mushin, Lagos</td>
<td>₦ 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transporters' Association ticket</td>
<td>₦ 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission to Head, Cassava roots Section</td>
<td>₦ 80 – 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Even though these prices are agreed upon by members of respective association or product/service groups, in practice, individual members may bargain for a higher or lower fee for favoured customers.

When compared with information obtained in the study by Dipeolu and Ayinde (2003), the share of the various actors from the primary wholesalers' price and the secondary wholesalers' price have changed (Table 5). The primary wholesalers seem to have become better off while the secondary wholesaler has become worse off. But while the processors' share of the primary wholesalers' price have fallen from 81% in 2003 to 60% in 2005, it has increased when compared to the secondary wholesalers' price from 36% in 2003 to 37.5% in 2005. From a rural development perspective, this implies that between 2003 and 2005, the changes in the economy of the marketing system had been favourable to the grassroots.
Table 5. Market margins of fufu wet paste traced from Ilaro through Ifo
Fufu market to Pen Cinema market, Agege, Lagos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market chain</th>
<th>Price of 60kg bag of Wet paste fufu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Factor=1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Point-of-processing price</td>
<td>₦284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Transport cost</td>
<td>₦24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Point-of-wholesaling purchasing price</td>
<td>₦308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Primary Wholesaler selling price</td>
<td>₦350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Primary Wholesaler margin (%) (4) – (3) / 4</td>
<td>₤12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Processor share (%) (1) / (4)</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Transportation cost</td>
<td>₦62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Point-of-secondary wholesaling purchasing price</td>
<td>₦412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Secondary wholesaler selling price</td>
<td>₦800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Secondary wholesaler margin (%) (9) – (8) / 9</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Processor share (%) (1)(9)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Updated from Dipeolu and Ayinde (2003)

It is important to note that seasonal variations in the prices of cassava and
 cassava products are common. Prices are usually lower in the wet season
 when harvesting is less tasking and therefore attracts lesser cost. Dipeolu
 and Ayinde (2003) data were obtained in November, 2002 while the data
 for the current study were obtained in January, 2005. Both studies were
 therefore conducted within the dry season when the prices of cassava
 root and cassava products are more likely to be at their highest in the
 year. Since the data for the Dipeolu and Ayinde (2003) study were
 obtained early in the dry season compared to the mid dry season for the
 current study, slight variations in the prices are to be expected.

Another variation is the prices of cassava roots and cassava products are
 the biennial cyclical movement in prices as a result of farmers’ reaction to
 price changes in the cassava market. If the prices of cassava and
 cassava products are high in a year, farmers’ increases the land area
 cultivated in that year. This increase in land area cultivated results in a
 higher quantity supplied of the cassava roots in the next year, thereby
 forcing prices down. Some farmers often refuse to sell their cassava root
 sin that year and also refuse to cultivate new land, hence keeping prices
 low until the second year. The situation changes in the third year when the
quantity supplied falls below quantity demanded and prices rise again. This cyclic movement seems to have been at comparable stages when the data for the Dipeolu and Ayinde (2003) and the current studies were collected.

For these reasons therefore, an attempt was made to express the 2003 prices in terms of 2005 prices using the ration of price of rice in Ifo (a common staple in Nigeria) in November, 2002 (N64.25/kg) and January 2005 (N73.81/kg) as the factor. Even with this adjustment, there has been an increase in the real price of fufuwet paste.

**Traditional institutions in the management of cassava fufu market**

The market is segmented into six different product units. These are fufu wet paste (dominated by Igbo and Yoruba peoples), cassava roots (dominated by Ohori, Yoruba, Igede and Igbo people), lafun (Yoruba), starch (Yoruba), tapioca sellers (Yoruba) and tapioca processors (Beninese). Each unit of the market has its operational head (Olori or Alaga). At the time of the visits, the transport section is in transition, so only a caretaker was in charge of the Transportation Office. The reason for this is that the term of the immediate past Officers of the Fufu Transporters Association have just ended, so a Caretaker is appointed until fresh elections are conducted.

The traditional institutions in the management of cassava fufu market are:

1. The Parakoyi – This is the Baba ‘Loja-in-Council. It is made up of constituted by old people who could be retirees from government parastatals, old soldiers and lorry owners under the headship of the Baba ‘Loja. The Parakoyi settles disputes, quarrels among market actors and refer cases that gets out-of-hand to appropriate quarters (usually the Police). Parakoyi is also a term used to describe a form of tax payable on goods brought to the market. The market is a scheduled 5-day market, but skeletal services are available on other days. Arrival for each schedule market day begins the night preceding it.

2. The Oduaa Peoples’ Congress (OPC) is another traditional institution in the market. The Congress is being employed by the market contractors (commissioned by the Local Government) to serve as day and night guards.
3. It is only the Baba ‘Loja or his representative who have the authority to change things in the market.

**Security issues in the conduct of the cassava fufu market**

The OPC is dominant ethnic militia group throughout Yoruba land. The group was invited by the Contractors to provide security for the market. This was due mainly to perceived inefficiencies in the operations of the Police and the experiences of unresolved security breaches on the part of the Police by some market actors. The main concern of the OPC is to prevent theft in the market. Security issues do not influence food supply to the poor. Neither does it result in the exclusion of any group. Some market actors praise the efficiency of the OPC even in cases where the Police have been helpless. Usually, the OPC traces and find the culprit and executes extra-judicial punishments. The mere presence of the OPC in the market place was reported by many market actors to be enough deterrent for anti-social behaviours.

4.2 Positioning of current work in the literature

**Agricultural marketing in Nigeria**

Marketing is the sum total of all of all business activities involved in the movement of commodities from production point to the point of final consumption. The need for marketing arises with the production of a surplus (Olayemi, 1972; Adekanye, 1988). It is widely reported in the literature that the marketing of agricultural products is done in mostly unorganized markets in Nigeria. This study appears to challenge this position given that clear lines of organization can be discerned in the marketing of cassava fufu.

Furthermore, marketing has been viewed as the crux of the whole food and agricultural problem in Nigeria (Adegeye and Dittoh, 1985; Okunmadewa, 1995). They posit therefore that it would be useless to increase the output of agricultural commodities and equally futile to set up optimum standards of nutrition unless means could be found to move agricultural commodities from the producer and at the prices affordable by the consumers. The ability of a marketing system to effectively and efficiently perform its developmental functions depends on the ease with which price changes and responses are transmitted spatially and temporally between contiguous market pairs for a homogenous commodity. This in turn depends on the availability and effectiveness of marketing infrastructures like storage and transportation facilities,
communication networks, and access roads (Mafimisebi, 2001; Mafimisebi, 2002). To a great extent this study has demonstrated how the marketing of a traditional product could meet this challenge. The cassava fufu market is transferring a product with very short shelf life to meet urban food demand with a commendable level of efficiency.

**Power relations within the food markets**

This study has confirmed the findings of Wan (2001) that the food market is not having any impact on gender relations and women’s subordination. The overall head of the market could be male or female and all the market functions are dominated by women except transport. Even in the case of transport, some women own vehicles which are driven by male employees.

Information is scanty in the literature on the role of ethnic domination in food markets. In this study, the domination of the Yoruba ethnic group is evident in the fufu market at Ifo. Even though there are no laws excluding other ethnic groups from operating in the market, all the traditional institutions and the market associations are dominated by Yoruba people.

**Access to information on prices and supplies**

The findings of this study confirm the conclusion of Shepherd (1997) that producers and traders require a range of different types of marketing information. In addition to prices and supplies, information is required on alternative channels, quality, means of payment and financing. The study also re-affirms the importance of traders’ personal network and social capital in obtaining market information (Lyon, 2001). The closer a trader is to the Baba ‘Loja or the transport office, the more access that trader is likely to have to important market information. The studies of Smith and Lutrel (1994) and Lyon (2003) have demonstrated this assertion.

This study reaffirmed the findings of earlier studies that the power to control prices and supplies depends on the ability of market associations to act as cartels (Smith and Lutrel, 1994). The various market associations in Ifo Fufu Market are very strong in dictating prices of various products and services in the market. They even limit the quantity of products that can be brought to the market on any given market day to retain their control of the prices of such products.
Self-regulation: the role of trader associations

The reasons for forming associations in agricultural markets have been outlined in earlier studies (Whetham, 1972; Smith and Lutrel, 1994). These reasons were re-echoed in this study. A key finding that emerged from this study however is that associations are not necessarily a cohesive whole. There are issues of conflict within market associations that may hinder their effectiveness in meeting the expectations of their members. Such conflicts were felt in the various discussion sessions in this study.

The domineering influence of market associations emphasized by Adubi (1996) is also evident in this study. Non-compliance to association rules attracts heavy penalties that often results in exclusion of such erring parties from the market. This study did not however perceive the roles of market associations in the negative sense evident in the work of Adubi (1996). Market associations are essentially filling a void that could hinder the smooth operation of the market. These roles ensure the regular flow of products through the marketing chain by retaining a pragmatic market price even in the presence of potential great fluctuations in the supply, protecting the rights of their members to fair dealings in the market and ensuring that the threats of conflict are nipped in the bud.

Market security: youth vigilante groups

The presence of the Odua Peoples’ Congress (OPC) in Ifo Fufu Market affirms the position of Alemika, (2003); Gore and Pratten (2002) and Aboderin (2003) on the role of youth vigilante groups as important features of the Nigerian nation state. As some market actors put it: “the mere presence of the OPC in the market place is enough deterrent for any anti-social behaviour”.

5.0 Policy Implications of Your Findings

5.1 Good practice emerging from the study

Traditional market institutions are essential components of marketing systems. The search for alternatives to these should be done with great care. This study has shown that traditional market institutions can maintain effective marketing systems when interference from external forces do not erode their strength in maintaining balance and keeping order in the market system.
The central role of market information as the driving force of a transparent marketing system is clearly observable in this study. Modern communication gadgets such as the mobile phone were recognized by all categories of market actors as desirous in making market information wide available. It was deduced that such gadgets aid in increasing the disparities in access to market information between the rich and the poor actors. It is important therefore that policies seeking to make such gadgets accessible to market actors should also create avenues such as public pay phones that the relatively poorer market actors can use.

The failure of the Police to provide adequate security in the market was mentioned by several respondents in this study. As far as the market actors are concerned, the youth vigilante group or ethnic militia is welcome relief in improving the security situation in the market. Their presence gives several market actors a feeling of security which is important for efficient market operations.

The need to target cassava fufu marketing such that the product reaches the final consumer with minimum delay (the shelf life of the wet paste is about 7 days) is the evident guiding principle informing the structure, conduct and performance of the fufu market. As such policies to influence this marketing arrangement with a view to ensuring that adequate and safe foods are available to urban and rural consumers must learn from this.

5.2 Specific Recommendations for the Fufu Marketing system

There is a need to improve market linkages in the cassava fufu market. Currently, the market is not taking full advantage of the very good road network in the area to explore supply of wet paste fufu to other parts of southwest Nigeria. The role of market associations in negotiating prices for goods and services in the market could be expended to searching for other outlets for the cassava fufu. This way, the system of controlling output to suit market demand can be replaced with one of optimum production to meet the needs of a diverse market.

The promotion of functional market associations is useful. They provide an organised entry points for discussing improvements to the fufu processing and marketing system and new market opportunities. Most fufu marketers rely heavily on trusted market relationships, the associations therefore provide a forum for creating such assurances before their members embark on any new initiatives or take major risks.
The incidence of leftovers in the fufu market, though not widespread because of the control mechanisms put in place by the market associations makes the search for shelf-life enhancing technologies important. Currently, some processors use a double packaging method to extend the shelf life of wet fufu paste. This method and others emerging from careful research could be promoted in processing and marketing locations.

Another technology that could aid an increase in shelf life of fufu wet paste is the production of fufu powder. The production of fufu powder has the potential to be a time, labour and energy saving activity in the production for most consumers of fufu and may provide a new dried product which can be marketed. Earlier works on this by Sanni (2003) provides a major starting point for this.

Low-tech, low cost improvements to processing, marketing and information sharing will facilitate greater efficiency in the fufu marketing system. The introduction of new technologies may however create need dynamics in the marketing system such as increasing the disparities between the poor and the rich and creating new power blocs in the marketing system which may give rise to conflicts that were not there before. It is important therefore that the introduction of new technologies should be carefully studied and its potential effects clearly understood before their active promotion is encouraged in the system.

New capital intensive technical interventions aimed at commercialising fufu, if found to be technically and economically feasible, could most easily be targeted at processors with the wherewithal to adopt them in the first instance. Several large scale fufu processors have substantial financial capital and appear to be interested in expanding their activities. However, there is a risk that this approach may provide more direct advantages to richer members of the community (although, of course, more employment opportunities may be created). Efforts can be made to encourage the participation of less elite groups, by utilising the co-operative mechanisms for pooling resources. Alternatively, processing and marketing arrangements that allow large processors to purchase some intermediate products from smaller ones may prove useful.
6.0 REFERENCES


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