

## Fish Marketing As a Tool for Poverty Alleviation among Women in Lokoja and Kotonkarfi Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

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### ABSTRACT

*The growing level of unemployment, poverty and hunger in developing countries is still high despite global advances in technology and entrepreneurship development. Fish is known to be the most important food commodity handled by the women of Lokoja and Kokon-Karfi Local Government Areas (LGA) of Kogi State because the area is surrounded by water. The study was conducted to examine the socio-economic characteristics of women involved in marketing, the level of profitability as well as identifying the problems associated with fish marketing. Two markets each in Lokoja and Koton-Kakarfi LGAs of Kogi State were used. A well structured interview schedule was used to elicit information from thirty (30) respondents in each L.G.A. Analytical tools used were simple percentages and Benefit cost Ratio. The result showed that 43.3% were within the age range of 31 – 40 years. The Benefit/cost Ratio are 1.20 and 1.22 for Lokoja and Koton-Karfi markets respectively. This shows that fish marketing is profitable, it can be used as a tool for economic empowerment and hence reduction of poverty level among rural women.*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Marketing is the performance of all activities involved in the flow of goods and services from the point of initial production to the final consumer, (Adegeye and Dittoch, 1985). They further opined that marketing provides employment for stimulation of research into the techniques of fish, food, meat preservation and preparation of various food items. This is one of important aspect of agriculture without which production is not complete if goods and services produced do not reach the final consumers.

Fish is abundant and to some extent it occurs freely in nature. It is available in most market either as fresh, smoked, dried, canned or frozen as such the problem of scarcity is removed. There is hardly any religious taboo affecting the consumption of fish unlike pork and meat.

Fish is one of the most important sources of protein which could be processed and prepared into fish pie, fish cake, fish meal etc which are highly nutritional and desirable foods. Fish is less tough and more digestible compared to beef, muton, chicken and bush meat (Eyo, 1980). He further reported that fish is usually recommended to patients with digestive disorders such as ulcers because of its greater digestibility.

Williams (1985) indicated that fish consumption per computed estimate show that contribution to available supplies from fish and livestock in the Nigerian diet is equivalent to 15.5%. Because of its importance, there is need to increase its consumption and one of the

areas where fish consumption can be increased is through effective marketing. It is envisaged that fish holds the promise of reducing protein deficiency in the country.

### **Rural women**

Majority of people living in developing countries such as Nigeria live in rural areas and over 50% of the population are women. Women have been documented all over Africa and the developing countries to provide 60 – 80% of agricultural labour force (Sofranka, 1984). They are now seen engaging in farming activities like crop production, livestock, land clearing, processing etc. Rural women play a crucial role in production and provision of food for household, post harvest activities and marketing of farm produce in order to supplement family income.

Oshuntogun and Ladipo (1985) observed that most of the fish sellers from the village level to the city merchants were majority women. Moreover, most of the women were found to be full time fish sellers.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To identify the socio-economic characteristics of the women involved in fish marketing.
2. To investigate the level of profitability of fish marketing.
3. To examine the problems associated with fish marketing.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

The research was carried out in Lokoja and Konton-Karfi Local Government Areas of Kogi State. Four (4) fish markets were used, Girinya and Edeha markets in Konton-Karfi and Kpata and old markets in Lokoja. Simple random technique was used to select the sample for the study which was described by Loveday (1961) as a representative process i.e. a sample trial may result in any one of a number of possible outcomes each determined by chance.

Sixty (60) fish marketers comprising of thirty (30) marketers from each Local Government Area were given interview schedules. Oral interview and personal observation were also used by the researchers. Simple percentages and benefit cost ratio were used for data analysis.

The research was carried out between January – October, 2005.

## **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.**

There is the need to know the demographic characteristics of the fish marketers. This will enable one to adduce reasons for some of the observed behaviours and the level of influence these characteristics have regarding fish marketing.

#### **Age**

Table 1 shows that age group 31 – 40 years had the highest percentage (43.3%) while age group 15 – 25 years had the lowest percentage (10%). This 43.3% for age group 31 – 40 years might be due to the fact that they have a lot of responsibilities.

#### **Marital status**

16.7% of the respondents are single. 80% of them are married while 3.3% are divorced. This shows that fish marketing by women cuts across all the status.

### **Level of education**

Data in Table 1.0 indicates that 36.7% of the respondents have no formal education while 30% had primary education. Respondents with secondary and post secondary are mostly young people who assist their parents in sourcing for money to improve their living conditions. However, from oral interview, the most important factor in the marketing of fish is basic intelligence and the level of experience in the market and not much education. It implies that education is not a determinant of their success though it may enhance it. This finding is contrary to the opinion of Pala (1976) which view formal education as an important factor in the performance and management of fish marketing and fishery sector in general.

### **Number of children**

From Table 1.0, it can be seen that respondents with no children constitute 16.7% whose majority are likely to be single. The majority of the respondents (41.7%) had a rather large household size with 4 children and above. With a large household size, the women cannot abandon all the financial obligations of the family to the man alone to cater for.

### **Category of fish marketers**

The producers constitute the lowest (11.7%) among the categories and they are mainly seen in Girinya market along the river banks where they sell their catches. 10.3% are wholesalers who buy from the producers and sell to retailers and other merchants. Retailers constitute the largest percentage of 40% and this might be due to the small capital requirement when compared with wholesalers.

### **Types of fish sold by the respondents**

The fish being sold are either, fresh, smoked, dried or frozen.

**TABLE 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents**

Social feature	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
15 – 25	6	10.0
26 – 30	18	30.0
31 – 40	26	43.3
41 and above	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
<b>Single</b>	10	16.7
Married	48	80.0
Divorced	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0
<b>Level of education</b>		
No formal education	22	36.7
Primary Education	18	30.0
Audit Education	5	8.3
Secondary Education	5	8.3
Arabic Education	6	10.0
Post Secondary Education	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0
<b>Number of children</b>		
None	10	16.7
1	1	8.3
3	8	13.3
4 and above	25	41.7
Total	60	100.0
<b>Categories of fish marketers</b>		
Fishing/producing	7	11.7
Wholesaling	11	18.3
Retailing	24	40.0
Wholesaling & Retailing	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2005

Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents are into smoked fish, dried fish and some combine both fresh and smoked fish with percentages of 25%, 23.3% and 25% respectively. This is probably owing to the fact that smoked and dried fish has a long shelf life.

TABLE 2: Type of fish sold by the respondents

Type of fish	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fresh fish	10	16.7
Frozen or iced fish	6	10.0
Smoked fish	15	25.0
Dried fish	14	23.3
Fresh and smoked fish	15	15.0
Total	60	100.0

Field Survey, 2005

### Standard of measurement

It was observed from the study area that there are various units of measurement employed by the marketers in selling their products.

TABLE 3: Standard of measurement

Unit Measurement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Basket	20	33.3
Carton	5	8.4
Size	9	15.0
Quality and Freshness	11	18.3
All of the above	15	25.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2005

### Cost and revenue of fish marketers

The costs incurred in market operations and profit generated important so as to know whether the venture is a profitable one or not.

% profit in each study area

$$\text{Lokoja \% profit} = \frac{\text{profit}}{\text{Total cost}} \times 100 = \frac{N1940}{9,800} \times 100 = 10.8\%$$

<b>Market</b>	<b>Total cost</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9,800</b>	<b>1</b>
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$$\text{Koton-karfi: \% profit} = \frac{\text{profit}}{\text{Total cost}} \times 100 = \frac{N2,000}{9,300} \times 100 = 21.5\%$$

<b>Market</b>	<b>Total cost</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N9,300</b>	<b>1</b>
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### Benefit/Cost Ratio

$$\text{For Lokoja} = \frac{\text{Benefit}}{\text{Cost}} = \frac{N11,740}{9,800} = 1.20$$

<b>Market</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>N9,800</b>
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$$\text{For Koton-karfi} = \frac{\text{Benefit}}{\text{Cost}} = \frac{N11,300}{9,300} = 1.22$$

<b>Market</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>N9,800</b>
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From the above, fish marketing in the study area is profitable because the cost/benefit ratio is greater than 1.

**TABLE 4: Cost and revenue of fish marketing**

Study Area	Number of Market	Number of Respondent	Average cost per Basket (^)	Average variable cost (^)	Total cost (^)	Revenue (^)	Profit (^)
Lokoja market	2	30	8,500	1,300	9,800	11,740	1,940
Kotonkarfi market	2	30	8,100	1,200	9,300	11,300	2,000

Source: Field Survey, 2005

### Constraints to fish marketing

Fish marketing like any other agricultural venture has its limitation which if properly handled will enhance profitability. The major obstacles to this enterprise are contained in table 5.0.

Table 5 shows that the major constraints in fish marketing are power supply, high transportation cost and inadequate storage facilities, which had 23.3%, 20.0% and 16.7% respectively. Since fish is highly perishable, power supply ranked first especially for those who sell fresh iced fish.

**TABLE 5: Constraints of fish marketing**

Problems	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Power supply	14	23.3%
High transportation cost	12	20.0
Inadequate storage facilities	10	16.7
Inadequate finance	7	11.7
All of the Above	17	28.3
Total	60	100.0

Field survey, 2005

### 4.0. CONCLUSION

Fish marketing is profitable and ultimately leads to the improvement of the quality of life of women in the study area. The level of profitability is reduced by such constraints as erratic power supply and inadequate storage facilities. If these constraints are overcome by the provision of necessary facilities, then fish marketing by the women provide a good avenue for reducing the level of poverty among rural women.

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