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**STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING UNEMPLOYED YOUTH INTO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE RURAL AREAS OF EBONYI STATE**

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to determine the strategies of attracting and retaining unemployed youth and adult into agricultural production in rural areas of Ebonyi State. Two research questions guided the study. The design was descriptive survey research design. The total population for the study was six hundred and sixty-one thousand, five hundred and six people (661,506). Six hundred and fifty eight thousand were unemployed youth and adult (658,000); while three thousand five hundred and six were registered old aged farmers in the State. Sample used for the study was one hundred and twenty respondents (120). Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. The study revealed that youth and adults in the three educational zones are ready to join agricultural production in the rural areas when integrated by the government; that all the attracted youth and adults were not willing to leave agricultural production to other sectors of the economy; that all the 23 item strategies have attracting and retaining potentials for gainful empowerment for youth and adults in the state. Recommendations were made to the state government to implement the strategies raised under the agency for poverty reduction and community development to boost agricultural production in the state.*

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**Introduction**

Agriculture is as old as the history of man on earth. However, it is the bedrock and life wire of any nation in this contemporary society. It started its origin with the history of early man who lived in the cave and gathered fruits and wild animal, which was domesticated within his environment and created awareness for cultivation of food, feed and fibre crop for raw materials (Ogba, 2002). This string relationship is the reason(s) why (Onuoha, 2008) reiterated that agriculture is the fundamental to life and will continued to improve in its nature, status and level as man continued to improve in his standard of living through innovation packages. It is then imperative to recognize (Nweke, 2008) who maintained that 95% of the ageing rural men and women that participate effectively in agricultural activities in their different villages and communities nationwide Beside (Olaitan, 2005) is of the view that as a business, agriculture requires adequate knowledge of management to utilize factors of productions (capital, labour and land). This is to ensure efficiency and profitable return on investment. The knowledge of some basic economic principles is essential for full understanding of agricultural management. However, to face this noble goals and aspiration, (Eze, 2005) stressed that youth are the enterprising agent of development, and should face the challenges of massive food production needed to feed the nation, raw materials for domestic

industry, products for exports, to gain foreign exchange, Agro allied material among others. (Okorie, 2004) saw the index of Nigeria agricultural economic development as the ability to make a significant contribution in the overall provision of adequate and well balanced food for the ever increasing population. The provision of raw materials for domestic industries, foreign exchange through exports earning in the labour market for other sectors of the economy. Then the dwindling nature of the ageing population that participates in the food production cannot meet up the global demand to reduce hunger and minimize poverty on individual bases. Since youth are the engine for development, Nigerian youth need to be provoked and challenge the threatening condition for reduction in production as a result of old, aged men and women that cannot continue in agricultural production because of aged stress. The need for youth involvement in agricultural production cannot be completely discusses without initiative programme. However, (Nweke, 2003) stressed that agricultural friendly initiative programmes are the multi-dimensional approaches adopted by successive government in Nigeria to combat hunger, poverty and to increase our national income through agricultural production. Ogba, (2008) maintained that agricultural friendly initiatives include programme and policies adopted toward the improvement of agricultural sectors in Nigeria for optimal food production. It involves

strategies for positive agricultural production practices in primary, secondary and tertiary institution. These strategies for increasing food production by attracting the unemployed youth and adult that have the strength for agricultural production becomes a sense of worries to humanity as 21st century challenges that require urgent attention. The world replacing connotes, support, and assist, not removing any group of people from farming system. Therefore, the worries of the researcher is how to attract and retain the unemployed youth in this presents situations of low agricultural production to reduce Ebonyi State poverty level, hunger, diseases, which is prevalent in our environment. (Okeke, 2006) maintained that youth mobilization in agriculture by providing capital, raw material, inputs for production, machineries, equipment, improved seeds and seedling, livestock among others is an alternative for changing ageing population that practices subsistence farming and change the youth into commercial agriculture and maintain Nigerian economy with or without oil production. The replacement and changing of aged population with youth, for commercial agriculture instead of subsistence farming, will reduce poverty, hunger and enhance food production capacity within Nigeria and improve exportation capacity of this country in food production.

The statistical digest (STADE, 2010) stated that Ebonyi State youth and adults that were unemployed rated about six hundred and fifty eight thousand people in the State. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out strategies for attracting and retaining unemployed youth and adult into agricultural production to support the retired, tired, aged men and women in agricultural production capacity in the rural areas, to reduce hunger and poverty in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study tends:

1. To determine the strategies that will attract unemployed youth into agricultural production in the rural areas of Ebonyi State.
2. To determine the strategies that will retain the youth that have the strength for agricultural production in the rural areas in Ebonyi State.

### Research Questions

1. What are the strategies that will attract unemployed youth into agricultural production?
2. What are the strategies that will retain the youth that have the strength for agricultural production in the rural areas in Ebonyi State?

### Methodology

The design for the study is descriptive survey. The area of the study was Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The total population for the study was six hundred and sixty one thousand five hundred and six people (661,506). Six hundred and fifty eight thousand were unemployed youth and adult (658,000) while three thousand five hundred and six (3506) were old aged farmers that- registered in the State. The unemployed youth composed of SSCE, ONO, NCE, HND and graduate (Degree holders). From different discipline within the three educational zones in Ebonyi State. The sample for the study was one hundred and twenty people (120). Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire developed by the researcher using 4 point rating scales (SA, A, D,SD) strongly agreed, Agreed, disagreed, and strongly disagreed. The instrument was validated by one expert in measurement and evaluation in the department of Science Education, Faculty of education of the same university and another from Agricultural Education unit in Technology and Vocational Education Department in the same university. The reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. The figure obtained was adequate for the study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help: of three research assistants one per educational zone during youth rally day. Out of one hundred and twenty questionnaires distributed, one hundred and eighteen (118) were completed and returned. Means and standard deviation was used in answering the research questions. The level of agreement by the respondent was determined using Agreed and not Agreement after Mean scores and Standard Deviation. The cut-off points was 2.50 and above for agreement and less than 2.50 for disagreement.

**Result****Research Question I:**

What are the strategies that will attract unemployed youth into agricultural production in the rural areas of Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Strategies for Attracting Unemployed Youth into Agricultural Production.

SN	Constructs	X	SD	Remarks
1	By selecting school certificate holders, undergraduates and graduates into agricultural friendly initiative programme	3.08	1.75	Agreed
2	Providing accommodation for the selected unemployed youths and adults	3.37	1.83	Agreed
3	Acquiring large hectares of land for the Unemployed Youth	3.45	1.85	Agreed
4	By providing functional machineries and implements and selecting technical manpower for training and retraining the youths on the machinery	3.43	1.85	Agreed
5	Acquiring large quantity of improved inputs (livestock, seeds, seedling, etc) for the unemployed youth	3.31	1.82	Agreed
6	Providing functional storage facilities for the products	3.30	1.85	Agreed
7	Providing essential amenities in the areas (water, electricity, healthcare, access road)	3.15	1.77	Agreed
8	Reorganizing agricultural financing institution for agricultural enterprising loan to the unemployed youth	3.50	1.87	Agreed
9	Establishing well equipped and efficient monitoring team free from bribery to monitor the youth	3.35	1.83	Agreed
10	Grouping the selected unemployed youth and adults into different cooperative units (crops, poultry, fishery, piggery, etc.)	2.64	1.62	Agreed

The respondents have agreed with all the items in Table 1 as the strategies for attracting Unemployed Youth into Agricultural Production with mean ranging from 2.64 to 3.50 and standard deviation of 1.62 to 1.87. The observed high Standard Deviation indicated that there was much variability in the level of agreement by the respondent it. Show different levels of agreement and internal consistent

of agreement with the respondents in all the items raised.

**Research Question II**

What are the strategies that will retain the youth that have the strength for agricultural production in the rural areas in Ebonyi State?

**Table 2: Strategies for Retaining the Youth in Rural Areas for Agricultural Production**

SN	Constructs	X	SD	Remarks
1	By financing Agricultural activities in crops, poultry , fishery, piggery, rabbitry production etc	3.35	1.83	Agreed
2	Ensuring the active participation of everybody on any skill involved in the production of each unit.	3.35	1.83	Agreed
3	Empowering them with little stipend on monthly bases until their agricultural products will be harvested, processed and marketed.	3.37	1.83	Agreed
4	Establishing standard formular of sharing money realized from Agricultural products of each unit to individual members government and cooperate account.	3.53	1.87	Agreed
5	Establishing structures, and other basic requirement for individuals who have stayed and produced for the three period with cooperative unit	3.32	1.82	Agreed
6	Empowering those who have got structures with other inputs, and establish assistance of financial institution.	3.30	1.81	Agreed
7	Those who have been empowered and established financially need to be monitored frequently by experts	3.27	1.80	Agreed
8	Inputs are to be supplied directly to avoid diverting the money to the other sector to reduce cost.	3.33	1.82	Agreed
9	Provide the technical assistance need of the individuals that have left the cooperative unit to their own.	3.83	1.95	Agreed
10	Federal and State Government should partner with Donor agencies to provide sponsorship.	3.33	1.83	Agreed
11	Selecting another batch to replace the graduating group of Youth in order to make it continious.	2.50	1.50	Agreed
12	Training and retraining will make the different individuals, who graduated and establish their own by employing many people in their area.	3.10	1.76	Agreed

The respondents have agreed with all the items in Table 2 as the strategies for retaining the Youth in rural areas for Agricultural Production with mean ranging from 2.50 to 3.83 and standard deviation of 1.50 to 1.95. The observed high Standard Deviation show the variability in the level of agreement and maintained internal consistent in their agreement for accepting all the items.

### Major Findings

1. All the ten items in table 1 are the strategies for attracting unemployed youth into Agricultural production in the rural areas of Ebonyi State.
2. All the items in table 2 are the strategies for retaining the youth that have strength for Agricultural production in Ebonyi State.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the ten items strategies are qualified for attracting unemployed youth and adults into farming activities in rural areas of Ebonyi State. This finding is in line with the study of (Onuoha, 2008) who stated that Agricultural friendly initiatives remain the only option for pulling youth into formidable agricultural production. That youth and adult will have to be motivated by certain remuneration to increase their zeal for Agricultural production in the rural areas.

The remuneration strategies related opinion is in line with the study of (Nweke, 2005), who reported that rural farmers can only be increased by motivating youths and adults to enable them have the zeal to do the work without stress which will reduce unemployment and increase empowerment of youth and adult. The findings are in line with the study of (Ode 2008) who maintained that selecting unemployed youth and adults into Agricultural production in the rural areas of Ebonyi State will reduce unemployment and increase food production. The finding is in line with that of (Eze, 2008) who maintained that financial assistance are the best related human needs and aspiration in establishment of Agricultural production, empowering them for self sustenance and reliance.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the nature of human challenges in food need and fibre crops, the following recommendations were made:

1. That, Ebonyi State poverty reduction for community development should adopt these strategies to enable them attract the unemployed youths into Agricultural production in the rural areas as community development strategies in reducing poverty in the community.
2. The agency at the same time should make use of the strategies to retrain all the attracted, selected, unemployed youth and

adults into rural Agricultural production. This will help to develop the community generally in human empowerment and equally reduce hunger.

**Conclusion**

There is need to attract youth into Agricultural production in our country, Nigeria. This will help to boost massive food production to feed our teeming population in this country. It will

enhance exportation of food products to other countries of the world and reduces our monoculture oil economy. It will reduce unemployment, hunger, poverty, and other social vices that challenges the 21<sup>st</sup> century which Nigeria is one of the countries in the world that are fighting against them.

The observed high standard deviation show the variability in the level of agreement and maintained internal consistent in their agreement for accepting all the items.

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