

**Growing the Nigerian Agricultural Sector through Entrepreneurship**

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**Abstract.** This study dealt with agricultural entrepreneurs in Nigeria, measures to enhance their performance and problems faced by them. The article made use of questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The methods of analysis employed were descriptive and inferential statistics. These were used to test the relationship between entrepreneurship and agricultural development in Nigeria. From the analysis and interpretation of data collected, the result showed that agricultural entrepreneurs contribute to increasing agricultural output, create awareness and income generation for the sector. It was also ascertained that the provision of interest free loan, conducive environment and access to modern technologies will enhance the performance of agricultural entrepreneurs. It is further observed that there are major challenges faced by agricultural entrepreneurs. These include inadequate infrastructural facilities, low profitability for agriculture, low level of education, limited agricultural investment, poorly developed research agricultural system, among others. In view of this, the study recommended among other things, that necessary action should be taken by various stakeholders with the view of ensuring adequate input supply and distribution, credit and micro-credit delivery, availability of agricultural extension services, encouragement of cooperative and agriculture entrepreneurs association and export promotion of agricultural and agro-industrial product.

**Keywords:** Agricultural Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship, Nigeria and Inferential Statistics

**Introduction**

A nation's stability and success depends on the quality of its people, and society will grow rapidly if they are entrepreneurial, optimistic and brave enough to bear risk. These individuals are known as entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship is reflected in their character. Entrepreneurship is not a monopoly by any culture or religion. Anywhere, regardless of age, qualification, experience or socio-economic context, entrepreneurial capacity can be created and built and only efforts in the right direction are required (Jhingan, 1995). Entrepreneurship may not be considered a sufficient condition for growth, but it is definitely a necessary condition for growth. It must therefore be given top priority in a country's national programmes. In entrepreneurship literature, it is generally accepted that entrepreneurship is about individuals reclining new possibilities. Continuous, passionate, adaptable and able to take risks are entrepreneurs. As a consequence, entrepreneurship in a variety of environments will occur. However, the development of new business ideas by individuals or teams lies at the heart of entrepreneurship (Timmons, 1999).

The life-blood of the Nigerian economy is entrepreneurship. It is the birthplace of the most imaginative ways of producing jobs and wealth. Therefore, it is imperative that we consider the contribution the entrepreneur makes to our economy and the growth of the agricultural sector; entrepreneurship is the development of human activity. This implies that the spirit of enterprise transforms the individual from a nomad to a rearer of cattle, to a settled farmer, to a merchant and an industrialist (Murty, 1989).

According to Schumpeter (1959), an entrepreneur is considered to be the "king-pin with a super-normal intellectual will that is ready and willing to break through the resisting forces that are willing to bring change through innovation." Innovation basically means inventing an

old thing in a different way. The entrepreneur does not invent, he innovates only through imaginative thought. As entrepreneurs play a crucial role in the growth process of any country, the role of entrepreneurship in the economic development process cannot be over-emphasized (Schumpeter, 1959).

In the midst of shifting paradigms and a challenging global structure, Nigeria must concentrate primarily on the agricultural sector, the backbone of the economy, in order to remain a front-runner. This strategy will grow agricultural entrepreneurs with distinct characteristics and skills to take advantage of vast opportunities in the agricultural sector. Focusing on promoting viable agricultural enterprises would certainly help exploit its operational efficiency to the hilt among the numerous strategies to promote planned development.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2006) reported that, because of its high share of jobs and the production of livelihoods, agriculture is the key pillar of the Nigerian economy. About half of the Nigerian population is funded by it. It is also a major source of raw materials and demand for many industrial products, including fertilizers, pesticides, farm machinery and a range of consumer goods.

Agriculture includes land production, animal husbandry and rearing for the purpose of providing food for humans, animal feed and raw materials for industry. It requires the processing and selling of these agricultural products for crops, animals, forestry, and finishing. The role of agriculture cannot be over-emphasized in transforming both the social and economic structure of an economy. It is a source of food and raw materials for the manufacturing sector and is also important for the expansion of job opportunities.

It is difficult to over-emphasize the role of the agricultural sector in the growth of the Nigerian economy. This is because agriculture remains the main stay of the Nigerian economy, contributing about 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and employing about 77 per cent of the working population, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2006) (Oyaide, 1992). Nigeria was self-sufficient in food production at independence in 1960; agriculture's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was then around 64 percent of the total GDP. This remarkable achievement, however, could not be maintained by the urban drift of rural labor, the rise in crude oil revenues, the lack of agricultural growth policies and weak implementation. Those problems found posed a serious challenge to self-sufficiency.

Entrepreneurship in agriculture is characterized as community-oriented, directly marketed agriculture that is typically sustainable. Sustainable agriculture refers to a holistic approach to agriculture that focuses on the interrelationships between social, economic and environmental processes (2008). For a country like Nigeria, where the twin problems of poverty and unemployment coexist, the position of the entrepreneur is therefore of fundamental importance.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The method of analysis used in this research is basically descriptive. Data were collected from the field by random sampling method with the aid of questionnaire. However, due to the large population size and considering the difficulties involved in studying the whole country, sample were therefore drawn from Jos North Local Government to represent the population. A total of 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered but only 140 representing 93.33% of the total copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, the questions in the questionnaire were divided into two parts. Part one has section A which contains the personal information of the respondent while part two consists of section B which contains the research questions.

### The Sources of Data

The information and data used in this research are primary and secondary. The primary data was obtained by administering questionnaire while the secondary data was sourced from textbooks, journals, government publications, seminars and conference papers, internet (World Wide Web), unpublished articles as well as undergraduate research projects.

### Analytical Techniques

The analytical techniques used in this study include the simple descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics method such as frequency counts and simple percentage were used. A statistical tool, the chi-square was used to test the hypotheses of the study.

### Findings

The researcher formulated fourteen (14) questions to be tested, the questions were assessed one after the other using tables and simple percentages, five different categories of responses were used. These include: Strongly Agree, Agree, and Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

**Table 1. The performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector can be enhanced**

Responses	No of repondents	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	69	49.3
Agree	70	50
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	1	0.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

From Table 1 above, 49.3% (69) and 50% (70) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that the performance of entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector can be enhance. Similarly, there was no undecided respondent and 0.7% (1) respondents strongly disagree. Based on the analysis above, we observe that the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector can be enhanced

**Table 2. Entrepreneurship education through the provision of extension services will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	56	40.0
Agree	79	56.4
Undecided	1	0.7
Disagree	4	2.9
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 2 shows that 40% (56) and 56.4% (79) of the respondent strongly agree and agree respectively that entrepreneurship education through the provision of extension services will enhance the performers of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. While one (1)

respondent representing 0.7% of the respondents was undecided and also 2.9% (4) disagree. There was no respondent that strongly disagree. Based on the analysis above, we note that entrepreneurship education through the provision of extension services will enhance the performers of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 3. Provision of interest free loan will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	54	38.6
Agree	72	51.3
Undecided	5	3.6
Disagree	4	2.9
Strongly disagree	5	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 3 shows that 54 (38.6%) and 72 (51.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that provision of interest free loan will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. Five (5) respondents representing 3.6% of the total respondents were undecided. However, 4 (2.9%) and 5 (3.6%) disagree and strongly disagree. Based on the analysis above, we observe that provision of interest free loan will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 4. Providing enabling environment by the government will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	60	42.9
Agree	69	49.3
Undecided	8	5.7
Disagree	3	2.1
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 4 shows that 42.9% (60) and 49.3% (69) of the respondent strongly agree and agree respectively that providing enabling environment by the government will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in Nigerian agricultural sector. Eight (8) respondents representing 5.7% of the total respondents were undecided. Similarly, 2.1% (3) disagree while no respondent strongly disagree. Since the respondents that strongly agree and agree have the highest percentage, we discover that providing enabling environment by the government will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 5. Access to modern technology will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	90	64.3
Agree	48	34.3
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	2	1.4

Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 5 shows that 90 (64.3%) and 48 (34.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that access to modern technology will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. Similarly, there was no respondent that is undecided while 2 (1.4%) of the respondents disagree while no respondent strongly disagreed. Similarly, we can also observe based on the analysis above that access to modern technology will enhance the performance of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 6. Entrepreneurship contributes to the development of the agricultural sector in Nigeria**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	92	65.7
Agree	40	28.6
Undecided	4	2.9
Disagree	3	2.1
Strongly disagree	1	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 6 shows that 65.7% (92) and 28.6% (40) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that entrepreneurship contributes to the development of the agricultural sector in Nigeria. Four (4) respondents representing 2.9% of the respondent were undecided. In the same vein, 2.1% (3) and 0.7% (1) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively. From the analysis above, it is observed that respondents that strongly agree and agree have the highest percentage. Based on that, we note that entrepreneurship contributes to the development of the agricultural sector in Nigeria.

**Table 7. Entrepreneurship contributes to agricultural sector development in Nigeria through introduction of new ways of farming, capacity building and increased income for the sector and awareness creation for the sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	60	42.9
Agree	72	51.4
Undecided	5	3.6
Disagree	1	0.7
Strongly disagree	2	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 7 shows that 60 (42.2%) and 72 (51.4%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively. Five (5) respondents representing 3.6% of the respondents were undecided. Although 1 (0.7%) and 2 (1.4%) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree. From the analysis above, we note that entrepreneurship contributes to the development of the agricultural sector through introduction of new ways of farming, capacity building and increase income for the sector and awareness creation for the sector.

**Table 8. Entrepreneurship impacts positively on the agricultural output in Nigeria**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	88	62.9
Agree	45	32.1
Undecided	6	4.3
Disagree	1	0.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 8 shows that 62.9% (88) and 32.1% (45) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that entrepreneurship impacts positively on the agricultural output in Nigeria. Five (5) respondents representing 4.3% of the respondents were undecided. However, 1 (0.7%) of the respondent disagree while no respondent strongly disagree. Since the respondents that strongly agree and agree respectively represent the highest percentage, we therefore conclude that entrepreneurship impacts positively on the agricultural output in Nigeria.

**Table 9. There are major obstacles facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	63	45
Agree	68	48.6
Undecided	6	4.3
Disagree	3	2.1
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 9 shows that 45% (63) and 45% (68) of the respondent strongly agree and agree respectively that there are major obstacles facing entrepreneurs in the Nigeria agricultural sector. Six (6) respondents representing 4.3% of the total respondents were undecided. However, 2.1% (3) of the respondents disagree while no respondent strongly disagree. From the analysis above, we note that indeed, there are major obstacles facing entrepreneurs in the Nigeria agricultural sector.

**Table 10. Funding is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	75	53.6
Agree	55	39.3
Undecided	4	2.9
Disagree	3	2.1
Strongly disagree	3	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021



Table 10 shows that 75 (53.6%) and 55 (39.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that funding is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector while four (4) representing 2.9% of the total respondents were undecided. Similarly, 2.1% (3) and 2.1% (3) disagree and strongly disagree respectively. From the analysis above, it is clear that the respondents that strongly agree and agree have the highest percentage; therefore, funding is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector.

**Table 11. Lack of access to modern technology serves as a major challenge to entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	49	35
Agree	75	53.6
Undecided	8	5.7
Disagree	5	3.6
Strongly disagree	3	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 11 shows that 35% (49) and 53.6% (75) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that lack of access to modern technology serves as a major challenge to entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. Similarly, Eight (8) of the respondents representing 5.7% of the total respondents were undecided while 3.6% (5) and 2.1% (3) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively. From the analysis above, we observe that lack of access to modern technology serves as a major challenge to entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 12. Low level of education is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	37	26.4
Agree	82	58.6
Undecided	10	7.1
Disagree	11	7.9
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 12 shows that 37 (26.4%) and 82 (58.6%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that low level of education is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. ten (10) respondents representing 7.1% of the total respondents were undecided. Similarly, 7.9% (11) and 0% (0) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively. From the analysis above, we deduce that low level of education is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 13. Poorly developed agricultural research system is a major challenge facing entrepreneurs in the sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	62	44.3

Agree	70	50
Undecided	4	2.9
Disagree	3	2.1
Strongly disagree	3	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

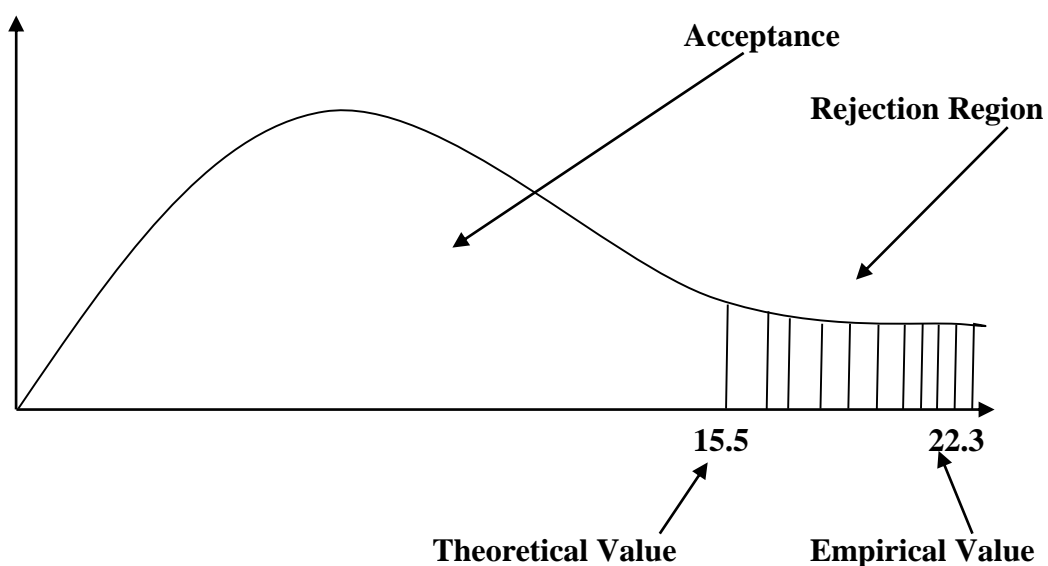
Table 13 shows that 47 (33.6%) and 72 (51.4%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that low level of education is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. Six (6) respondents representing 4.3% of the total respondents were undecided. Similarly, 7.1% (10) and 3.6% (5) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively. From the analysis above, we deduce that low level of education is a major obstacle facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.

**Table 14. Infrastructural inadequacy is a major challenge facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector**

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentages (100%)
Strongly agree	47	33.6
Agree	72	51.4
Undecided	6	4.3
Disagree	10	7.1
Strongly disagree	5	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 14 shows that 62 (44.3%) and 70 (50%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that infrastructural inadequacy is a major challenge facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector. Similarly, four (4) respondents representing 2.9% of the total respondents were undecided while 2.1% (3) and 2.1% (3) of the respondents disagree and strongly agree respectively. From the analysis above, we note that infrastructural inadequacy is a major challenge facing entrepreneurs in the Nigerian agricultural sector.



**Figure 1. Chi-square Distribution Curve**



### Discussion of Result Findings

In the analysis above, it is observed that majority of the respondents believe that entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the development of the Nigerian agricultural sector.

In the computation of the chi-square statistic above, it is further observed that  $X^2$  calculated (Empirical value) is greater than  $X^2$  tabulated (Theoretical value), that is  $22.3 > 15.5$ . Based on the decision rule which states that when  $X^2$  calculated is greater than  $X^2$  tabulated, we reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that entrepreneurship does not play a significant role in the development of the Nigerian agricultural sector and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) that entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the development of the Nigerian agricultural sector, thus we conclude that entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the development of the Nigerian agricultural sector.

### Conclusion

It is clear from the above that the prosperity and progress of a nation depends on the quality of its people, if they are actually enterprising, ambitious and courageous enough to bear necessary risk, the society will develop quickly. Such people are identified as entrepreneurs and their character reflects entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can be seen as the life blood of the Nigerian economy. It is the cradle of job and wealth creation – the most innovative way.

Nigeria, in order to remain a front-runner needs to primarily focus on the agricultural sector, the backbone of the economy. This strategy will develop agriculture entrepreneurs with distinct traits and skills to exploit opportunities galore in the field of agriculture. Among the various strategies to promote planned growth, focus on promoting viable agricultural enterprises will certainly help exploit its operational efficiency to the hilt.

### Recommendations

In order to enhance the productivity and performance of entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector which will subsequently lead to development of the sector, government at all levels are by this research work advised to consider as a matter of urgency in order to revamp the agricultural sector, the following recommendations:

a. Input supply and distribution:

In order to support agricultural entrepreneurs, government should build a more favorable atmosphere for productive investment in the production and distribution of inputs, such as improved starter materials, animal health drugs, fertilizers, etc. The supply of fertilizers should be contingent on full privatization and liberalization of commodity production, distribution and marketing. The government's primary role would be to strictly track the quality standards of all fertilizers (both local and foreign) to ensure that only certified products meet farmers. The government should also promote the use of organic fertilizers to replace the current use of inorganic fertilizers. To ensure the supply of sufficient and high quality seeds to local agricultural entrepreneurs, the seed industry development program should be reinvigorated and community seed development projects should be encouraged. In order to engage effectively in the production of seeds, seedlings, brood stocks, fingerlings, etc., the organized private sector should be mobilized, encouraged and given incentives and should also be involved in the mobilization of out-growers.

b. Credit and micro-credit delivery:

The strategies to be adopted to solve the problem of inadequate capital include:

- i. Provision and improvement of rural infrastructure to attract investment and financial services.
- ii. Integration and linkage of rural financial institutions to the formal banking sector.
- iii. Regulating and supervising the growth of non-bank financial institutions with emphasis on saving mobilization at the grassroots (Okeke, 2008).

- iv. Expanding the mandate of the restructure Nigerian agricultural cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) to include savings mobilization (Akeredolu-Ale, 1975).
- v. Supporting self-help groups in their savings mobilization and credit delivery activities.
- vi. Modification of the credit delivery system to include the cooperative and community-based organizations as delivery channels to reduce transaction costs.
- vii. Modification of terms of credit such as interest rate, eligibility criteria, legal requirement, etc. to enhance access (Abayomi, 1997).

c. Agricultural extension:

In essence, agricultural extension is an operation that should be conducted by the lower levels of government. However, given the overarching importance of technology dissemination, all three levels of government in Nigeria should be involved in the joint funding and impact monitoring of agricultural extension delivery. Extension service delivery should also be simplified for greater productivity for agricultural entrepreneurs in Nigeria through the integration of ADP and state extension services.

d. Encouragement of cooperative and agriculture entrepreneurs/community associations:

The driving force of cooperative activities is the mobilization of resources and the fostering of group action. This is to take advantage of group dynamics as a tool for agricultural growth, with its concomitant reciprocal guarantee. Services that cooperatives may provide include the administration of government incentives for agriculture, such as the provision of inputs, the provision and recovery of credit, the selling of goods and the promotion of democratic values, in view of the democratic principles inherent in their activities.

e. Processing, storage, agro-allied industry and rural enterprise development:

To add value to goods and increase their self-life, the use of easy yet efficient on-farm and off-farm storage facilities and agro-processing technology should be promoted. It is important to modernize, reinforce and upgrade the Strategic Grain Reserve Scheme to a National Food Reserve Program that will allow it to manage all staples and vital food items. Promoting and improving agro-processing in the country for the evolution of virile agro-allied industries and rural agricultural enterprises is also crucial.

f. Export promotion of agricultural and agro-industrial products:

In promoting a range of exportable agricultural commodities such as cocoa, palm products, rubber, ginger, spices, fruit and vegetables, flowers, shrimps and ornamental fish, cassava products, hides and skin, cashew, gum arabic, groundnuts and cotton, Nigeria has a comparative advantage (products). In order to diversify the basis of the Nigerian economy and expand the demand for agricultural commodities in order to absorb the anticipated increase in production, exports of these agricultural and agro-industrial products need to be encouraged in order to empower agricultural entrepreneurs financially. Appropriate capacity and institutional structure will need to be established within the agricultural sector as well as in other related sectors of the economy in order to promote the acceptance of Nigerian agricultural commodities on the international market, including taking full advantage of the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

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