

Agricultural Financing and the Effectiveness of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme on Food Security in Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The credit deficit faced by smallholder rice farmers in Kogi State, Nigeria, is a significant barrier to improving productivity, income, and food security. Despite the efforts of programmes like the Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme (RABP), many smallholder rice farmers still struggle to access adequate and affordable credit. This study therefore examines the role of agricultural financing, particularly the Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme (RABP), in enhancing food security in Kogi State. The study adopts Quantity Theory of Credit as its theoretical framework. The research evaluates the programme's effectiveness in improving rice production, increasing farmers' income, and contributing to food availability, accessibility and affordability. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes primary and secondary data to assess the programme's impact on smallholder rice farmers in Kogi State and its implications for food security in the state. The RABP, initiated to provide credit facilities, inputs, and technical support to farmers, represents a significant shift towards improving agricultural productivity through accessible financing. The study concludes that agricultural financing through the Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme in Kogi state has the capacity to position the state for improved food production that can lead to food availability, accessibility and affordability. However, challenges remain in fully achieving food security objectives. To address these challenges, the study recommends that a targeted outreach strategy should be developed to include more smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth in remote and underserved areas of Kogi State.

Keywords: Agricultural Financing, Food Security, Quantity Theory of Credit, Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme, Kogi State, Nigeria

Introduction

Food security is a pressing global issue that has led to the development of various policies and frameworks by international organizations and governmental bodies. The global food environment has continued to decline, with 29.6 percent (2.4 billion people) facing moderate or severe food insecurity in 2022 (Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO], 2023). This decline is attributed to structural issues, including Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, which have slowed growth in the past five years. The Nigerian economy like others is also experiencing its share of food insecurity and has declared a state of emergency on food security recently. The issue of food security challenge has led to the establishment of different policy frameworks especially for extensive and commercialized food production across the globe.

Global food security policies and initiatives aimed to ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) is a global policy framework that seeks to end hunger, achieve food security, and improve nutrition by 2030.

At the African level, food security policies focus on strengthening the continent's food systems. The African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is a key policy framework that aims to improve agricultural productivity, food security, and nutrition in Africa. The CAADP has been instrumental in promoting policy reforms, investments, and partnerships to support African agriculture and food security (Xie, Wen, Choi & Zhang, 2021). In Nigeria however, one of the key initiatives designed to bolster agricultural productivity and improve food security is the Anchor Borrowers Program (ABP), launched in 2015 by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). This programme aims to provide financial support to smallholder farmers by linking them with anchor companies that offer inputs, technical assistance, and guaranteed markets for their produce (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2015).

The working definition of food security according to this research is centered on three key pillars, which include food availability, accessibility and affordability. However, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defined food insecurity as the lack of regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development for an active and healthy life, due to unavailability and/or lack of resources to obtain food (FAO, 2013). Given the definition of food insecurity, the 2022 Global Food Security Index Report highlights Nigeria's position as the 107th out of 113 countries with food security, assessing performance across four pivotal pillars: affordability (25.0%), availability (39.5%), quality and safety (55.6%), and sustainability and adaptation (53.7%). Nigeria's overall score of 42.0% underscores the multifaceted challenges confronting its food environment in recent years. In addition, 17 million (45%) people are currently faced with food insecurity, with this number estimated to increase to 25 million by the end of 2023. Out of this number, 3 million are from states in the North-East region and are estimated to increase to 4.4 million by the lean season. States in the North-West are also having their share of the increasing food insecurity, with 2.9 million people at risk. Notably, children are impacted the most, with the malnutrition rate rising to 2 million in the North-East in 2023, posing a risk of high child mortality triggered by acute malnutrition (FAO, 2023).

Kogi State which is located in the central region of Nigeria, presents a unique case for examining the impact of financing smallholder rice farmers through the Anchor Borrowers Programme on food security. The study, therefore, was conducted in Kogi State, Nigeria. The State has an area of 29,581.9 sq. km. with a population of 4,466,800 (NBS, 2022) and the State has an average maximum and minimum temperature of 33.2°C and 22.8°C respectively. The State has two distinct kinds of weather – dry season; which spans from November to February and the raining season that lasts from March to October (Olatunde & Adejoh, 2017). The significance of the rice ABP lies not only in its potential to improve agricultural output but also in its target demographic—smallholder farmers, who constitute a large portion of the agricultural workforce in Nigeria. By facilitating access to affordable credit, the programme aims to empower farmers, reduce poverty levels, and consequently contribute to food security. Studies indicate that access to finance is a determinant factor for agricultural productivity (Ojo, 2021; Afolabi, 2019). However, empirical research evaluating the direct impact of financing smallholder rice farmers through the ABP on food security metrics in Kogi State is still limited. It is against this background that this study is designed to investigate agricultural financing and the effectiveness of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme on food security in Kogi State.

Statement of the problem

Food security is a pressing global issue that has led to the development of various policies and frameworks by international organizations and governmental bodies. In Nigeria however, almost most of the agricultural regions including Kogi State rely heavily on subsistence farming which is susceptible to economic fluctuations and climatic changes. A lot of policies have, therefore been formulated and implemented to tackle the problem of sustainable food security in Nigeria through adequate and sufficient agricultural financing programmes. One of such interventions is the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), initiated by the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2015, aims to provide financial support and resources to smallholder farmers. While the ABP is touted as a pivotal strategy to transform agriculture and promote food security, there is a lack of comprehensive empirical evidence regarding its impact on food security outcomes in Kogi State especially in terms of food availability, accessibility, affordability and utilization. Previous studies have indicated ongoing issues such as inadequate access to credit, poor infrastructural support, and lack of market access, which could undermine the effective implementation of the programme (Akanbi *et al.*, 2023; Ogunleye, 2022). Other studies have also shown that access to finance is a determinant factor for agricultural productivity (Afolabi, 2019; Ojo, 2021). However, no study has adequately examined the level of awareness of rice farmers on the existence of the Anchor Borrowers Programme in mitigating the financial challenges facing smallholder rice farmers in Kogi state.

Therefore, the credit deficit and lack of awareness of credit facilities faced by smallholder rice farmers in Kogi State, Nigeria, is a significant barrier to improving productivity, income, and food security. Despite the efforts of programmes like the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), many smallholder rice farmers still struggle to access adequate and affordable credit. Existing studies have focused on national outcomes or other regions, leaving a gap in understanding how the programme has addressed food security challenges in Kogi State. This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by evaluating the ABP's effectiveness in enhancing food security in Kogi State.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To evaluate the nexus between agricultural financing and improvements in food security in Kogi State, Nigeria between 2015 and 2024.
- ii. To assess the effectiveness of the rice Anchor Borrower Programme (ABP) on Food Security Levels in Kogi State?

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the concept of agricultural financing. Agricultural financing refers to the provision of financial services, including credit, savings, insurance, and investments, to farmers, agribusinesses, and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector to support production, processing, and marketing activities (FAO, 2023). It also refers to the funding provided to farmers and agribusinesses to support agricultural production and related activities. It encompasses various financial services, including loans, grants, and insurance, aimed at improving productivity, securing inputs, and managing risks within the agricultural sector. It plays a crucial role in enhancing agricultural productivity, improving food security, and promoting rural development by enabling farmers to purchase inputs (such as seeds, fertilizers, and equipment), adopt modern technologies, and manage risks (World Bank, 2021).

Rice Revolution

While rice is a type of cereal grain that is widely consumed as a staple food around the world. It is a carbohydrate-rich food that is obtained from the *Oryza sativa* plant. Rice is a good source of energy and is also a good source of several important nutrients, including carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Rice is the most valuable cereal crop in the world, feeding more than half of the world's population (Ajibola & Onwu, 2017). The origin of rice is not known. Wild species of rice grow across South and East Asia, including India and south China. Rice was domesticated in the fifth millennium B.C. The cultivated species of rice *Oryza sativa* is believed to have derived from annual progenitors found in a large area extending from the Gangetic Plains through Burma, northern Thailand, northern Vietnam and southern China. In the United States, a British sea captain was credited to have brought rice from Madagascar. Early rice production in the US were concentrated in the southeastern United States, where South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee were major producers in the early 1800s (Acquaah, 2015).

Rice accounts for about 20% of the world's total grain production, second only to wheat. It is the primary staple food for more than 50% of the world's population. An estimated 90% of the production and consumption of rice occurs in Asia, where the per capita consumption is about 100 pounds, compared with a world average of about 60 pounds and a US average of about 20 pounds (Acquaah, 2015). The world's major producers of rice are China, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh, together accounting for more than 70% of the world's total production. China which is regarded as the world leading producer, regularly accounts for about 36% of the world's total production (Acquaah, 2015).

In Africa however, rice has become a highly strategic and priority commodity for food security and its consumption is growing faster than that of any other major staple on the continent because of high population growth and rapid urbanization. Rice is adjudged as the single most important source of dietary energy in West Africa and the third most important for Africa as a whole. Although local rice production increased rapidly after the 2007-2008 food crises, a key problem facing the rice sector in Africa, in general, is that domestic production has never caught up with demand. The continent, therefore, continues to rely on importation to meet its increasing demand for rice (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, [ICRISAT], 2015).

Nigeria is the highest producer of rice in Africa followed by Egypt and Madagascar, and 13th in the world. The country moved from producing 2.0MMT of rice in 2007 to almost 3.8MMT in 2018 (Issa, 2023). Rice production systems in Nigeria have grown to approximately 3.7 million hectares of land in the country, covering 10.6 percent of the 35 million hectares of land under cultivation; out of a total arable land area of 70 million hectares, 77 percent of the farmed area of rice was rain-fed, of which 47 percent was lowland and 30 percent upland (Cadoni & Angelucci, 2013). Rice is grown in nearly all the agro-ecological zones in Nigeria. Nigeria has four rice production systems namely: upland rice, lowland rice, irrigated rice and mangrove/deep water rice production systems (Ogunsimi, Ajayi, Amire & Williams, 2013).

Kogi State is one of the top rice-producing states in Nigeria, contributing significantly to the country's rice self-sufficiency goals. The state's rice production increased from 150,000 metric tons in 2015 to 300,000 metric tons in 2023, driven by the ABP and other interventions (Kogi State Ministry of Agriculture, 2023). The ABP, launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2015,

has provided significant support to rice farmers in Kogi State through access to credit, inputs, and guaranteed markets (CBN, 2023). The Kogi State government has implemented policies to promote rice farming, including the provision of subsidized inputs, training programmes, and infrastructure development (Kogi State Agricultural Development Project, 2023).

Anchor Borrowers Programme

The Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) is a government initiative launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2015 aimed at providing financial support to smallholder farmers through loans and technical assistance. For this study, the ABP is defined as a structured financial intervention designed to enhance the productivity and income of farmers in Kogi State by facilitating access to credit, agricultural inputs, and markets. The Anchor Borrower Programme's primary aim is to enhance agricultural production, create jobs, and reduce reliance on food imports, thereby conserving foreign reserves (Muhammad, Baban'Umma, & Abdul, 2024).

Borrowing from the ABP guideline, it states that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in line with its developmental function established the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP). The ABP was a drive to set Nigeria free from its balance of payment crisis. The Federal Government is to support the small farmer's holder with needed amount of money to boost their productive capacity. This cash is not freely given; the farmers are expected to remit at least 9% of the loan at the duration period of the production and harvest of the crop. At harvest period, the small Holder farmer supplies his/her produce to the agro processor (Anchor) who pays the cash equivalent to the farmers account (CBN, 2015).

Food Security

The concept of food security as advanced by Adebayo (2010) came into existence in 1974 during World Food Conference as a perspective of having adequate availability of food on national level. In his study, "Food security in Nigeria: Pre and Post Deregulation Review," he explores the impact of economic deregulation on food security in Nigeria. The research aims to analyze the differences in food security status before and after deregulation. The study highlights the importance of food security, which is a critical aspect of human development. Adebayo examines the relationship between economic policies and food security, emphasizing that deregulation can have both positive and negative effects on the food sector. Though, his study relies on secondary data, which may not be up-to-date or comprehensive.

According to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." This comprehensive definition highlights the importance of ensuring that food security is not just about having enough food available, but also about ensuring that people have access to nutritious food that meets their dietary needs, and that this access is stable over time.

Islam (2020) defines food security as "a state wherein individuals have consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life, which is influenced by the availability, affordability, and utilization of food resources." Islam's definition of food security effectively captures the essential dimensions of the concept availability, access, and utilization while also emphasizing its role in promoting health and well-being. The focus on "consistent access" highlights the need for stability in food provisions, which is critical for individuals and communities to thrive.

Agricultural Financing Programmes and Food Security in Nigeria

The effort by Nigeria to end food insecurity in the country was started and implemented as soon as the country got her independence in 1960 from British colonial administration. From that period till date, various administrations have come up with numerous agricultural financing programmes to ameliorating the food security crisis in the country. Rice Anchor Borrower Programme for instance, was a major programme implemented by the government in 2015 to enhance food security in Nigeria. Others include Agricultural Transformation Agenda (2011), the Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing Agricultural Lending (2011-Date), Value Chain Development Programme (2015-2019), Agricultural Transformation Support Programme - Phase 1 (2014-2019) and the Ongoing Central Bank of Nigeria's Anchor Borrowers' Programme (2015 - Date). The goal of these programmes is to enhance agricultural development and to attain self-sufficiency in food production in Nigeria (Adamu & Kalgo, 2019).

Olatunji (2020) in his work "Agricultural financing and food security in Nigeria" sets the stage by highlighting the critical relationships between agricultural financing and food security in Nigeria. The author effectively emphasizes the importance of agriculture in a developing country context, illustrating that food security is not just an economic issue but also a socio-political necessity. This aligns with prior research, suggesting that increasing agriculture financing enhances productivity, thereby improving food security. The purpose of the work is clearly defined, stating the intention to review existing literature on agricultural financing and its impact on food security. The methodology he employed involves a systematic review of literature, which is appropriate for assessing the state of knowledge in a fast-evolving field.

To showcase how effective financial policy framework can enhance the level of food availability, accessibility and affordability, Ojo and Nwankwo (2019) examine the intricate relationship between government policy, agricultural finance, and food security in Nigeria. The authors aim to address how effective policy frameworks can enhance agricultural productivity and, by extension, food security, which remain pressing concerns in the region. Given that Nigeria faces significant challenges related to food security and agricultural productivity, this research is crucial. The focus on government policy provides a necessary lens through which to evaluate potential solutions to these issues (Ojo & Nwankwo, 2019).

The Effectiveness of the Rice Anchor Borrower Programme on Food Security Levels

According to Nwankwo, Ogunniyi, and Adeyeye (2020) in their article "Assessing the impact of Anchor Borrowers Programme on Food Security and livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Nigeria" provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) on food security and livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Nigeria. The authors use a survey design to collect data from 150 smallholder farmers in three states in Nigeria. The results show that the ABP has had a positive impact on food security and livelihoods of smallholder farmers, with 75% of respondents reporting an improvement in their food security status (Nwankwo, Ogunniyi & Adeyeye, 2020).

In sharp contradiction with the perspective of Nwankwo *et al* (2020) on the effectiveness of credit facilities like the ABP in enhancing the level of food security in Nigeria, Nwanyanwu (2009), in his work though conducted in 2009 "Analysis of bank credit on the Nigeria economic growth" contends that bank credit has not impacted significantly on the productivity of the Nigerian economy. She argues that banks show apathy in lending to the private sector for productive purposes like the agricultural sub-sector, as they prefer to lend to the short-term end of the market,

e.g., commerce, which attracts quick and high rate of turnover. As a result of this, the volume of loan given to investors is insignificant in improving the productivity of the Nigerian economy. She recommended that banks should be willing to give both short and long-term loans for productive purposes, as this will eventually lead to economic growth.

Balogun *et al* (2021) in their work “Assessment of the performance of Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) beneficiary and non-beneficiary rice farmers in Badagry Local Government Area, Lagos State” assessed the performance of Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) beneficiary and non-beneficiary rice farmers by adopting two-stage sampling procedure to elucidate information from 100 ABP and non ABP beneficiary rice farmers during 2019 planting season. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, their results reveal that rice farming was dominated by male farmers and that ABP beneficiary rice farmers had a higher profit than non-beneficiaries suggesting that ABP is an intervention that should be extended to reach all categories of farmers in Nigeria in order to boost profit and income (Balogun *et al*, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The Quantity Theory of Credit (QTC) is a theory primarily associated with monetary economics, focusing on the relationship between the amount of credit in an economy and a variety of economic outcomes. The QTC was first proposed by Wicksell (1907) and later developed by Fisher (1911) and Friedman (1969). The modern usage of the theory as adopted by this research was propounded in 1993 by a German academic, Richard Werner. The theory states that the quantity of credit in an economy determines the level of economic activity, including prices, output, and employment. According to Werner money are not bank deposits or other aggregates of private sector savings, as he asserted that Banks are not being financial intermediaries that lend existing money, but creators of new money through the process of lending (Afolabi *et al.*, 2021).

Werner's theory emphasizes the importance of productive credit - credit used for investment in goods and services that contribute to real economic growth. The Anchor Borrowers' Programme, launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2015, aligns with this principle by providing loans to smallholder farmers to boost agricultural production. This credit is used to purchase inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and equipment, directly enhancing productivity and food output. The Quantity Theory of Credit posits that the amount of credit in an economy has a direct influence on economic outcomes, particularly relating to investment and consumption. This theory can be effectively applied to the analysis of agricultural financing initiatives, such as Nigeria's Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), and its implications for food security.

In conclusion, the Quantity Theory of Credit provides a useful theoretical framework for analyzing the impact of credit like the ABP on agricultural productivity and food security in Kogi State, Nigeria. The theory predicts that an increase in credit to smallholder farmers will lead to an increase in agricultural productivity and food security. Empirical evidence from Nigeria supports this prediction.

Research Methodology

To examine rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme and food security in Kogi State, Nigeria, this study adopted a mixed method design. This methodology was designed to provide a robust framework for evaluating the ABP's effectiveness in enhancing food security in Kogi State. The approach combined both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyse data. The qualitative aspect of the study involved the use of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions

to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of beneficiary and non-beneficiary smallholder rice farmers and other stakeholders. A content analysis of some related secondary materials was also embarked upon to show a clear understanding of the issue under examination to discover gaps in extant literature which this research seeks to fill.

The quantitative aspect of the study involved the use of survey to collect data from a sample of Anchor Borrowers Programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries rice farmers and other stakeholders. For objectivity and clarity, the size of the study which is 400 was divided among the three groups of Anchor Borrowers Programme beneficiaries: 99, Non-beneficiaries rice farmers: 160 and other stakeholders: 141.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data on the demographic characteristics of respondents involving academic qualifications, sex and others. This approach was preferred to other research designs because of the peculiarity of the study.

Result of the Findings

This section presents data and discussion of findings obtained on agricultural financing and the effectiveness of Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme and food security in Kogi State, Nigeria. The findings were interpreted based on the objectives of the study. Data obtained from the respondents show that, out of Four Hundred (400) questionnaire administered on respondents, Three Hundred and Eighty Six (386) which represent (96.5%) response rate were completed and returned while Fourteen (14) which represent (3.5%) response rate were not returned. However, the three hundred and eighty six (386) copies of the questionnaire which were filled and retrieved were used to analyse the data.

Table 1 Responses on the factors that account for effectiveness or otherwise of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme on food security level in Kogi state.

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Technical support and training	114	29.5
Climate and weather conditions	132	34.2
Funding and resource allocation	87	22.5
Farmers awareness and education	42	10.9
Other factors specify	11	2.8
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, January 2025

The above Table 1 showed respondents responses on the factors that account for effectiveness or otherwise of Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme on food security level in Kogi state. It was observed that the most cited factors were climate and weather conditions (34.2%) and technical support and training (29.5%). These two factors account for more than 60% of the total responses. This shows that they are predominant factors affecting the effectiveness or otherwise of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme on food security level in the state. Other factors include funding and resource allocation (22.5%) and farmer awareness (10.9%). Some few respondents (2.8%) specified other factors outside the ones listed ranging from access to markets and storage facilities to programme design and implementation and lastly to soil quality and fertility.

Table 2 Respondents opinion on the effectiveness of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme in improving food availability, accessibility and affordability in Kogi state.

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Highly effective	128	33.2
Moderately effective	91	23.6
Fairly effective	107	27.7
Not effective	60	15.5
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, January 2025

Table 2 above depicts respondents' opinions on the effectiveness of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme in improving food availability, accessibility and affordability in Kogi state. A significant number of 33.2% of the total responses rated the programme to be highly effective in improving food availability, accessibility and affordability in Kogi State. This was followed by 27.7% of the respondents who rated the programme to be fairly effective. 23.6% of the respondents rated the programme to be moderately effective while 15.5% of the respondents asserted that the programme is not effective.

Discussion of Findings

One comprehensive finding from the Respondents' rating of the factors that account for the effectiveness or otherwise of Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme on food security level in Kogi state is that the most cited factors were climate and weather conditions (34.2%) and technical support and training (29.5%). This implies that aside the human made factor of providing adequate training to farmers, the natural conditions of weather and climate play a significant role in the effectiveness or otherwise of the programme. Funding and resource allocation (22.5%) and farmer awareness (10.9%) do not serve as significant as the other two factors raised above according to the respondents. Also, fewer respondents (2.8%) identified their own factors that affect the effectiveness or otherwise of the programme. The study revealed that access to funding and resource allocation under the RABP significantly influenced farmers' productivity. Many respondents acknowledged that the programme enhanced their ability to cultivate larger rice farms, aligning with previous studies (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2020; Oluwasola, 2018), which found that input support schemes improve smallholder farmers' output. However, some participants reported delays in input distribution, which negatively affected planting seasons. This finding corroborates the work of Ajayi and Okuneye (2019), who noted that late input delivery undermines the potential benefits of agricultural credit schemes.

While the findings of the research reveal poor implementation of the programme, a significant number of the respondents (33.2%) rated the programme to be highly effective in improving food availability, accessibility and affordability in Kogi State. This was followed by 27.7% of the respondents who rated the programme to be fairly effective and 23.6% of the respondents who rated the programme to be moderately effective while 15.5% of the respondents asserted that the programme is not effective. Content analysis from FGDs indicated that farmers who received training on modern rice farming techniques reported higher yields. This aligns with the assertion of Nwachukwu et al. (2021) that capacity-building programmes enhance farmers' efficiency. However, some interviewees lamented inadequate extension services, which limited the programme's impact. Similar concerns were raised by Ogundari (2020), who argued that poor extension services in Nigeria hinder the successful implementation of agricultural interventions.

Conclusion

The Rice Anchor Borrowers' Programme has made significant strides in improving agricultural productivity and food security in Kogi State. However, its full potential is yet to be realized due to poor implementation, logistical constraints and inadequate resources. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions and increased investment in agricultural infrastructure will be crucial for ensuring the programme's long-term success. Ultimately, agricultural financing initiatives like the ABP are essential for transforming the agricultural sector, reducing poverty, and achieving food security in Kogi State and Nigeria as a whole.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made;

- i. A targeted outreach strategy should be developed to include more smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth in remote and underserved areas of Kogi State. This can be achieved through partnerships with local farmer cooperatives, community-based organizations, and traditional leaders to identify and register eligible farmers. Expanding coverage will ensure that more farmers benefit from the programme, leading to increased agricultural productivity and food security in the state.
- ii. Government and other stakeholders should make agricultural financing mechanisms more viable through timely provision of inputs and training and comprehensive training programmes for farmers on modern agricultural practices, financial literacy, and climate-smart techniques. Additionally, invest in post-harvest infrastructure such as storage facilities, processing units, and market linkages to reduce losses and increase farmers' income.

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