

Challenges of Implementing Anchor Borrower Programme for Food Security in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the Nigerian government has intensified efforts to address food security challenges by implementing various initiatives aimed at encouraging local food production and restricting the importation of certain agricultural products, such as rice produced abroad. However, the implementation of these policies faces significant challenges. This study examines the obstacles to implementing the 'Anchor Borrowers Rice Programme' for small holder rice farmers in Nasarawa State, using the Diffusion of Innovation Theory as a theoretical framework. Employing a survey research design, the study gathered primary and secondary data through questionnaires, interviews, and a literature review. The analysis revealed that while the programme has effectively increased rice accessibility, several barriers persist. Environmental challenges, including climate variability and pest infestations, pose substantial risks to crop yields. Inadequate funding limits the resources available to farmers, leading to disruptions in agricultural cycles and reduced yields. Additionally, infrastructure and logistics issues, along with administrative and bureaucratic problems, further complicate program execution. To address these challenges, it is recommended to allocate sufficient funding and resources to the programme, including increasing initial capital for farmers and ensuring the timely disbursement of funds. Investing in sustainable agricultural practices and financial support mechanisms, such as promoting drought-resistant crop varieties, implementing water management strategies, and providing access to weather forecasting services, may help mitigate the adverse effects of climate variability and pest infestations. Furthermore, enhancing coordination between government agencies, financial institutions, and other stakeholders can streamline administrative processes and improve programme delivery efficiency.

Keywords: Agricultural Productivity, Food Security, Credit Scheme, Agricultural Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

In response to persistent economic challenges, successive Nigerian administrations have focused on agricultural development to address food security concerns. Over the years, various strategies such as the Farm Settlement Scheme and the National Accelerated Food Production Programme have been implemented, though many have fallen short of expectations. A significant initiative in this context is the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), launched in 2015 in collaboration with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and Kebbi state, aiming to bolster the agricultural sector and mitigate the economic instability caused by high import dependence, unemployment, and rural-urban migration (Akogun, 2018).

The ABP aims to reduce operational costs, increase rice production, and improve the living standards of farmers by enhancing their access to credit and agricultural inputs (CBN, 2016). Despite initial skepticism rooted in the failure of previous initiatives, the ABP seeks to support smallholder farmers (SHFs) by linking them with anchor companies involved in the production of key commodities, including rice. This linkage is designed to enhance productivity and self-sufficiency in rice, a staple in the Nigerian diet that has historically been supplemented by costly imports, putting pressure on foreign reserves and exposing the nation to food security risks (Salau et al., 2019).

Nasarawa State in North-Central Nigeria is a focal point for the ABP due to its favorable conditions for rice cultivation. The state's diverse agro-ecological zones and fertile land make it ideal for agricultural activities. However, food insecurity remains a challenge for many of its residents, highlighting the critical need for initiatives like the ABP to improve food accessibility and security (FAO, 2005). The program's impact in Nasarawa State is notable for its potential to increase domestic rice production, reduce dependency on imports, and stabilize food supply against global market fluctuations and exchange rate volatility (CFS, 2012).

The ABP provides smallholder farmers with loans, agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, and technical support, aimed at boosting crop yields and income levels. By facilitating better access to credit and enhancing agricultural practices, the ABP contributes to a more stable and secure food supply, crucial for Nigeria's economic resilience and food security (Committee on World Food Security, 2012). Therefore this paper is to interrogate the impact of anchor borrower programme on food security in Nasarawa state

Statement of the Problem

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) launched the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) to create economic connections between smallholder farmers (SHFs) and key agricultural companies, aiming to increase agricultural production, generate jobs, and reduce food imports to conserve foreign reserves, as per the CBN Act 2007 (CBN, 2007). Despite significant investment in providing credit to farmers, food insecurity remains a pressing issue, with over 90 million Nigerians affected from 2017 to 2018 (Olomola & Nwafor, 2018). The ABP's objective to enhance food security has been inadequately explored in existing studies, which primarily focus on broader aspects without specifically addressing the food security status of SHFs involved in the program (Olanrewaju et al., 2020; Iliyasu & Lawal, 2020; Okeke et al., 2019).

The ABP faces significant challenges, including a lack of a comprehensive implementation manual and limited farmer capacity due to health, age, soil fertility, and access to land. Environmental factors, resource monopolization by elites, and corruption further hinder the program's effectiveness (Coker et al., 2018). Additionally, poor policy continuity and ineffective government responses to issues like illegal imports and exchange rates undermine the program. Farmer mismanagement of funds, insufficient supervision, and negative attitudes towards farming exacerbate these problems, highlighting the need for more robust oversight and policy support to improve the ABP's impact on food security, particularly in regions like Nasarawa State (Ayinde et al., 2018).

The above context underscores the necessity to investigate the relationship between the ABP and food security, aiming to assess its effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement in addressing Nigeria's food security challenges generally.

Research Objectives

1. To find out how the implementation of Rice Anchor Borrower programme relates to food security food availability, access, utilization, and stability, in Nasarawa State
2. To investigate constraints in the implementation of the Rice Anchor Borrower Programme in enhancing food security in Nasarawa State.

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant relationship between the implementation of the Anchor Borrower Rice Programme and food security, food availability, access, utilization, and stability in Nasarawa State.
- ii. The constraints faced by smallholder farmers in the implementation of the Rice Anchor Borrower Programme have no significant relationship with food security in Nasarawa State.

Conceptual Framework

Food Security

According to the USDA, food security is defined as "access by all people at all times to enough food for an

active, healthy life" and encompasses the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and the ability to acquire them in socially acceptable ways (USDA, 2006). This entails that Food security exists when "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2001). This comprehensive definition highlights the need for consistent access to adequate food that supports health and well-being.

However, WHO defines food security as the situation where "all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life," emphasizing the importance of both the availability and quality of food, as well as the ability to access it (WHO, 2015). Food Security a condition where "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," highlighting the multidimensional nature of food security that includes availability, access, utilization, and stability (CFS, 2012).

Food security, as defined by the 1996 World Food Summit, exists when "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life" (FAO, 1996). This definition encompasses four critical dimensions necessary for food security: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability (Saint et al., 2019). These dimensions are interrelated and their absence contributes to food insecurity, which is recognized as a "wicked problem" due to its complexity, ambiguity, and resistance to straightforward solutions (Candel, 2014). Food insecurity not only manifests as extreme hunger but also includes various forms of deprivation, such as material poverty, malnutrition (both obesity and undernourishment), and socio-cultural losses, including the erosion of indigenous crop varieties and traditional ecological knowledge (Farrell et al., 2017; Hendriks, 2015).

Recent literature identifies three major pillars of food security: food accessibility, availability, and affordability, with affordability being particularly crucial in determining access to food, especially in Africa (Hassan-Wassef, 2012). The definition of food security was reaffirmed in the 2009 declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, emphasizing physical, social, and economic access to adequate food (CFS, 2012). The concept has evolved to integrate nutrition security, highlighting the need for nutritious and safe food to meet dietary needs (CFS, 2012). Nobel laureate Amartya Sen introduced the notion of "entitlements" to food, stressing that access depends not only on food availability but also on economic and social capabilities (Nestle, 2000). Thus, food security encompasses production, distribution, and exchange for availability; affordability, allocation, and preference for accessibility; nutritional value, social value, and food safety for utilization (Erickson, 2018).

Anchor Borrower Programme

The Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) is an agricultural intervention launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to support smallholder farmers by linking them with key agricultural companies, or "anchors," involved in processing essential commodities (CBN, 2020). The program's primary aim is to enhance agricultural production, create jobs, and reduce reliance on food imports, thereby conserving foreign reserves (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2015; ARMTI, 2019). According to Saheed et al. (2018), the ABP provides essential agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, and equipment, ensuring that farmers have the resources necessary to improve yields and comply with contractual terms, thus reducing incidents of side-selling. This initiative is critical for establishing economic connections between small-scale farmers and large-scale processors, which ultimately boosts agricultural productivity and enhances the capacity utilization of processors (CBN, 2020).

Launched in 2015 by President Muhammadu Buhari, the ABP aims to provide both cash and in-kind support to smallholder farmers to increase the production of selected crops, thereby addressing Nigeria's balance of payment issues (Anchor Borrower's Programme Guide, 2016). The program requires farmers to repay at least 9% of the loan upon the completion of their harvest, with the harvested produce supplied to agro-processors who then compensate the farmers (CBN, 2020). The ABP also seeks to increase financial support from banks to the agricultural sector, decrease the need for agricultural imports, and promote financial inclusion and cashless policies (CBN, 2020). Moreover, the program aims to foster a new generation of farmers and

entrepreneurs, create employment opportunities, and alleviate poverty among small-scale farmers by transitioning them from subsistence to commercial farming (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2015).

The targeted beneficiaries of the ABP include small-scale farmers involved in cultivating a variety of crops, such as cereals (rice, maize, wheat), root and tuber crops (cassava, potatoes, yam), tree crops (oil palm, cocoa, rubber), legumes (soybeans, cowpeas), as well as livestock like fish and poultry (CBN, 2020). These farmers are organized into groups for efficient fund disbursement, managed by participating financial institutions (PFIs) such as Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) and Microfinance Banks (MFBs), with additional support from private integrated processors and state governments (Anchor Borrower's Programme Guide, 2016). The program's funding comes from the N220 billion Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (MSMEDF), with an interest rate of 9%, providing accessible financial resources to farmers (CBN, 2020).

Farmers are required to repay the loans with their harvested produce, delivered to designated collection centers, as stipulated in their agreements (Anchor Borrower's Programme Guide, 2016). The ABP's administrative functions, detailed in chapter three of the guidelines, are overseen by a mix of private sector-led and state windows, ensuring streamlined operations and accountability (Anchor Borrower's Programme Guide, 2016). This comprehensive approach aims to integrate smallholder farmers into larger economic structures, thereby enhancing food security and contributing to Nigeria's agricultural and economic development (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2015).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Implementation of Rice Anchor Borrower Programme for Food Security

The paper presented at the 6th African Conference of Agricultural Economists in September 2019 examined the impact of the Central Bank of Nigeria's Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) on rice farmers in Kebbi State, Nigeria. The study utilized both primary data, gathered through questionnaires distributed to 226 rice farmers (113 ABP beneficiaries and 113 non-beneficiaries), and secondary data from annual time series on Nigeria's rice import quantity and cost from 1990 to 2016. Employing descriptive and inferential statistical tools, the results highlighted fluctuations in Nigeria's rice import trends and underscored the significant benefits enjoyed by ABP beneficiaries. Specifically, ABP beneficiaries demonstrated higher technical efficiency (mean technical efficiency of 0.98) compared to non-beneficiaries (mean technical efficiency of 0.81), translating into a higher mean rice output of 5504.4 kg/ha for beneficiaries versus 3267.7 kg/ha for non-beneficiaries. Additionally, the program facilitated favorable timing and pricing arrangements for the beneficiaries, contributing to improved outcomes (Salisu, 2019).

The study further identified various benefits for ABP participants, including increased access to extension visits, training, seminars, ready markets, and job creation, all of which collectively led to improved living standards. Despite these positive outcomes, the effectiveness and efficiency of the ABP could be enhanced with improved monitoring and more timely distribution of inputs (Salisu, 2019). These findings underscore the program's potential in boosting agricultural productivity and economic well-being among smallholder rice farmers, yet also highlight areas where administrative improvements are necessary to maximize the program's benefits.

A subsequent study by Salisu (2019) delved deeper into the impact of the ABP on the productivity of rice farmers in Kebbi State, employing a multi-stage sampling technique to collect data from 221 rice farmers through structured questionnaires. The analysis included the use of descriptive statistics, Total Factor Productivity (TFP) measurement, and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. The findings indicated that the average respondent was 46 years old, predominantly male (69.27%), and married (93.21%), with farming being the primary occupation and an average farming experience of 20 years. The mean productivity index for ABP rice farmers was calculated at 6.24, and the OLS regression analysis revealed that ABP credit had a statistically significant positive impact on rice productivity at a 1% level of significance. However, challenges such as lack of awareness, bureaucratic obstacles, and high interest rates were identified as major barriers to small-scale farmers accessing ABP credit. The study recommended increasing awareness among rice farmers

to enhance participation in the ABP and suggested that the government establish a monitoring and evaluation committee to ensure adherence to the program's goals (Salisu, 2019).

Another research piece titled "Assessment of Awareness and Determinants of Anchor Borrowers Program's Adoption Among Rice Farmers in Kaduna State, Nigeria" focused on the awareness and adoption of the ABP among rice farmers. Conducted in Kaduna State, the study collected primary data from 240 respondents using a structured questionnaire and a multi-stage sampling procedure, analyzed through descriptive statistics and a probit regression model. The findings revealed that only 40% of respondents were aware of the ABP. The probit regression analysis highlighted that access to credit, involvement in off-farm work, and membership in cooperative societies were critical factors influencing ABP adoption. Awareness of the ABP was a significant determinant of adoption, and rice farmers engaged in off-farm activities were more likely to adopt the program. Interestingly, farming experience showed a negative correlation with ABP adoption, suggesting that more experienced farmers might be risk-averse and less likely to participate in new programs. The study emphasized the need for targeted communication strategies to raise awareness among rural farmers and promote the adoption of government agricultural programs, particularly in regions with a high concentration of farmers (Anonymous, 2023).

Challenges Faced in the Implementation of the Rice Anchor Borrower Programme

Talumo (2021) conducted an insightful analysis of the systemic challenges faced by Nigerian farmers and food transporters, emphasizing the significant hurdles that threaten national food security. The study underscores that both farmers and transporters encounter substantial obstacles, primarily centered around market accessibility and the poor state of road infrastructure. This lack of infrastructure not only hampers market access but also contributes to the logistical difficulties that exacerbate the plight of these stakeholders. Farmers, in particular, face compounded challenges due to multiple taxation and harassment, which further impede their ability to operate efficiently and profitably (Talumo, 2021).

Moreover, government regulations designed to limit large gatherings at farm gates and markets have created significant barriers for farmers, restricting their ability to conduct essential agricultural activities. These regulations have been especially detrimental during the COVID-19 lockdowns, which led to a notable contraction of the transportation sector by 50% in the second quarter of 2020, resulting in decreased farmer incomes and lowered living standards (Talumo, 2021). Farmers' reliance on selling a portion of their produce to meet essential needs means that restricted market access during this period had severe economic implications, particularly due to the lack of adequate storage facilities and unreliable electricity, which further complicated the handling of perishable goods (Talumo, 2021).

Uchenna (2023) highlights the significant economic burden imposed by Nigeria's annual expenditure of US\$2 billion on rice imports, which drains foreign exchange and threatens the domestic rice industry. This persistent demand-supply gap is largely due to the country's inability to boost domestic paddy rice production sufficiently to utilize the integrated rice mills established over the past 15 years (Uchenna, 2023). In response, the Nigerian government launched the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) in 2015 to provide smallholder farmers (SHFs)—who account for over 85% of the nation's agricultural output—with accessible and affordable funding. Despite the program's potential to contribute significantly to food security, it faces several challenges, including delays in fund disbursement, inadequate institutional support, and poor rural infrastructure (Uchenna, 2023).

Anyanwu et al. (2019) and Bello et al. (2020) further elaborate on the difficulties faced by SHFs in accessing credit under the ABP. Stringent collateral requirements, bureaucratic hurdles, and loan disbursement delays significantly limit the ability of these farmers to invest in modern farming practices. Additionally, the lack of technical assistance and extension services prevents farmers from adopting best practices in rice cultivation, further limiting the program's effectiveness (Anyanwu et al., 2019; Bello et al., 2020). Ogunlowo (2019) notes that limited access to profitable markets discourages farmers from scaling up production, while climate variability and environmental risks like flooding and drought exacerbate these challenges, threatening crop yields and food security (Ogunlowo, 2019).

Balana (2022) explores the broader context of agricultural productivity in Nigeria, focusing on the limited adoption of modern agricultural technologies due to poor access to credit. The study distinguishes between supply-side constraints, such as inadequate collateral, and demand-side factors, including risk-averse behavior and high transaction costs. Balana emphasizes the need for policies that empower smallholders to possess bankable collateral and improve access to information and extension services to enhance credit access and facilitate technology adoption (Balana, 2022).

In Nasarawa State, government agencies implementing the ABP face significant challenges, including inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, bureaucratic delays, and corruption, which hinder the program's effectiveness (Isa, 2019; Ogunlowo, 2019). These issues not only limit the number of farmers who can benefit from the program but also reduce the level of investment in crucial support services.

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

This theory was developed by Rogers in 1962, to explore how and why new ideas, technologies, products, and practices are adopted within social systems (Rogers, 2003). The theory laid the groundwork for researching the spread of innovations among individuals and groups. It identifies an innovation as any idea, behavior, or object perceived as new by its audience, regardless of its actual age (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). It aims to explain the process of adoption and emphasizes three key aspects: qualities that facilitate adoption, the role of peer-to-peer networks, and the importance of addressing diverse user needs (Rogers, 2003).

Rogers identified the qualities that make an innovation more likely to be adopted, such as its relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. These attributes help reduce uncertainty and predict the adoption rate (Rogers, 2003). Peer networks and interpersonal communication are crucial in the diffusion process, as they foster trust and facilitate information exchange. Additionally, recognizing the varied needs of different user segments helps tailor innovations to specific groups, enhancing their acceptance and integration (Rogers, 2003).

The theory outlines four elements essential to the diffusion process: communication channels, time, social system, and the innovation-decision process. Communication channels, including mass media and interpersonal communication, are the means through which innovation-related information is conveyed (Rogers, 2003). Time plays a critical role, as the adoption process, adopter categorization, and the rate of adoptions all involve temporal aspects (Rogers, 2003). The social system, defined as a set of interrelated units working towards a common goal, significantly influences how innovations spread and are accepted within a community (Rogers, 2003).

The innovation-decision process involves five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. In the knowledge stage, individuals become aware of the innovation and seek information about it. The persuasion stage involves forming a positive or negative attitude towards the innovation. In the decision stage, individuals decide whether to adopt or reject the innovation. The implementation stage involves putting the innovation into practice, often requiring technical assistance and potential reinvention. Finally, in the confirmation stage, individuals seek support for their decision and may reconsider their adoption if exposed to conflicting information (Rogers, 2003).

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory is particularly relevant to agricultural programs like the Anchor Borrower Program (ABP), which aims to support smallholder farmers with loans, seeds, fertilizers, and technical assistance. The theory provides a framework to understand how such programs are adopted and diffused among farmers. It helps identify adopter categories, such as innovators and early adopters and assesses how these farmers perceive the program's relative advantage compared to traditional methods (Rogers, 2003).

Moreover, the theory emphasizes the importance of communication channels in spreading information about the program. It suggests evaluating whether mass media or interpersonal communication is more effective in promoting the program among farmers. By applying the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, policymakers and

program managers can better design and implement initiatives like the ABP to maximize their impact on agricultural development and rural economies. The theory aids in understanding adoption dynamics, identifying key influencers, and optimizing communication strategies to enhance program diffusion as in the case of anchor borrower programme implementation and challenges in Nasarawa state.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research design acts as the foundational framework guiding a study, providing structure and direction for data collection and analysis. It defines the methods for making inferences and drawing conclusions (Churchill et al., 1983). In this research, a survey design was utilized, incorporating both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with participants in the Anchor Borrower Rice Programme in Nasarawa State, focusing on three local government areas (LGAs) where the program is implemented. Secondary data was obtained from a comprehensive review of literature, including published and unpublished sources, as well as online materials, with data presented in tables for clarity.

The study area was Nasarawa State, chosen for its involvement in the Anchor Borrower Rice Programme, which aims to enhance agricultural productivity and improve the financial services available to rural poor households. The population includes approximately 345,000 households in three LGAs: Doma, Keana, and Obi, totaling 402,336 people.

For data collection, cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used for the questionnaire, with a total sample size of 400, determined using Taro Yamane’s formula. Questionnaires were distributed across the selected LGAs proportionally to their populations. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed for in-depth interviews with key stakeholders who possess relevant expertise and familiarity with the area of study.

Data collection methods included structured questionnaires with both open-ended and close-ended questions to gather demographic information and insights on relevant variables. Interviews were conducted for local farmers, using both English and local languages, with responses recorded and analyzed using thematic methods. The qualitative data from interviews was transcribed and analyzed with NVIVO software, following a thematic approach to ensure that essential information was effectively captured and analyzed. This comprehensive methodology ensured a thorough examination of the Anchor Borrower Programmer’s impact on food security in Nasarawa State.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1.2 Respondents Rating of the Implementing Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Implemented	56	14.66
Low Implemented	89	23.29
Moderately Implemented	105	27.49
Fairly Implemented	61	15.97
Poorly Implemented	74	19.36
Total	382	100

Source: Field Survey February 2024

From the table above, it can be deduced that most respondents rated the implementation of the Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State as Moderately Implemented (27.49%). This suggests that while there is some level of success, there is room for improvement. The next most common ratings were Low

Implemented (23.29%) and Poorly Implemented (19.36%), indicating significant dissatisfaction among a considerable portion of respondents. A smaller proportion of respondents rated the programme as Highly Implemented (14.66%) or Fairly Implemented (15.97%). Overall, the ratings reflected a mixed perception of the effectiveness of the programme, with a notable portion expressing dissatisfaction.

In the interviews conducted to evaluate the implementation of the Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa state, a comprehensive view of stakeholders' perspectives was offered.

Farmers expressed gratitude for the program's provision of credit and farming inputs, yet they raised concerns about delayed loan disbursements, insufficient extension services, and limited market access. While recognizing the program's positive impact on rice production and livelihoods, farmers stressed the need for improved support services and timely assistance to address challenges during farming. Government officials acknowledged the program's role in agricultural development and food security, emphasizing ongoing efforts to streamline administrative processes and address policy gaps. However, concerns regarding program sustainability and the necessity for continuous monitoring and evaluation were highlighted. Financial institutions praised the program's facilitation of credit access for smallholder farmers but identified challenges such as high default rates and limited risk management mechanisms. They emphasized the importance of enhancing collaboration with program administrators and leveraging technology to improve service efficiency. Despite challenges, stakeholders remained optimistic about the program's potential to contribute to agricultural development and poverty reduction, stressing the importance of concerted efforts to address existing gaps and enhance program delivery mechanisms. Overall, the interviews provided valuable insights into the program's successes and challenges, emphasizing the need for collaborative action to maximize its impact and ensure long-term success in Nigeria's agricultural sector.

Table 1.2 Responses on the Challenges of Implementing Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate Funding	87	(22.77%).
Administrative and Bureaucratic	55	(14.40%).
Infrastructure and Logistics Issue	59	(15.45%)
Technical and Knowledge Gaps	42	(10.99%)
Socio-Economic Factors	51	(13.35%)
Environmental Challenges	88	(32.03%)
Total	382	100

Source: Field Survey February 2024

From the table, it was observed that the most cited challenges are Environmental Challenges (23.04%) and Inadequate Funding (22.77%). These categories together make up nearly half of the total responses, indicating that they are the predominant issues faced in the implementation of the Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State. Other significant challenges include Infrastructure and Logistics Issues (15.45%) and Administrative and Bureaucratic Problems (14.40%). Technical and Knowledge Gaps and Socio-Economic Factors were also notable but less frequent, highlighting a diverse range of obstacles impacting the program's effectiveness. However, the interview conducted with respondents 1,3, 4, 6, and 8 revealed that:

The Rice Anchor Borrower Programme (RABP) in Nigeria, intended to enhance rice production and bolster food security, has faced numerous challenges that impede its effectiveness. Key issues include funding and financial constraints, where insufficient financing and delayed disbursements disrupt agricultural cycles and reduce crop yields, while high default rates rain breed poor yields and further undermine the programme

sustainability. Administrative hurdles such as a complex application process, corruption, mismanagement, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation further complicate the programme execution. Additionally, infrastructural deficiencies, including poor transportation networks and a lack of storage and processing facilities, exacerbate post-harvest losses and limit market accessibility for farmers. On the other hand, respondents 2, 4, 7, 9 and 10 lamented that:

Issues relating to the challenges of Anchor Borrower Programme is compounding these issues are technical and socio-economic barriers, where a lack of modern farming knowledge and insufficient agricultural extension services impede productivity. Land tenure disputes, socio-cultural biases, and the high cost of inputs restrict participation, particularly among smallholder farmers and women. Environmental challenges like climate variability and pest infestations pose significant risks to crop yields, while market access difficulties and price volatility affect farmers' income stability and loan repayment capabilities. Policy inconsistencies add another layer of complexity, creating uncertainty and potentially hindering the effective implementation of the RABP.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One comprehensive finding from the Respondents' Rating of the Implementing Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State is the mixed perception of its effectiveness. The majority of respondents rated the implementation as Moderately Implemented (27.49%), indicating some level of success but also highlighting areas for improvement. However, significant dissatisfaction was expressed by a considerable portion of respondents, with ratings of Low Implemented (23.29%) and Poorly Implemented (19.36%) being common. This suggests that there are notable challenges in the program's execution, such as delayed loan disbursements, inadequate extension services, and limited market access. Despite these concerns, a smaller proportion of respondents rated the program as Highly Implemented (14.66%) or Fairly Implemented (15.97%), indicating some positive outcomes. Overall, this finding underscores the importance of addressing existing gaps and enhancing program delivery mechanisms to maximize its impact on agricultural development and poverty reduction in Nasarawa State.

Findings from the challenges of implementing the Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State is the significant impact of Environmental Challenges and Inadequate Funding. These two categories collectively account for nearly half of the total responses, indicating their prominence as the primary obstacles to the programme's effectiveness. Environmental Challenges, including climate variability and pest infestations, pose significant risks to crop yields, while Inadequate funding limits resources for farmers, leading to disruptions in agricultural cycles and reduced crop yields. Additionally, infrastructure and logistics issues and administrative and bureaucratic problems are significant challenges, further complicating program execution. Despite these challenges, the interviews revealed a diverse range of obstacles, including technical and socio-economic barriers, which impede productivity and participation, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by the Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The government should have established mechanisms for transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement in Anchor Borrower Programme implementation in Nasarawa State. Establishing mechanisms for regular and transparent communication with stakeholders, including farmers, government officials, and financial institutions, can help address concerns and build trust in the programme. Additionally, conducting regular monitoring and evaluation exercises to assess programme performance, gather feedback from stakeholders, and identify areas for improvement is essential. This process should involve actively soliciting input from beneficiaries and incorporating their perspectives into decision-making processes.
- ii. To address the challenges of environmental challenges and Inadequate Funding facing the implementation of the Anchor Borrower Programme in Nasarawa State, there should be allocation of sufficient funding and resources to the programme, including increasing the initial capital provided to farmers and ensuring timely disbursement of funds. Investment in sustainable agricultural practices and

financial support mechanisms. initiatives aimed at enhancing climate resilience, such as promoting drought-resistant crop varieties, implementing water management strategies, and providing access to weather forecasting services, may assist farmers in mitigating the adverse effects of climate variability and pest infestations. Furthermore, enhancing coordination between government agencies, financial institutions, and other stakeholders can streamline administrative processes and improve programme delivery efficiency.

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