

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study. It explains what this research sets out to achieve. It also covers the frameworks on which the study is anchored.

Background to the Study

Historical records testify to the pervasiveness of Igbo agriculture in the pre-colonial period. This probably was because the agricultural activities of the Igbo in the 19th century embraced various forms of production including food and non-food crops production, animal rearing and hunting, fishing and gathering of edible fruits, as well as vegetables. There was hardly any family that did not engage in agriculture.¹ Agriculture, most importantly farming, was like an apparatus or modality in measuring the individual wealth and socio-political status in terms of productivity and surpluses.

Thus, the inference of this Igbo attitude towards agriculture was that every Igbo man and woman was a farmer. They produced enough staples like yam, cocoyam, cassava and vegetables. There were some communities with fertile lands such that they “exported” surpluses to areas within and outside Igboland. Enough evidence also supports that Northeastern Igboland (Abakaliki area) would appear to have come to the resume of an agricultural revolution before other parts of the region, a result that yielded pride in socio-economic and political life of the Igbo people.²

Adiele Afigbo agrees with J. E. Flint when he re-echoes that “pre-colonial Igbo agriculture was very efficient.... Perhaps the most efficient in Africa, and that it was largely for this reason that Igbo population developed a density per acre only matched in Africa by that of the Nile Valley”.³

Onwuka N. Njoku may have also conceded to the above opinion when he posits: “Among the Igbo, farming was a passion and a universal pursuit. But it was the Ezza who had the upper hand in this pursuit, being the greatest yam farmers”.⁴ The above excerpt establishes that the people of the area (Abakaliki) have made a remarkable impact on staple crops production over the years.

Furthermore, a spate of oral evidence has also shown that the staple crops production consequently empowered the society to take good economic and political shape. The Igbo believed that through farming, they were able to obtain economic means which they needed to sustain life and upgrade socio-political status.⁵ The modality of measuring economic muscles for political recognition was evaluated by the quantity of harvests or surpluses in the barns or yam stakes, and the number of domestic animals herded including wives, children and dependants. This was typical of the Igbo economy which sustained the people before the advent of the British colonial government.

Food crops production was the dominant practice until the colonial conquest of the area inhabited by the Nigerian peoples. The European imperialism and colonialism drew in a strange shape into the people’s traditional practices in agriculture. The shape changed from production of subsistence crops to cash crops for export. The colonial economy of the Igbo was, therefore, orchestrated by various colonial policies on agricultural activities. European agricultural model for the people was thus patterned towards export crops against traditional farming system. By the 1940s, the colonies were envisaged as not necessarily in terms of their usefulness to the mother country but as economic entities themselves. They (the Europeans) saw the people and their land as undeveloped and untapped such that any economic benefits which may have accrued to them resulted from accident not design. The

principal beneficiaries of the colonial economy were the stakeholders of the companies importing and processing raw materials, such as cotton, rubber, palm oil/ kernel, cocoa, timber, groundnuts, among others. These items gradually replaced yam, cassava, cocoyam and maize, in exchange of clothes, tobacco, alcohol, mirror, machetes and rice.⁶

In addition, the colonial regime in Igboland appears to have done nothing significant to improve on the production of low-value export crops. Food crops production remained the same as in the pre-colonial times. There were, of course, no attempts to improve the methods of production of subsistence crops as the Germans had done in Togo. The British colonial officials in the Agricultural Departments did nothing in the situation unlike that of The Gambia where rice that could have been easily grown by the peasant farmers was imported and to pay for it, the farmers devoted more of their energies in the cultivation of groundnuts.⁷ Against this backdrop, it has been argued that one of the most stunning outcomes of the relationship between the British colonial economy and the Nigerian societies was the up-turn of hunger and rural poverty, as well as food insecurity which invariably had a direct bearing on social security.⁸ People who are poor and hungry are more likely to be violent and as such may not think of utilising other means of peaceful atmosphere for survival in the society.

For further perpetration of economic dependency of the Igbo upon the European imports and exports economy, Nigeria's Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford's report to the Nigerian Council in 1923 has noted *inter lia* that

The vast majority of indigenous populations are still independent of the outside world for all their essential supplies. They can and do spin their own thread, weave their own garments, provide their own foodstuffs, and even, when necessity arises, forge their own tools and make their own pottery. ... If need must, they can wholly dispense; and the sole exception to this..., was imported spirits of European manufacture.⁹

Clifford's perception of the Nigerian peasant farmers *vis-à-vis* the European merchants is further demonstrated in the following words:

The purchasing of the native grown agriculture produce will always be mainly in European hands, while the transport of it to the market of the world will be managed by railways and ships assigned and managed by Europeans.¹⁰

In spite of all the colonial policies, food crops production still fared better until the discovery of oil in the late 1950s. The growth of the oil economy in the 1970s altered the practice of agriculture and traditional economy. Huge foreign exchange from oil in the period led to a drop in the agricultural (food crop) production. This resulted in a deviation and acute shortage in the local production of staple crops such as yam, cassava, cocoyam, maize and rice in Igboland. Imported rice as a consequence became the order of the day, a deviation from the situation before the 1960s. The market for locally produced rice dwindled, leading to low capacity utilisation at the small local rice mills, hence the migration of the active farm population away from the farm gates, to seek alternative means of livelihood in the urban areas. There were hunger and rural poverty. However, the consumption of rice increased as various families included it in their menu.¹¹

Arising from the above, the status of rice in the average diet transformed from being a luxury food item to that of a staple, taking the place of yam, cassava, cocoyam, maize and others in the economy. Meanwhile, despite the low production capacity, rice economy designed a correlation between the economy and socio-political life in the Abakaliki area. This relationship was characterised by the division of labour and emphasis on profit making as coordinated by the factors of production. It is this interaction that has generated interest in studying the specific importance and impact of rice on the economy of the people. Most importantly, an insight is given into the rice economy of the people of Abakaliki, to seek its

philosophy. In doing this, the study examines position of rice production in Abakaliki. It also tries to consider the policies (public or private) that affected rice production in the area. Also, it may be necessary to note that the study has three dimensions: food security, policy approach and empowerment.

Statement of Problem

This study is necessitated by an investigation into the place of rice production in the economy of Abakaliki. A contending issue that is responsible for the problem of this study is traced to fragmented written works on Abakaliki rice enterprise such as newspapers, journal articles, conference papers, government policy documents, unpublished articles, periodicals and monographs, among others which are mainly outside the approach in the discipline of history. A few relevant materials like project work, theses and dissertations exist in various disciplines such as Crop Science, Agricultural Extension and Management, Food Science and Technology, Economics, Agricultural Economics and so forth, and they are not readily available in the libraries, research institutions and field sources. It is this problem that the study tries to address by attempting to organise and assemble a work on rice production in Abakaliki from historical perspective.

Purpose of the Study

This research has the following objectives which it seeks to achieve.

1. To investigate the history of rice production in Abakaliki from the perspective of food security, policy apparatuses of the public and private individuals and the empowerment approach.

2. It also examines the rate at which policies on rice production had affected the socio-economic and political status of the people of Abakaliki.
3. This study attempts to unravel the activities of rice production and its impact on the economy of the area. This study, therefore, tries to examine the place rice production occupies in the economy of Abakaliki.
4. It examines the contributions of the government, non-governmental institutions and other private economic actors to rice production, processing and marketing in and outside Abakaliki area.
5. The study also seeks to unravel how the industry has directly or indirectly affected the living standard of the people in the locality.
6. The study, however, also considers the challenges facing rice industry all in an attempt to make useful recommendations for self-sufficiency in rice production in the area.

Significance of the Study

This research is conducted under a systematic and critical moderation by authorities in Economic History to serve as a resource material of the age. It could serve as a reference material for students in various disciplines such as History, Economics, Agricultural Sciences, and other areas in the development studies of rural communities in Nigeria.

Similarly, the study is apparently significant in view of the sagging economy of the nation. Rice is one of the major staple crops consumed in Nigerian families and as a source of calories. The work is designed to provide a guide to saving the society from famine, poverty, as well as economic and social insecurity. The policy frameworks of the public and

private individuals examined in this dissertation shall serve as useful citations in further studies in rice production, crop history and traditional economies.

It is believed that, following the bold attempts made in this research, especially in studying the local economics of food production, processing and marketing, policy makers will be able to explore the potentials which rice economy anchors on food security. The production process can as well be harnessed for international export earnings, if the findings of this work are adopted by governments and the public.

Scope of the Study

This work examines the economics of rice production. It also underscores the policies of both the governments and individuals on rice production. It studies the relationship between the rice industry and other sectors of the economy in the area. The study area comprises Abakaliki areas of Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo in Ebonyi State, Southeast Nigeria, from the year 1940 - 2011. The Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo clans are major producers of rice in the state and they form the nucleus of the old Abakaliki Division.

The choice of 1940 as a take-off period is pertinent because it was the year the European agricultural model for Igboland was patterned towards export crops to replace the traditional subsistence economy.¹² The Nigerian colony under Hugh Clifford was seen as an economic entity, a notion which continued until the introduction of a variety of rice from Asia. The year 1940 also witnessed the meeting of the Agricultural Committee at Umuahia (present Abia State capital) to discuss the introduction of rice to suitable areas of the Eastern Nigeria. The work terminates in 2011, a period of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan, which cropped the intervention of multi-agency and public-

private partnerships which provided incentives, extension services and grant/ loan facilities to farmers (rice producers) in order to attain self-sufficiency in food production in Nigeria.

Methodology and Sources of Data

This research is presented in themes. Data collected from primary, secondary and tertiary sources are qualitatively and quantitatively analysed and presented as events unfold. Qualitative method such as descriptive analysis is adopted in the study. Also, quantitative approach of the study involves the use of tables, figures and illustrations in explaining data.

Interviews and archival material formed the bulk of the primary sources. Secondary sources comprise published works such as books, journal articles, brochures and conference papers, unpublished theses and dissertations. Also, the work makes extensive use of tertiary sources gathered from verified internet websites.

Conceptual Clarifications

Some of the concepts used in this research are given explicit definitions here. They include the following:

1. **Economy:** This is people's mode of production in relation to the factors of production and available resources. Furthermore, it is a process or system by which goods and services are produced, sold and brought into a country or region. This is the researcher's opinion or definition of economy. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English Language (Special Price Edition), "Economy is the relationship between production, trade and supply of money in a particular country or region"¹³.

2. **Policy:** This is a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in the light of a given condition, to guide and determine present and future decisions. It is a higher level plan that embraces a general goal, with acceptable procedures, especially of a government body. Therefore, government policy is a plan of action of the government with an acceptable pattern which guides the present and future decisions. For Obasi Igwe, policy is:

the highest level of statecraft, embodying both objectives of the state and means of attaining them, and involving the coordinated application of all the elements of national power... including the administrative, demographic, diplomatic, economic, geographical, ideological, historical...¹⁴

By extension, it may be necessary to add that economic policies are higher level patterns of actions and plans geared toward present and future decision; especially of the government, on wealth creation, development and food security, for a period of time. They involve conditions for the management of production processes and scarce resources, for improvement in the present and future.

3. **Political Economy** is the theory or study of the role of public policy in influencing the economic and social welfare of a political unit. Obasi Igwe aptly asserts that "it is the scientific study of the reciprocal influence of economics and politics of the bias and political element of the superstructure. This inevitably involves attentions to relations of production, and iniquities and imbalances in the national and political power."¹⁵ It is both an approach in social research, and a theory seeking to explain the system of economically influenced political relations at the domestic and international levels.

Political economy approach in this study analyses social phenomena from the standpoint of economic and political interest in rice industry of the Abakaliki areas.¹⁶ It derives from the symbiotic influence among power relationships and the mutual interaction of rice economy whose political instances surround the two structures (economic and political) in the Abakaliki society. Rice production has thus empowered people in the area, and the people at various positions have developed the production system from the resources acquired in rice production.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical framework suitable for this study is a blend of the Peasant Farm theory and Mass Production theory. The Peasant Farm theory propounded by Alexander Vasilevich Chayanov may be relevant here. The masterpiece of this theoretical framework appears to be published in Moscow in 1925. At the time, the author, Chayanov was known as the leading agricultural economist in the Soviet Russia. In the publication, *Theory of Peasant Economy*,¹⁷ Chayanov uses the Peasant Farm theory to explain the production mode of non-capitalist agrarian societies of not only Russia, but other micro-economies in Nigeria, Mexico, Turkey, India and Indonesia.¹⁸ These countries, according to the author, bore striking similarities to those micro-economies in Russia from the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 up to the agricultural revolution at the end of the 1920s.¹⁹ There are two dimensions of the Peasant Farm theory: the ‘family farm’ aspect and ‘business firms or capitalist enterprises’.

The Peasant Farm theory employs the concept of ‘family farm’ in a particular sense. By ‘family farm’, the theory refers to peasant households that mostly rely on the labour and contributions of the family members. In some cases, though, peasant family farm could hire

outside labour to increase production. The business firms or capitalist enterprises are businesses that operated with hired workers in order to maximise profits. The term ‘family farm’ in the context of the Peasant Farm theory also means a farm normally run by a family without hired labour, except in rare cases where the family needed to augment their income. The kernel of the theory is that the basis of production in a peasant society is family contributions to labour and productivity which was prevalent among the Igbo.²⁰ This does not mean, the theory further explains, that the ‘family farm’ concept was entirely devoid of the quantitative inter-relationships of wages of labour, interest on capital, rent for land and profit of enterprise.

From the foregoing, Chayanov contended that about ninety per cent of the farms in Russia in the first quarter of the twentieth century had no hired labourers. They were said to be family farms in the full sense of his definition. As a result, this could be applied in explaining the production patterns of the peasant economy in Abakaliki. The peasant economy in Abakaliki was structured on family labour which hired workers to raise production so as to generate income.

Critically, Chayanov insisted on taking the entire family household as a single economic unit and conceived their annual product as a return to family activity. By implication, this return was unique and indivisible. This economic strand was not entirely typical of the Abakaliki during the period of this study. Therefore, based on the inadequacies of the Peasant Farm theory in explaining all phenomena of this study, the study also considers another relevant theory.

The Mass Production theory was first propounded in Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in 1776. The theory is based on the

principles of specialisation and division of labour, especially with the advent of machines (steam engine) and equipment. The practice of specialisation and division of labour was adopted in Eli Whitney's gin factory in America in the 1790s.²¹ This is where the Mass Production theory first advocated for skilled labour to design products and set up production system. This theory encourages worker's competence in a particular area where labour and productivity could be proficiently handled. Mass production methods use the allocations of labour along the individuals' expertise or areas of specialty in the production system. This situation enhanced the production of standardised products.

Also, with the help of specialised machineries and equipment, there were increased outputs and expansion of the marketing system of the manufactures. However, the adoption of the methods (division of labour and specialisation) was able to take workers directly out of agricultural labour on land to factory work. People took employment in areas they could do better which improved their income over a period of time.

By implication, rice production in Abakaliki took a dimension in recent times (partly in the study period) with the advent of specialised machineries and workers. Rice was also produced *en mass* in the area with the help of equipment and division of labour. This recent development expanded the scope of trade on rice and industrialisation in Abakaliki and its environs. Mass production of the crop also led to the emergence of a group of wealthy investors in rice economy and other economic sectors such as transport, finance, trade, entertainment industry and mobility of labour, among others. This situation, by extension, empowered the people politically, socially, religiously, culturally and economically in a reciprocal term.

To critique this, however, the Mass Production theory (alone) is not sufficient in underpinning all the phenomena of rice production in Abakaliki. Although there was division of labour in the production of rice in Abakaliki, the labourers in some specialised areas also took employments in other economic activities. For instance, a rice miller could also work as an engine operator or take up a job in bagging rice at the same time. The essence of the theory is for exclusive participation of the workforce in areas most proficient, especially with the use of machines for mass production of goods. In addition, the extent of mass production of rice in Abakaliki had not made the area self-sufficient.

Meanwhile, the relevance of the two theories to this study is obvious due partly to the fact that Abakaliki was an agrarian/ peasant economy and as such an emerging rural capitalist society which a peasant and/or subsistent economic theory could best explain. This is the reason Peasant Farm and Mass Production theories formed the theoretical underpinning of this study.

Literature Review

It is of immense importance to review some of the written sources that are relevant to this work. Although, few written works emphasise rice production in Abakaliki, the review is organised from the view of rice production in the outside world to sub Saharan Africa down to Nigeria and the Abakaliki area in particular.

B. Chandrasekaram, K. Annadurai and E. Somasundaram in the work, *A Textbook of Agronomy* examine the domestication account of rice in China since 2600BC. They corroborate the argument of other scholars like D. O. Condolle, who affirms that rice has been a valued crop in India since Vedic times. This work, however, traces the etymology of rice crop from various languages such as Tamil, Arabia, Spanish, Greek, and others. The

work associates the names of some ancient Kings of India, with a derivation from or association with the word 'rice'. It holds thus; "about the Sixth Century B.C., the King of Nepal, father of Gautama Buddha, was known as Suddhodana which mean Pure Rice."²² This work is more concerned with crop agronomy irrespective of its in-depth study of rice etymology and cultivation. Moreover, the study cuts across South-east Asia and has not taken much time in the study of the West African rice systems. This is a lacuna that ought to be addressed in due course of this discourse.

G. S. Khush in an article titled, "Taxonomy and Origin of Rice" classifies rice into two cultivated species belonging to *gramineae* (grass family). He succinctly infers that "Drawing from Morishima and Oka's allusion, a variation study suggests that *Oryza* species can be divided into three main groups: (1) *Oryza sativa* and its relations (2) *Oryza Officinalis* and its relatives, and (3) Other more distantly related species."²³ It is worthy of note that "other more distantly related species" classified above included the African rice varieties such as *Oryza Glabberima steud* cultivated in the study area for thousands of years before the introduction of the Asian rice. This has left a lacuna in the work for it is not a work that basically studies the African indigenous rice economy.

Similarly, Miller B. McDonald and Lawrence Copeland in *Seed Production: Principles and Practices* produce a hypothesis of rice domestication and cultivation as the most important food crop as early as 3000 B.C. in China. This work hence asserts that "Genetically, rice is a unique crop because of its long period of domestication and wide geographic range. There are three eco-geographic races... Indica, Japonica and Javanica. Rice is clearly one of the world's most important food crops...."²⁴ This work is of immense importance in the study of various seeds production. It discusses extensively the intricacies

in seed cultivation. However, there is a gap existing in the work due to its neglected interest in examining the place of rice in the average economy of the people.

A Textbook of Rice Science published by B. Chandrasekaran, K. Annadurai and R. Kavimani studies rice farming systems and agronomic varieties. The authors took time to examine the various indices in rice production processes, ranging from rice growth, ecosystem, rice crop management, breeding and biotechnology. The methodologies are largely more scientific in approach than historical. It is in the light of this observation and premise that we wish to address the prejudice, and fill the gaps from other existing literature that could provide historical approaches in the study of rice in the economy of Abakaliki.

Bor S. Luh in his work, *Rice: Production and Utilisation*, unravels that rice crops date back to pre-historic period. The literature attempts to assemble the bulk of information on rice production, agronomy and the technology of rice utilisation. This work is a contribution of scholars in the outside world that may not have been acquainted with the trends in rice production in this part of the world (Abakaliki, South-east Nigeria). This is one of the reasons that prompted the present study. Attempts shall be made to address the gaps in the subsequent chapters.

In David Catling's book, *Rice in Deep Water*, it is illustrated that three quarters of West African Deep Water Rice is grown along the Niger River. This work demonstrates the economic importance of the Niger River in rice economy.²⁵ It discusses extensively the deep water rice with little or no interest in other rice agronomy or types in the area. Its channels of discussion create a lacuna and have thus generated interest in examining rice types, varieties and geographic agronomy in chapter three.

All India Rice Exporters Association (AIREA) in the work, “The Origin” reports that rice originated at least 130 million years ago as wild grass. It suggests that the cultivated rice was first grown about 10,000 years ago in Southeast Asia, probably in India.²⁶ The study is based on the perception of various schools of thought on the origin of the crop, which is believed, was buried in obscurity and depth of time. In the Abakaliki area which this work did not capture, we tend to use relevant literature with the help of oral tradition, to assemble facts so as to arrive at an acceptable period of rice domestication or cultivation in the area.

AN Zhimin in “Origin of Chinese Rice Cultivation and Its Spread East” considers the appraisal of the Asian-centred rice planting system with different traditions of origin or hypothesis. These hypotheses include the Assam-Yunnan, East Asian Crescent, and Middle and Lower Yangtze River. The author affirms that from available archaeological evidence and finds, China has the earliest rice site with a rich culture. He further holds that China’s powerful influence on the surrounding areas is well evinced by Korean and Japanese finds.²⁷ However, opinions are divided over the route of the spread to East with more hypotheses involving North, East, and South China. The work discusses the special status of rice agriculture in Asian history by concentrating on the examination of its origin and spread to Northeast Asia. Lacuna exists in this compendium on Chinese rice history due to the lack of interest or direction towards the rice economy in the Abakaliki area of Eastern Nigeria. Until this study deals with the botany, history and growth of rice as well as its etymology in chapter two, it would be able to give a clearer acceptable period and place of rice domestication in Asia and Africa - the Abakaliki type.

Hisao Fukuda, John Dyck and Jim Stout in “Rice Sector Policies in Japan” hold that farmers are compensated for market price decline below a moving average of past prices.²⁸

This article is one of the series that examine Japan's policies that protect and regulate its agricultural markets. The work is divided into sections such as domestic policies on rice, border policies and policy implications in the economy of Japan.

P. Cadoni and F. Angellucci in "Analysis of Incentives and Disincentives for Rice in Nigeria" examine rice production capacity and total hectare cultivated in Nigeria. The work gives an account of the irrigated rice production and practices in Ebonyi State. Statistically, it examines the consumption ratio of rice alongside sorghum, millet, cassava, yam, maize, wheat, plantain, and sweet potato. About five channels of rice marketing system it points out are examined by the authors, with an illustration of its effects or impact on other rice sub-sectors. Further studies on rice policies in the work highlight various policy measures and initiatives in Nigeria such as Presidential Initiative on Increased Rice Production (2001-2007), Nigerian National Rice Development Strategy (2009-2018), and Presidential Transformation Agenda, (2011).²⁹

Ignatius U. Obi in the work, *Maize: Its Agronomy, Diseases, Pests and Food Values* supplies information on the nutritional values and consumption rates of maize and rice in Southern Nigeria. According to him;

In Southern Nigeria, maize has been the principal cultivated cereal until the introduction and expansion of production of rice and has been used primarily as human food ...Abakaliki area was identified to be the highest consumer of maize diets which was estimated at 0.5kilogramme per person per week.³⁰

The above excerpt shows that there is a deviation from maize as a chief food item during the period, as compared to rice in the recent past.

L. C. Uzozie's, "Igbo Agriculture" is a groundwork on the staple crops production among the Igbo sub-cultural zones. While discussing patterns of crops combination, the

author, in the article published in *A Survey of the Igbo Nation*, reports that before the introduction of the Asian rice into Igboland, the staple food crop of the Igala and Igbo people who inhabited the lowland were yams, maize and a variety of local rice called *Ji agwuna* (yam has finished). To compare the place of the above crops as staples in the families, let us read the following lines:

Rice now ranks first and accounts for about 40% of the total cropland, maize claims 25% and yam 22%. Cassava, soya beans and cocoyam are minor crops in the south parts of the region ...Rice hectareage has been on the increase since the establishment of farm settlement. The cost of production is small in relation to the net profit per hectare.³¹

Uzozie's work is a study on the patterns of crop combination in Igbo sub-cultural areas which has not specifically dealt with the rice farming communities of Abakaliki.

A. Nwile in "Responses of Upland Rice to Mitorgen in Forest Agro-System" agrees with Uzozie's position for holding that rice is no longer a luxury food for the people of Igboland. He succinctly states that "the food constitutes the principal sources of calories for rural and urban households with demand growing at an annual rate of 60%".³² Nwile traces other economic uses of rice and illustrates how it has been used for meat-pie, sausage rolls and a variety of recipe for confectionaries.

L. Erica's work *Food Production* examines the usefulness of rice, and states the processes involved in using rice to make beer, wines and other alcoholic beverages. He further notes that the commodity is also used in the cosmetic industries by the extraction of starch.³³ Some of the literature on industrial uses of rice such as confectionaries will provide an apt examination on the uses of rice in the concluding part of chapter five.

F. R. Ivryne in the book *Upland Rice: The Tropical Agriculturist* concedes to the evidence of rice varieties cultivated in Nigeria. The work concludes its findings by stating

that rice processing and practising in Nigeria were based on African indigenous techniques until recent changes in modern technology.³⁴ Other authorities such as Selbut R. Longtau and Cletus Nwakpu disagree with Ivrine's position that only two varieties: 'Upland and Swamp or Irrigated rice' are produced in Nigeria. This gap is appropriately handled in Chapter three of the present research while discussing Rice Systems Agronomy in Abakaliki. Discussion on Deep Water and Lowland Rice gives the reader a broader understanding of agronomic varieties of rice in Abakaliki, Southeast Nigeria.

Selbut R. Longtau in the work, *Multi-Agency Partnerships in West African Agriculture: A Review and Description of Rice Production Systems in Nigeria*, fills the gap created in Ivrine's scholarly work. Longtau represents, in a table, a composition of rice systems agronomy and their geography. He shows that Upland, Lowland, Rain-fed, Deep Water and Irrigated rice is cultivated in Nigeria.³⁵ It is seen in Longtau's analogy that these varieties were grown in most parts of Nigeria in a given proportion. The rice farming communities in Abakaliki are known to have found a few responses to their ecological environment.

On his part, Cletus Nwakpu in his *A Practical Guide to Lowland Rice Production in Nigeria* dwells on the two major rice varieties cultivated in the Abakaliki areas of Nigeria. It as well gives an insight into the socio-economic and policy issues constraining rice production. This fourteen-chapter work shows the statistics of Nigeria self-sufficiency level in rice production and imports from 1961 to 1999. The work does not narrow down some of the socio economic and policy issues to explicate its effects on the Abakaliki rice farming system.³⁶ However, the author also uses scientific methods of analyses in studying rice potentials of the various Nigerian communities. We think it is in the domain of history to

investigate the very nature and implication of the past policy frameworks on rice production in Abakaliki.

Egene Victoria Ochonia in *Rice Production in Kogi East: A Case Study of the Ogbogbo Community in Igala- Mela, Odolu Local Government, 1960- 2000*, unveils the economic potentials of rice production in the Ogbogbo area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The researcher studies the history of rice production and the primary methods in the use of local implements in the area. She further traces the effects of advanced technologies in the rice industry.³⁷ The research, however, fails to trace a specific time or period of the introduction of rice crop in the area which invariably creates a gap in the origin and spread of the crop in Ogbogbo community.

Also, Biyi Daramola draws attention to a global consumption of rice. The author posits that rice is consumed by over 4.8 billion people in 176 countries to become the most important food crop with over 2.89 billion consumers in Asia, over 40 million consumers in Africa and likely 150.3 million in America.³⁸ Daramola studies Nigeria rice supply and why Nigeria rice is uncompetitive. Furthermore, the author presents in a table with illustration, Nigeria's trade policy on rice after the civil war up to 2003. This work concludes with a possible threat to rice production and examines the various (government) presidential initiatives on increased rice production, processing, and export. There is a gap in Daramola's work to be filled in the chapter five of the current study in order to have an apt conclusion about the differences between Nigerian (Abakaliki) rice and Asian (foreign or imported) rice.

I. A. Emodi and M. C. Madukwe in their "A Review of Policies, Acts and Initiatives in Rice Innovation System in Nigeria" succinctly submit that, "Nigeria is currently the

highest rice producer in West Africa, producing an average of 3.2 million tonnes of paddy rice or 2.0 million tonnes of milled rice”. The authors maintain that “It is also the largest consuming nation in the region, with the growing demand amounting to 4.1 million tonnes of rice in 2002, and only about half of the demand met by domestic production.”³⁹ The work lists rice production figures in Nigeria from 1961 to 2006. It also examines the pre-ban period, ban period and post-ban period of rice production as well as some programmes and agencies in the rice innovation system in Nigeria, from 1970 to 2001. This work terminates in the first decade of the 21st century. The current study begins with the study of rice production from the 1940s and covers the experiences in the production across the first decade of the 21st Century, to the beginning of the second decade of the century. The existing gaps in Emodi and Madukwe’s work result from place and time, which shall receive accelerated attention in the study of private and public policies on rice in the Abakaliki area, a smaller unit than Nigeria as a whole.

M. U. Dimelu, I. A. Enwelu, C. P. Attah, and A. I. Emodi, in “Enhancing the Performances of Farmers’ Cooperative in Rice Innovation System in Enugu State, Nigeria” unravels the challenges confronting Rice Farmers’ Cooperative Societies, in Enugu State. The authors enumerate factors responsible for improving the performances of rice farmers’ cooperatives like fund-related issues, institutional factor, training and development, and leadership.⁴⁰

In addition, the work published by Ebonyi State Government titled, “Action Plan and Fund Request submitted to Federal Government of Nigeria for Financial Support from the Special Funds Reserve for Natural Resources Development, July 2011” proposes some approaches that should be undertaken by the government to increase production of rice and

other crops. In a citation, the proposal recommended improved rice farming system. The proposal has stated among other things that

To ensure that targeted farms and farmers are satisfied, farmers must have access to improved quality seed... The seeds required will include FARO52, FARO44 and FARO57 for swamp rice production and NERICA varieties for upland rice production.⁴¹

The project proposal selected locations in Ebonyi State to be developed accordingly. These included Ozara Okangwu Farm Settlement, Ezillo Farm Settlement, Ishieke Farm Settlement, Ndierukwu, Enyibichiri, Amagu Item Ikwo and ABC Farm Ikwo.⁴² This proposal of 2011 may or may not have been executed to have an impact on rice production.

Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in “Rice Transformation Project Proposal” illustrates action plan for rice agenda which was part of the proposal. The document highlights rice production ecology, production patterns, policy issues relating to rice sub-sector, constraints to rice sub-sector development, and strategies for improving on rice production in Nigeria.⁴³ Basic interest in Abakaliki area shall spur studies in the indices of the rice sub-sector growth, so as to fill the gaps left in the foregoing work.

The work, *Draft: Ebonyi State of Nigeria Agriculture Policy*, is a publication of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Ebonyi State). This policy document highlights the benefits, negative impact, challenges and opportunities offered by agricultural development. The government through the ministry stated its readiness to improve on food crops (rice) production to meet global standards. This paper vividly states in clear terms as follows that

Of all the crops grown in Ebonyi State, perhaps none is as important as rice in terms of income generation and poverty alleviation potentials. Government has in recognition of these, taken measures in the past including a major survey in 2003 to find ways to mechanise rice production for all seasons in terms of irrigation, engineering and soil

texture to determine where rice could be grown all year round... Abakaliki Rice Mill Complex built in 1964, which also services farmers from Cross River, Benue and other states within the axis, processes, de-stones, and bags rice, has not received the expected level of assistance...⁴⁴

It is noted, therefore, that at state level rice development policies are weak and sometimes non-existent. Meanwhile, this paper does not convey to the readers some of the public or private policies on rice that affect the rice producing communities in Abakaliki. This gap is believed to be addressed in the subsequent chapters of the present research.

Uchenna Casmir Anyanwu in his work, *The Ezza of Northeastern Igboland, 1905-1979: An Igbo Society in Transition* contends that the British occupation of the Ezza area of Abakaliki led to a change on the one hand which prompted innovations in the people's farming system. On the other hand, the author opines that the influence of the European religion had some far-reaching positive and adverse effects on the society. He holds that the change was not a sole factor in the transition of the society, and that the changes brought about in the political re-organisation of the Abakaliki clans from the 1940s had glaring influences in the economic lives of the people. In his words, Anyanwu leaves some verdict thus:

The introduction of rice cultivation in the late 1940s by the British in Abakaliki division and its consequent spread, however, tended to lessen the number of the Ezza labourers leaving their homes in search of wage labour, especially as rice cultivation did not require continuing access to new and unused lands like yam...⁴⁵

Fortunately, it is appreciated that the work gives an insight into rice economy of the people, it is, however, not sufficient to continue relying on the work as a sufficient resource material in the study of Abakaliki rice economy.

Alphonsus Nweke Alagu in his thesis, *Abakaliki Under Colonial Rule, 1905- 1960*, underscores the origin, migration and settlement patterns of the people, as well as their economic activities in the pre-colonial period. This work is a marriage of Anyanwu's thesis in that both works emphasise the 1940s as a period of the re-organisation of Abakaliki Division which gave a face-lift to the people's economic activities, particularly food crops production. Further insights into the economic policies of the British administration were given, when the author acknowledged the impact of the colonial government on the traditional economy, through the introduction of new crops to replace the traditional ones. He observes in the following lines that

The traditional crops which occupied the attention of the Abakaliki people were yams, cocoyam, water yam, yellow long, a yellow cocoyam species called unanwuna, ground pea and beans. The cultivation of cassava was later development... the cultivation of rice from the 1930s had added a new crop to the agricultural experiences of the people...⁴⁶

From the above, a recap of the revolution in the agricultural activities of the peasant society was re-visited by Alagu. However, his work is not a comprehensive examination of the colonial agricultural policies on (crops) rice production in Abakaliki. This has constituted a gap which this study shall attempt to seal in the study of agricultural policies and rice production in Abakaliki.

Also, Augustus Iruka Nwankwo in *Trade and Trade Routes in the Nineteenth Century Abakaliki* assembles the history of the Abakaliki people's involvement in the nineteenth century mercantilism with the *Aro* through their trade routes. In a given measure, the work is a contribution to knowledge in the marketing systems and exchange determinant/medium among merchants in the period.⁴⁷ Nwankwo discusses, in details, the economic activities of the people, including agriculture, craft, fishery, hunting, without making

mention of rice production. The reason for this could have been that the revolution in the production of Asian rice had not taken place in the nineteenth century, but we think he could have looked into the dispersed African rice types (*Oryza Glabberima*) found in the area much earlier before the period of this research. This is a lacuna which we intend to fill in the study of replacement of the African rice by Asian type (*Oryza sativa*) in the twentieth century.

Delane E. Welsh's "Rice Industry in Abakaliki Area of Eastern Nigeria" is an unpublished PhD Dissertation at the Michigan State University. The author holds that the introduction of the Asian rice in the area was an 'accident'. This is because according to him until the 1940s, the colonial government in Nigeria did not deem it necessary for the local farmers to produce food crops for themselves. Rather, it was a design and result of the food crisis in Europe during the world wars that compelled the European colonialists to encourage the production of food crops. Besides, the author observes that in 1942 rice was introduced in Abakaliki by the government under Hugh Clifford.⁴⁸

Also in his "Rice Marketing in Eastern Nigeria" Welsh traces the development of rice production, marketing and processing in Eastern Nigeria. He corroborates his opinion in his PhD Thesis earlier cited, and added that the Asian rice (*Oryza sativa*) was first introduced from the British Guiana to the Abakaliki area in 1942.⁴⁹ These two works by Welsh mainly deal with the introduction of rice in the area and the marketing system in the cycle of production. No specific policy of the government that might have affected the production of the Asian rice is treated by the author. However, little efforts are put in these works to have a good documented record of the cultivation or domestication of the indigenous African rice (*Oryza Glabberima*) in the area.

Cletus Nwakpu, “Ebonyi State Report of Fadama III Additional Financing Project: A Report Presented by the State (Ebonyi) Fadama Coordinator on Information on Ebonyi State Rice Potential”, accounts for the potentials of Ebonyi State in rice production. The coordinator states that

Ebonyi State is a major rice producing State in Nigeria with nearly 90% of its rural population involved in rice production. About 15per cent of the land area in the state belongs to lowland ecology best suited to the growth and production of lowland rice system...⁵⁰

The work evaluates the irrigation potential for rice farming in such areas as Item-Amagu, Akaeze, Ezillo, Owutu Edda and Ndiarufu, where there were water schemes capable of carrying out rice production if revived. This report is mainly a Fadama III Annual Report on agricultural activities in the area. A little chunk of the report deals with overall potentials in the rice industry of the area. This present work shall address the lacuna in the report.

Nnennaya Ogonnaya in “Economic Analysis of Rice Production” traces the domestication or cultivation of indigenous African rice (*Oryza Glabberima*) to about 3,500 years ago has addressed a number of issues. Ogonnaya holds that the earliest cultivation of the improved rice varieties (*Oryza sativa*) started in about the 1870s, in Nigeria, with the introduction of Upland varieties to the high forest zones in Western Nigeria. She further asserts that active and systematic rice research started in Nigeria, in 1953 with the establishment of the Federal Rice Station at Baddegi, present Niger State.⁵¹ This work agrees with the opinions of some individuals and groups that Nigeria, being the largest producer and consumer of rice in West Africa, produces an average of 3.4 million metric tonnes of paddy rice, equivalent to 1.8 million metric tonnes of milled rice annually. The author relates the tremendous increase in rice consumption to population increase since the 1970s. The decline in production of rice she adds was traced to a gap in production, due to

government policies and disincentives. Other interesting areas highlighted in the research include reasons for competitiveness for Nigerian rice, technology in rice production, strategies for improving rice farming system in Nigeria and major issues on rice production all over the world. The characteristic scientific approach in the discipline constituted gaps and distortion in understanding Ogbonnaya's work. The current research shall address this gap in subsequent chapters.

Blessing Chekwube Ezemba's "Economic Analysis of Rice Production in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State" may have agreed with Ogbonnaya's opinion of high increase in rice consumption and a decline in the production of same in Nigeria. The directions of the above works differ a bit, though related in titles. Ezemba considers rice as an indispensable staple crop. She enumerates factors affecting rice population, importance and uses of rice, and management practices.⁵² However, the two authors conducted their research in scientific method and approach thereby leaving a lacuna in the work that shall be resolved in historical approach.

Susan N. Ali in "Evaluation of Children's Participation in Rice Production in Ohaukwu L.G.A. of Ebonyi State" examines the various implications of children's involvement in rice production. The author divides the 'implications' into three broad categories namely; economic, social and environmental implications.⁵³ This work was not done specifically for Abakaliki, though its submissions may be adopted in the present study to fill exiting gaps in children's involvement in Abakaliki rice production.

Clement Nwankwegu Odom in "Contributions of Agricultural Extension Services to Rice Production in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, analyses the effects of the extension services in the production of rice in the area. The author uses the steps also

pointed out in Madukwe to explain the impact of the contributions of the extension service on rice production.⁵⁴ A gap exists in this work because it does not carry out a study of other institutional structures and multi-agency partnerships in rice production, which also provided extension services to the rice farmers, other than that from Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

Chinwe A. Alazor in “Yam in the Socio-economic and Political Economy of Anam, Anambra West Local Government Area, Anambra State, 1969-2012” underscores the socio-economic status of one of the major staple crops among the Igbo. Yam production in Anam could be compared with the place of rice in Abakaliki area due probably to the findings of the author. In chapter three of the work, the author discusses yam as a factory in Anam community. According to Alazor:

...yam cultivation has so far promoted the wellbeing of the Anam people. Through it, the community has been able to fight abject poverty, as land is made available for the indigenes who desires to farm. The community has been able to provide their collective needs such as building bridges and culverts, schools community halls, minor roads...⁵⁵

In chapter four, the work examines the economic value of yam. This further evaluates the economic potentials of the crop through trading and marketing in the area.

Yam trade in Anam area of Igboland was believed to have empowered the community. The author made references to the areas and destinations of yam from Anam through trade. Similarly, there is a correlation between rice production in Abakaliki and yam in the economy of the Anam people. Despite the fact that both are staple crops, they have been identified as the principal crops in the economy of the people where they are produced. Some gaps still exist in Alazor’s work which shall be handled in the subsequent sections of this study.

Simon Ottenberg's *Farmers and Townspeople in a Changing Nigeria* is a historical and anthropological account of the old Abakaliki Division up to 1960. The author further extended the study to the twenty-first century probably to capture some economic success in Abakaliki as a major rice producing area in Igboland. The study is divided into four sections: pre-British Abakaliki, colonial incursion of the area from the early twentieth century into the 1920s, a history of the area from the 1920s to World War II in the 1940s, and from the post-war period through Nigeria's independence in 1960.⁵⁶ Ottenberg studied the economic foundation of the Abakaliki and neighbouring communities. However, the study is not basically a work on rice production in the area. This has left some lacuna in the work which the present study addresses.

Mike Odugbo Odey in his work, *Food crop production, Hunger, and Rural Poverty in Nigeria's Benue Area, 1920-1992*, employs a mode of production theory to underpin the agricultural history and food potentials of the Benue area of Nigeria. It discusses the context in which food security of the nation is dependent on the area. The author evaluates government policy implications on the Benue which are known to have rarely affected the rural farmers.⁵⁷ This may have informed the author to make the reader believe that hunger and poverty still ravage the people in the rural communities in the Benue Area. This work did not mention rice production, which may have created a gap in the work and shall be addressed subsequently in this study.

Ikechukwu Kingsley Agu in "Agricultural Policies and Rice Production in Abakaliki, Southeast Nigeria, 1940-1986" examines the policy (public and private) initiatives on agriculture, particularly rice production in Abakaliki. The paper is segmented thus: colonial Agricultural policies on rice production and other trade (restriction) policies on rice

production in the area.⁵⁸ The seminar paper dwells majorly on policies that affected agricultural (rice) production. It has not examined the policies and activities in rice production in the Abakaliki area.

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CHAPTER TWO

LAND AND THE PEOPLE OF ABAKALIKI, EARLIEST TIMES UP TO THE 1960s

In this chapter, the study provides an overview of the origin and tradition of Abakaliki and its people. It, however, examines the principal features of the place known as Abakaliki with a view to understanding the area.

Overview of Geographical Description of Abakaliki

The study area encompasses Abakaliki metropolitan town comprising Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo. Thus, in the present study, like in many other contexts, the use of the word Abakaliki as a centre of rice production, and by extension, refers to Abakaliki proper and other neighbouring areas such as Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo.¹ Abakaliki is located in Igboland. It is the administrative capital of Ebonyi State. The towns/ clans surrounding Abakaliki are Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo. Others are Mgbo, Orri including Ntezi, Okpoto and Effium in Ezza area as well as Igbo Asaa.²

The name Abakaliki was a blend and combination of the names of the two villages, Aba and Nkaleke. These villages are located near the present site of Kpiri-kpiri market and Nigeria police barracks. On the other hand, an informant reveals that the name 'Abakaliki' evolved from an interpretation of the whiteman, when he was trying to describe a village head called Ntezi-Aba. Ntezi-Aba is said to be a prominent figure who usually relaxed on a 'back chair' (a locally made relaxation chair) at Nkaleke. Aba, in their local dialect means such a chair which the man Ntezi-Aba, who lived around Nkaleke used. It was in an attempt of the Whiteman to describe him and his location that the names Aba and Nkaleke were blended as Abakaliki.³

Abakaliki is bounded to the North by Benue State, to the South by Afikpo and Ohaozara Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State; to the West by Enugu State and to the East by the Cross River State. It lies between latitudes 7⁰3'N of the Equator and longitude 5⁰4'E of the Greenwich Meridian.⁴

The vegetation of Abakaliki is a rich grassland, characterised by dotted forest along the estuaries of streams and rivers that empty into the Ebonyi River. The land is mostly water-logged with low-land swamp lying plains. During the harsh climate, the Ebonyi River supplies water to the farms. The soil is rich and favours the production of root crops and cereals. Yams, cassava, maize, legumes and rice are cultivated in large quantities here.⁵

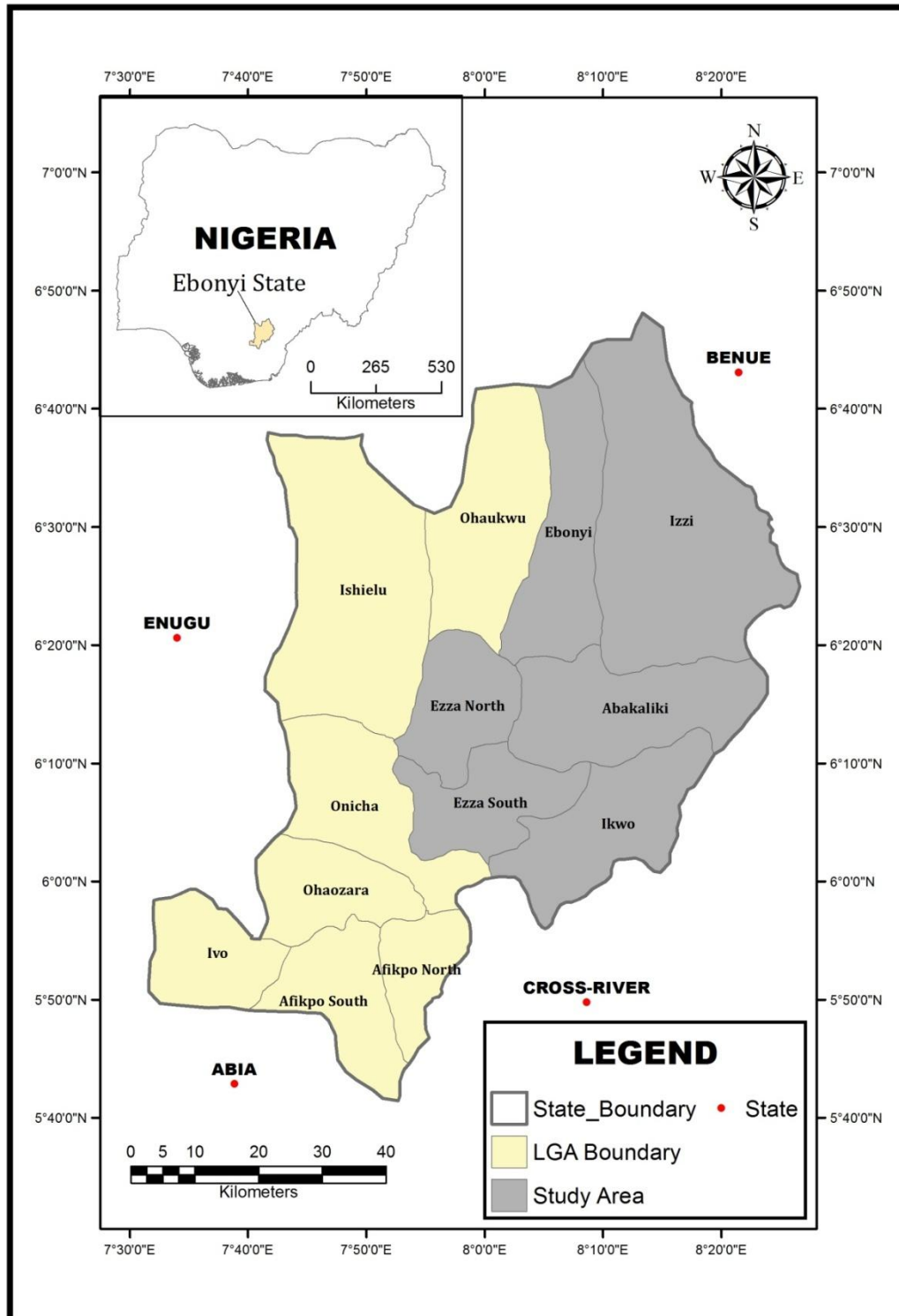
Origin of the Abakaliki People

There are lots of speculations regarding the origin of most preliterate African societies. Many gaps in the origin of the people have been created, reconstructed or addressed in oral testimonies. This has resulted in variations in the accounts of the people's origin from the same historical ancestor. However, as Cornelius C. Agbodike would want us to believe, oral tradition/ evidence could be used in writing a history of the pre-literate African society.⁶ This is not far from the Abakaliki experience. In Abakaliki tradition, three out of the six clans trace their descent from one ancestral origin. They are the Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo who trace their origin to Ekuma Enyi.⁷

Ekuma was believed to be the son of Enyi. An oral account states that Enyi came through a rope from heaven and lived at Amegu. The uncertainty of where Enyi was buried had left doubt among the people in making claims that Enyi was their progenitor. They rather lay claims to the son, Ekuma, who they believe, was buried and his tomb found in Amegu. It was from Amegu that the three clans dispersed to the locations now occupied by

Abakaliki people.⁸ For this, there are three traditions of origin of the people: the Ezza tradition, Izzi version and Ikwo speculation.

Map of Ebonyi State Showing Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo on the Shaded Area



Source: Cartographic work by Ndichie Chinemelu Cosmas, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, October, 2017

Accordingly, the general and popular tradition holds that Ezekuna, Noyo and Nodo, the ancestors of the Ezza, Ikwo and Izzi clans respectively originated from one grand progenitor called Anakiwaha. Anakiwaha was the father of Unaenyi. Unaenyi was the wife of Enyi; and both gave birth to Ekuma Enyi. Enyi, according to oral tradition, was a traveller and hunter, who navigated along Afikpo and the Izekwe area of Ogoja. Ekuma on his part got married to Ugo and had six surviving children. Three of them were males while others females. The eldest among his male children was Ezekuna, followed by Nodo and Noyo the youngest.⁹ Meanwhile, their three sisters were Anyigor, Ugbala and Ekoyo. Ezekuna was said to have travelled far and always returned with human heads. To demonstrate his appreciation of the son's bravery, the father (Ekuma) gave him Ezza, where there were enough palm trees.¹⁰ Nodo returned with yams from the forests and was given Izzi, where there were fertile lands.¹¹ However, the last son, Noyo, was said to have returned with fish, and their father gave him Ikwo, that was close to streams and rivers. Ezekuna married Anyigor. Nodo, the founder of Izzi married Ugbala, while Noyo married Ekoyo.¹²

Another tradition of the people is housed in a version of common ancestry of the three clans from the same father, but not of maternal origin. In this version, Nodo and Noyo associated themselves to have come from the same mother. However, they refuted the claims that Ezekuna (who married Anyigor, their sister) was born of the same woman.¹³ It is not traditional and cultural among the Igbo for such marriage union to exist. However, there seemed to be more close relationship that existed between the Ikwo and the Izzi, although we may not know the exact links between the three clans. Nevertheless, the three brothers lived together at Amana for a long period before their dispersal, which may have aligned with the allocation of lands by their father.¹⁴

Migration and Settlement Patterns

Among the Igbo there appears to be *ipso facto* that they have lost all memory of their migration into the present area. In clear terms, the absence of specialised institutions for the transmission of traditions has made the people to evolve a tradition of migration based on myth. The Nri tradition of origin and migration (Nri mythology) is a close example. According to Adiele Afigbo

The Nri of Northern Igbo evolved an elaborate and highly ritualised priest-kingship around which rich traditions have survived. But even they no longer have a tradition of migration from outside Igboland.¹⁵

This is in consonance with an earlier observation in a book by the same source, where Afigbo is quoted to have asserted that ; “There was one movement southeast into the Aba division to form the Ngwa group of tribes, and another movement east into the Umuahia area and hence to the Ohaffia-Arochukwu ridges, with an off-shoot that struck north to become isolated in the heart of the Eastern plains and to develop into the Northeastern Igbo”.¹⁶ What this pre-supposes is that about this period there could have been some movement and settlement of the Abakaliki people around and within Igboland.

Speculation in Igbo (Abakaliki) origin, migration and settlement patterns have taken three broad theories namely, Oriental hypothesis, Niger/ Benin Confluence theory and the Igbo Homeland hypothesis. The Abakaliki had a lot of Igala - Idoma and Cross River influence. This is evident in the etymology of their names as well as in the study of inter-group relations in Igboland before 1800. The migration from the core areas may have taken many directions southwards, southeast into Ngwaland, into Umuahia area and then to the Ohafia-Arochukwu ridge. According to J. O. Ijoma, “on getting to Arochukwu, the

expansion would appear to have been blunted with a recoil northwards to develop into the Northeastern Igbo of Ehugbo, Ezza, Ikwo and Izzi.”¹⁷

However, an insignificant proportion of the sources have argued that movement to Abakaliki towards the lowland of the Cross River area should have also taken place the same time others were moving towards Ngwaland and westwards across the Niger to find other parts of Igboland. The account holds “...it was an attempt to ascribe Abakaliki people, having come through Ngwaland, Umuahia, Arochukwu down to Afikpo, as a third-class citizens of the Igbo race...[sic]”¹⁸. We may disagree with this since a lot of literature and oral evidence tend to point to the Abakaliki people's migration from the (Aro routes) area.

On the other hand, the settlement patterns of the Abakaliki people were non-nucleated along the various clans' locations and affinity. The relationship that existed among the three brothers continued to tailor their settlement patterns. This relationship may be explained in a citation by Clement O. Mgbada. According to him:

Bordering on the Northern Igbo were the Northeastern Igbo of Abakaliki... the largest group among them were the Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo... The major group would assert that their ancestors had blood marriage ties with, and that they migrated from Item and Arochukwu to the South. But it is possible that they had some connections with the Igbo of Owerri area whose dialects appears [sic] to be related to theirs.¹⁹

Arguments surrounding their settlement patterns are not the focus of this study rather their present place whose contributions to agriculture cannot be over-emphasised.

Although good proportions of the people's lands are water-logged and swampy, they are known to settle on both upland and low-lying plains. Both areas were rich for farming and the swamps remained part of their sources of water. Agriculture, especially farming and fear of forceful acquisition of land by their neighbours, appear to have influenced their

settlement patterns. Most of them dispersed into the cultivable portions and farms to settle. This method of settlement patterns acted as deterrents to forceful acquisition and land encroachment. For example, an informant had told the researcher that the three brothers while at Amegu had the strong urge to conquer new farmlands apart from the areas allocated to them by their father. This territorial acquisition often brought conflict between them and their neighbours and among themselves. The quest to secure fertile farmlands to eke a living made the three major clans of Abakaliki to live in scattered hamlet.²⁰ Each clan tried to occupy its farmlands in the outskirts permanently to avoid trespass or fear of losing such areas to other groups.²¹ Therefore, agriculture influenced their settlement patterns as their land tenure system was fragmented.

Political Organisations of Abakaliki Before the 1930s

The Abakaliki clans were separate entities politically but not socially and economically. The independent clans (villages) had contacts through trade and mutual exchange of products and as well interacted in organised social settings. Social activities went on in tandem with the economic. In fact, they were inter-twined.

The political system of the pre-colonial era was a government of the elders, where the eldest man in the family presided over political as well as spiritual affairs, as head of the family. At the village level, there were councils of elders, who were representatives of various families to perform legislative, executive and judicial functions.²² There were other subsidiary political institutions such as the age-grade, kindred heads, titled men, secret societies, chief priests and others, which assisted the council of elders in administering the affairs of the clan groups.

Like every other Igbo community, the various clans of Abakaliki had no written law or statutory regulations. The norms, values and ethics handed down to them from one generation to another, by their ancestors, formed the people's model, and tenets of behaviour as well as traditional practices.²³ The elders were at the apex of the social ladder. They were the custodians and administrators of the ancestral norms and laws of the land. Drawn from various village/ clan groups, the elders were made up of such groups as *Ogbo Enyirije*, *Ezekuna* and *Ogbo Ibina* in Ezza; *Ogbo Edagu*, *Ogbo Enyirije* and *Ogbo Ibina* in Ikwo; and *Ogbo Uke* in Izzi.²⁴ These groups were holders of the village customs who presided over the government of the various clan groups as well as performed customary rites, including sharing of community lands at village level for farming and residential purposes. It was against their custom to allocate land to persons who had not performed certain traditional rites such as circumcision ceremony and title taking.²⁵

Despite the absence of formal laws regulating activities in the society, there were organised social arms that performed executive, legislative and judicial functions through the council of elders at various kindred/ village groups. The age-grade, titled men, native doctors, and priests also contributed immensely in decision making. The whole community, including women and children constituted a general assembly of the republican society, most importantly on critical matters that needed wider consultations and unanimous decisions. This characterised the government of the people until the British conquest of the area in 1905.²⁶

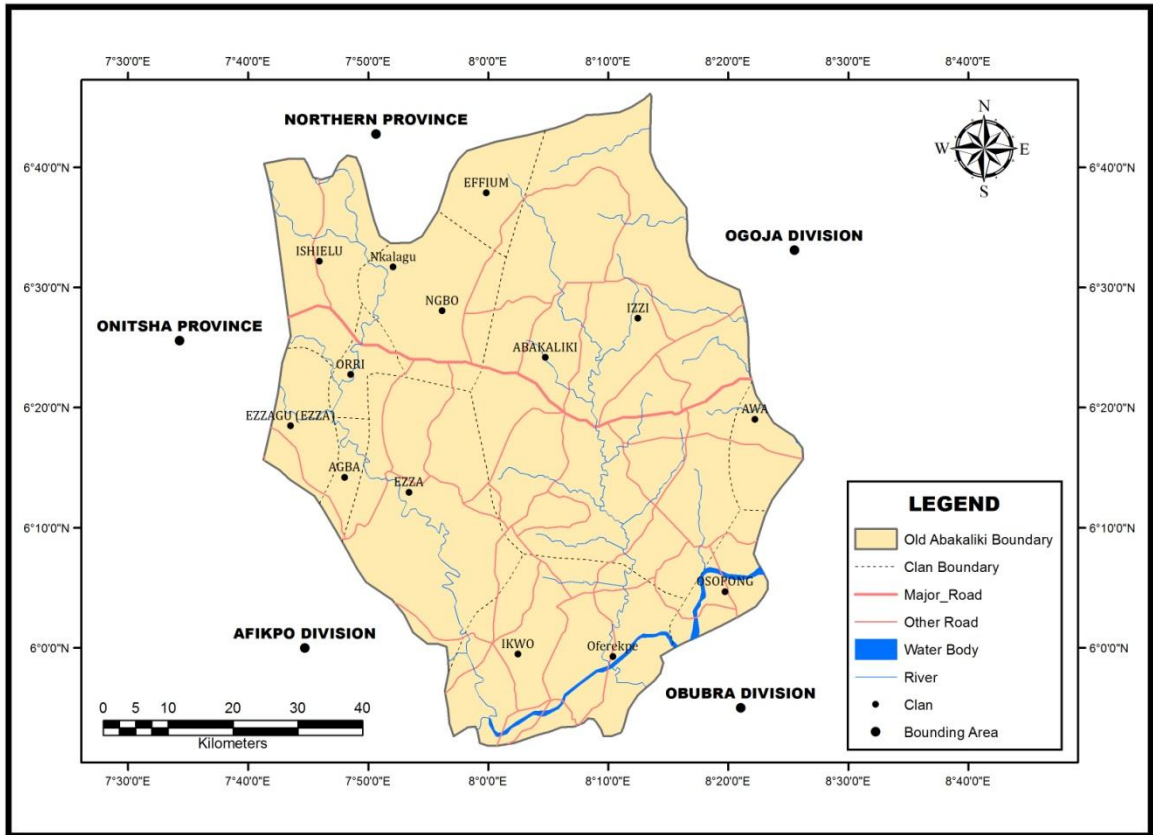
After the British conquest of Abakaliki area in the Ezza Patrol of 1905, formal European colonialism began with the amalgamation of the protectorate of Southern Nigeria with the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. The new arrangement introduced three

administrative units - Western, Central and Eastern Provinces.²⁷ The Abakaliki were incorporated into the Eastern Province. The provincial system was further divided into smaller units in 1917, after the amalgamation of 1914 by Sir Frederick Lugard, the colonial Governor-General of Nigeria. During the exercise, four provinces emerged from the Eastern Province namely, Ogoja, Calabar, Owerri and Onitsha. Abakaliki area fell under the Ogoja Province comprising three divisions - Ogoja, Abakaliki and Obubra Divisions.²⁸ The balkanisation of Igboland into districts, divisions and provinces, in the opinion of Afigbo, “turned out to be an event of revolutionary proportions for the people. For one thing, it was the first time in their history that any area as large as the district, division, or province was being administered as a unit”.²⁹

The British administration in Abakaliki appointed community leaders who became known as warrant chiefs. The attempt was to set up an institution of indirect administration of the area through indigenous personnel. They received special written warrants as rulers who enforced certain laws, organised public works, dispensed justice at minor courts and levied taxes. Some of the mercenaries appointed as ‘chiefs’ during the early period included Okenu Opehu of Umuoghara, Nwafor Aja of Idembia, Effia Alope of Amuzu and Ede Uduma of Ekka in the Ezza clan.³⁰ Also, among the early ‘chiefs’ in the Ezza clan were Nwaliobu Obaji of Umunwagu Ameka and Ugbala Egede of Umuikegwu Ekka. Chief Onwe Itumo of Okpoitumo, Ogwudu Aleke of Etam and Obura Opeke of Ekpelu, were appointed in the Ikwo clan. In Izzi clan, Chief Igboji Ola of Igbegu and Chita Aliede of Anmachi were also appointed between 1910 and 1915.³¹ Before this period, the process of transforming the area into a divisional headquarters had already started immediately after the invasion of 1905. According to Simon Ottenberg, “the few British officers who were with the expedition

chose the present site of Abakaliki Township as their permanent headquarters.”³² The area was discovered to be a place with good water supply and a dominating hill useful as a defensive post.

Map of Abakaliki Division



Source: Cartographic work by Ndichie Chinemelu Cosmas, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, October, 2017

The administrative headquarters at Abakaliki continued to grow. The British administration approved settlement areas for immigrants through an arrangement with the Izzi people for land lease. The colonial officials also attempted to restore peaceful co-existence among the various clans by the delineation of permanent boundaries to prevent constant re-occurrence of inter/ intra community conflict. Two other institutions of the British administration in Abakaliki included the Native Courts Ordinance (established in 1908) and Native Authority Ordinance enacted in 1916. These institutions empowered the warrant chiefs to act as government representatives in the rural areas. Thus, by 1925, Chief Atama Nwiboko Nwobodo was appointed the paramount chief of Abakaliki area.³³ Nwiboko was known to have exercised so much power that he levied double and direct taxation. Consequently, a group of anti-government crusade staged mass protest against him. They were made up of women drawn from the Aro group, Afikpo, Mgbo, Isieke, Agbaja, Nkaleke and Inyimegu, with the image of a deity, chanting war songs and also demanded the restoration of the indigenous tradition and government. They protested for social reformation and return to their customs.³⁴

Political Re-organisation of Abakaliki, 1930s-1960s

After the protest of 1925 which partly culminated in the Aba women resistance against the colonial policy in 1929, the British government in the 1930s undertook to assemble intelligence reports on the indigenous political, economic and social organisations of the Igbo communities, including the Abakaliki area.³⁵ The reports recommended among other things a change of the warrant system. Accordingly, the report stated that

Except in Onitsha and the coastal city states, chieftainship did not exist in the Eastern Provinces. Instead, authority was vested in the councils of the family, village or clan, membership of which may

consist variously of the family heads, the members of certain age grades, the holders of certain titles, the priests of certain cults or men of outstanding wisdom or personality.³⁶

It also revealed that the composition of the family, village and clan councils were generally elastic enough to allow the inclusion of any persons whose proved worth or ability entitled them to respect, and who could contribute to the general advancement of the community regardless of their age or social standing.³⁷ There was hence the ardent need for political re-organisation of the administration, for efficient adaptation of the economic motive of the British colonial government.

Two master-pieces from Sir Donald Cameron, *A Political Memorandum* and *Principles of Native Administration and their Application*, provide insights into the rationale for such re-organisation which is necessary for this study. The kernel of his argument in the above works was that the Native Authority must be constituted according to the people's own wishes. He had advocated, among other things, that

... authority which according to tribal tradition and usage had in the past regulated the affairs of each unit of native society and which the people of today are willing to recognise and obey, ...believing that if the people recognise authority as a "real living force, they themselves will supply the incentives to advancement."³⁸

In other words, he maintained that there must be a complete change of attitude of the colonial government towards the people, if their motive must thrive. Earlier, N. B. Brown had recommended a change of the warrant system of government. According to him,

Every society tries to combine its economic and political theory to produce a political economy which embodies its aims and interests, the working of markets, and personal decisions of powerful individuals and groups of men on matters pertaining to the economy as well as other fields of life. Thus certain economic structures are identified with certain political structures, for example, capitalism with democracy.³⁹

Before the turn of the 1940s, there had occurred an amendment of the ordinances of 1908 and 1916 in the 1930s. Two ordinances were thus designed to be applicable to Abakaliki area, just as it was in other parts of Nigeria. These were the Native Courts and Native Authority Ordinances of 1933. The courts were thus classified into four groups: A, B, C and D, to enable the colonial authority to establish a court for a particular clan.⁴⁰ Ogoja Province, for example, had about 10 courts which increased to 30 at the end of the re-organisation. The Native Authority Ordinance, on the other hand, empowered the Native Authorities to make declarations on native laws and customs. An important feature of and peculiarity with the Abakaliki Native Authority in the 1940s was that it was made up of illiterate councillors. Most of them, including the president of the council, had no western education.⁴¹

In April 1946, the government deemed it expedient to bring together the various native treasuries in the Abakaliki clans into a single treasury, to cap up the Native Authority into a central Native Authority. With the building of the Central Treasury Office and Council Chamber in Abakaliki, indigenous personnel were appointed to represent their clans in the chamber.⁴²

Furthermore, in 1948, the Chief Commissioner for the Eastern Province appointed a committee to handle the review of the system of local government in the area. The committee identified some shortcomings. For instance, it established that the local administration excluded the admission of educated and indigenous people into the council. It also noted that the local government system lacked well equipped staff.⁴³

Following the recommendations, a local government ordinance was enacted on 22nd May, 1950. The 1950 Ordinance introduced, among other things, the inauguration of the

three-tier structure of local government administration: the county or urban council, rural district council and local council.⁴⁴ Selection of members of the new council was hitherto through election as contained in the Local Government Ordinance of 1950. The 1950 local government ordinance recognised corporate bodies and groups institutionalised to inject new ideas and functional efficiency into the system to suit the dynamics of social, economic and political expediency.⁴⁵ In other words, the system was development oriented.

On inauguration of the first elective exercise, the election of officers in the new local council was simultaneously conducted in 1952 by the then Divisional Officer, Mr. G. R. Osborn. The first elected Abakaliki Divisional Council elected Mr. John Nwagu, a drug dispenser in the regional Ministry of Health, as its chairman. He had contested the position against Mr. Egwu Nwankwo, an Aro settler in Izzi.⁴⁶

It is said that the new Abakaliki Divisional Council undertook a significant stride in the development of the area. It embarked on the education of the people on new methods of agriculture, including the application of fertilizers and insecticides. Agriculture, rice cultivation in particular, started to attract wider attention, especially through the first Ogoja Provincial Agricultural Show held at Johnson's Ground, Abakaliki, on the 21st November, 1953.⁴⁷ Some of these re-organisations were successful due to the fact that the British had introduced their monetary system into the local economy. The Native Authority through the instrument of the British currency system was able to establish four primary schools at Ikwo, Ezza, Mgbo and Nkwegu Izzi.⁴⁸ Efforts were also geared towards the introduction of new varieties of crops such as *Oryza sativa* (Asian rice), cocoa, maize and cassava. Access roads to the farms were constructed; for instance, the Effium-Nwophe road.⁴⁹

Another major achievement of the council in the social sector was the move to ban nudity. Following a motion sponsored by Sampson Elom, the council members conceded that the custom was repugnant and obnoxious. By 1954, with the support of the Divisional Officer, Mr. J. D. Livingstone-Booth, a bye-law prohibited nudity in Abakaliki area.⁵⁰

The law-makers also made efforts to improve mass literacy through education levy and capitation rate which sparked off another popular protest by the womenfolk in Abakaliki, between 1953 and 1954.⁵¹ At the time, there was no post-primary institution in Abakaliki district due to civil unrest. Regrettably, efforts of the early councillors to establish one were frustrated by the resistances of the agitating women against the ban on nudity and education levies. As Ottenberg has noted:

....there was ineffectiveness and inefficiency as well as mismanagement of funds, projects and contracts and the council came to be viewed with cynicisms by the local public as organisation where individual could feather their nest...there was also the problem of non-performance and the inability to get the grassroots to feel the impact of the colonial government.⁵²

The Local Government Law No. 25 of 1955 was, therefore, enacted to repeal the Ordinance of 1950.⁵³ It provided for the removal of the District Officers, decentralisation of the Divisional Council to District Council based on clans, and functionality of the three-tier system of local government.⁵⁴ To this end, there arose the need to consult the indigenous people to sustain the 1954 law. When for instance, J. D. Livingstone was transferred from Afikpo to Abakaliki he toured the various clans of Abakaliki, to interact with the people on their traditional political organisation. In his findings, he recommended the division of the area into three council areas - Isielu District Council, Izzi District Council and Ezzikwo District Council.⁵⁵

In 1958, a change in the local government system came with the three-tier system being collapsed into a two-tier. On April 1, 1958, for instance, the 17 county councils in Eastern Nigeria were abolished to create more county councils. This affected the structure of local government in Abakiliki District.⁵⁶ Separate county councils, however, emerged following the arrangement with each formulating independent policies without getting clearance from the central administration at Abakiliki, as was the case during the era of rural district council. This meant that the county councils were given more powers in the 1958 arrangement as compared to the provisions of the 1955 Law.⁵⁷

In 1960, the Eastern Nigeria Government repealed the 1955 law and promulgated a new law called the Local Government Law No. 17 of 1960. It was the 1960 law that rather established and promulgated the 1958 document into a legal notice. It, however, did not repeal the provisions of the 1958 legal instrument. This provision gave the county council more scope to cover areas in the developmental task at the grassroots of Abakiliki clans.⁵⁸ Other necessary areas captured in the 1950s and 1960s laws included provision of social services such as medical and health facilities, public water supply, extermination of vermin, regulations on slaughtering and sale of meat, maintenance of maternity homes and drug dispensaries.⁵⁹

In furtherance of the re-organisation by the colonial officials, for effective administration and development convenience, the Abakiliki communities were coaxed into a nucleated settlement pattern. The people lived in a scattered non-nucleated community, probably to watch over and defend their lands against former owners attempt to re-gain possession.⁶⁰ The government adopted a re-settlement scheme in the late 1950s, for efficient local administration and integration of the various clans which had been at war with one

another in the past. Ikechukwu Kingsley Agu observes that “under the scheme, later called Farm Settlement Scheme, the provincial administration in Abakaliki believed in the effective organisation of the people into farm communities (nucleated) for them to develop both economically and socially.”⁶¹ It was believed that the closer the people were, the more they encouraged each other in the new agricultural innovations, such as community rice plantations.

The first community to benefit from the new arrangement was Abina in Ikwo clan with water reservoir, filter pumps, access roads and bridges as well as culverts, among other incentives that came their way in the late 1950s. The villagers themselves contributed to the development and integration process through voluntary labour and communal efforts. The following are identified as advantages of the re-settlement strategy:⁶²

- a) They had access to clean water.
- b) The farms became accessible through better roads networks, and also convenient for transportation of produce to markets from the farm gates.
- c) They were integrated with their friends and relatives.
- d) Although the village meetings were still not held at regular basis, they easily assembled and planned to manage village affairs.
- e) In the integrated village a farm co-operative society was organised with priorities in production, storage, processing and marketing of rice and other farm produce.
- f) There were community projects or an organisation of community rice project in the cluster areas which led to the building of town halls in Abina and Igwenadoha, for instance.

- g) Crime and social vices reduced because the people lived together and contributed collaborative defense mechanism against attack.

Advantageously, sicknesses, diseases and epidemics were easily handled in the new arrangement than in the previous dispersed settlement pattern. The attempt in coaxing the people from non-nucleated settlement regime to a cluster system was favourable to the Abakaliki people until the outbreak of the civil war in Nigeria in 1967. Further examination of the re-settlement scheme may continue in the discussion of post-colonial economy and policies in chapter four of this work.

Religion and Cultural Ideology

There is a general belief that man is the supreme product of creation that anthropologically evolved as a higher animal or primate. This extra-ordinary privilege he enjoys above other animals places him in close interactions with the Creator than other creatures. Such closer interactions are known to have without doubt yielded or helped produce a culture of cooperative human relationships, and advanced a complex knowledge of arts and creativity.

Religion is man's interactions and relationships with the Creator through the manipulation of the supernatural, nature spirits, deities, divinities, ancestor worship and the worship of other smaller (gods) powers such as the earth goddess, river goddess, tree goddess, mountain spirits and others.

Christian O. Tagbo Ugwu defines religion as faith and a practice involving the relationship between mankind and what is regarded as sacred. Religion generally includes the belief in the supernatural and a code of ethical behaviour that models the tenets of people's way of life and belief system.⁶³ Religious belief directly involves the people's

cultural ideology cutting across value system and norms, which has a bearing on social settings.

The religion of the Abakaliki people could not be separated from culture because all the aspects of their culture had a religious significance. Could this be the reason Ikechukwu Kingsley Agu in a thesis argues, "...they perceive the universe as a three-tier structure: the sky above (Elu Igwe), the solid earth (Ala), and the underworld (Ala muo); all of which is inhabitable..."⁶⁴ It was their (Abakaliki people's) belief that there were supernatural powers at the various areas of habitation. Therefore, every activity therein was sacrosanct and sacred, and carried in a manner that would not offend the invisible living. Desecration of the divine values often attracted punishment and/or appeasement of the gods to cleanse the land.

Sometimes, their religion transcended beyond culture to economic. Land was held sacred because every activity in Abakaliki was carried on it. Land was productive and produced what sustained the people's lives. That was why the people attached great importance to it and deified it as Ali (earth goddess). For its sacred status, land was controlled by the elders who were also chief priests or heads of families.⁶⁵ In the words of G.B.G. Chapman, "all assemblies of Ishiales under the presidency of the oldest sub-clans were the directors of the goddess of the earth and guardians of the land".⁶⁶ The economic activities and culture of the people were all carried out on the land, and virtually all other personal effects for their religion, social system, traditional arts and crafts, were effected on the land.

Advent of Christianity, 1920s-1970s

The Christian missions, however, were known to have put in some efforts to introduce Christianity in Abakaliki district in the opening years of the twentieth century. It

was the Roman Catholic Missionaries that first successfully penetrated in the Abakaliki area in the 1920s, through the old Eke and Ogoja Parishes. An arm of the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) missionaries moved into Abakaliki in 1922, with its nearest headquarters at Eke in Udi Division. The mission opened up six Infant Schools in the separate rural areas of Abakaliki, with one teacher for each school. From the Ogoja Division, another wing of the Catholic missionaries, led by Father J. Howell, arrived in Abakaliki in the same period to baptize condemned criminals in Abakaliki prison.⁶⁷

The visits were frequently repeated in company of African junior civil servants, namely, Mr. Olofi, a prison clerk, Mr. Efiang, a dispenser, Mr. Kojo, a district interpreter, and the chief warder, until the church found a place they erected a shed for worship. The local communities, who were traditional adherents, had initially refused to accept the Christian gospel preached by Father Vincent Davey, when he arrived the area from Eke in 1923.⁶⁸ They insisted that the alien religion would interfere with their traditional practices and customs. Chief Okuta (a warrant chief in Abakaliki area) was said to have refused the proposal to build a Church and School by Fathers James Mellet and Vincent Davey.⁶⁹ However, in the early 1930s, the people started to receive the gospel with good works which resulted in the establishment of St. Patrick's Missionary Society by Msgnr. O. J. Whitney in 1932.⁷⁰

Between 1932 and 1940, the St. Theresa Catholic Mission was established by Msgnr. Whitney and Father Melet. They were the Holy Ghost missionaries who entered the area through the Ogoja Diocese in the 1930s. Between 1937 and 1957, the Catholic missionaries had succeeded in establishing their religion and other humanitarian projects such as a leprosy centre, primary and secondary schools, Mile Four Hospital and Maternity homes in

Abakaliki. The evangelisation continued until 1974, when Abakaliki Diocese was carved out of Ogoja Diocese with the Most Rev. Thomas McGettrick as the first Catholic Bishop of Abakaliki.⁷¹

The Presbyterian Mission also contributed to the evangelisation of the area. These missionaries of the Church of Scotland had entered Abakaliki with the Christian gospel in the 1920s. Here, they established their first Church at the Kpirikpiri with Rev. J. M. McGregor as the first officiating priest.⁷² The Church established a primary school in Ikwo. In 1932, they established another elementary school at Eketube, Enyigba in Izzi, before establishing western schools in other areas. In the early 1960s, the Presbyterian Church established the Norwegian Church Agricultural Project (NORCAP) in Abakaliki.⁷³ The project cut across training and manpower development in many aspects of entrepreneurship, including agriculture. Other missionary enterprises continued to evangelise the area as they arrived to propagate the gospel.

Economy of Abakaliki before the 1940s

Abakaliki, like every other community in Igboland, was an agrarian community. Economic activity in pre-colonial Abakaliki was largely traditional - for subsistence purposes. Economic life of the people mainly centred on farming, livestock keeping, art and crafts, palm wine tapping, hunting and fishing, as well as wage labour. Some of the people engaged in trade on edible items like tree crops (palm oil) and vegetables, while a good number survived on traditional medicine practices.⁷⁴

Farming involved clearing, hoeing, planting, tending, harvesting and storing. These activities wholly depended on the use of traditional methods and implements such as knives, machetes, digging sticks and hoes. The basis of labour supply was the family comprising the

man, his wife or wives, and children, even dependants as the case may be.⁷⁵ Labour was not paid for as large-scale farmers supplemented the unit labour with the services of his friends, domestic slaves, lineage groups and age mates. People, who sought greener pastures, migrated to other Igbo communities for wage labour supply, especially after the introduction of the European currency, to enable them fend for their families and to borrow ideas in modern farming system. This innovation assisted the migrant wage-labourers who came back home to develop modern rice fields during the introduction of the Asian rice in the 1940s.⁷⁶

Apart from farming, rearing of domestic animal was a passion among the people of Abakaliki. D. Forde and G. I. Jones once pointed out that “the Ezza and North Afikpo groups...bred dwarf cattle for export to neighbouring areas of Igboland”.⁷⁷ Cows were herded by the youth and the women in some areas like Umuezenyi, Igbegu in Izzi. These locally bred cows were herded in commercial quantities by the neighbouring Igbo communities for funeral rites and ceremonies.⁷⁸ According to J. G. C. Allen, “almost every man (Abakaliki man) possesses at least one sheep and goat, and very many cows”.⁷⁹ An assessment by J. W. Wallace concludes that livestock in Abakaliki was much greater than anywhere else in the Eastern Provinces. Furthermore, in the 1940s, Wallace described the Ezza, Ikwo and Izzi as the best farmers in Abakaliki.⁸⁰ This assertion agrees with the classification of the people as among the Igbo that were pervasive in agriculture.

In the area of crafts and traditional industries, the enterprise attracted traders to salt, mat, basket, textiles, palm wine and bush meat within and outside Abakaliki. The Abakaliki people produced salt both for domestic and commercial consumptions. They were also known for mat-making which was an exclusive craft for the womenfolk especially in the

nineteenth century.⁸¹ Mat was used in the ceiling of houses, sleeping material and spreading of items like crops to dry before storage. Mat-making was an important source of income to the weavers and the traders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸²

Similarly, basket-making and wood-work were among the most widespread industrial activities in Abakaliki. There were sufficient raw materials for its production. Wood-work was mainly for the men just as textile production (weaving) was exclusively women activity. Carvers produced mortar, pestles and household wares. Activities in oil palm production and palm wine tapping became source of raw materials for basket making.⁸³ Every part of palm tree was useful to the people including the palm-frond which was also used as firewood. Oil palm, itself, constituted one of the largest trading items in the area.⁸⁴

Women in some parts of the area were reputed for spinning of cotton into thread. Adiele E. Afigbo observes that the Igbo-Ukwu excavation has revealed that the textile industry is a long established one among the Igbo, stretching back to a period beyond the ninth century A. D. His opinion could be understood to mean that the Igbo (Abakaliki) made cloth from certain materials, even before they learnt to use cotton.⁸⁵ Uchenna C. Anyanwu may have agreed with Afigbo when he traced the early stage of cloth production to the use of the fibrous bark of certain trees. He submits that *Aji* was the earliest form of textile in use. *Aji*, he concludes, was made from the inner bark of the branch of the tree (*Aji* plant) and was also worn as a belt.⁸⁶ There is strong evidence that the people made garments for themselves through indigenous materials such as fibre and cotton.

Tapping and brewing of palm-wine were practised among the Ezeke-Ikwo, Nsokkara Ezza and Ishieke-Izzi of Abakaliki clans.⁸⁷ The people were patronised from within and

beyond Abakaliki. Hunting, on the other hand, went side by side with palm wine tapping. Palm-wine tappers could sight wild animals such as monkeys, grass-cutters, antelopes, hares and other bush animals, from the top of palm trees. They could, however, use locally made snares and spears to trap the animal. There were also specialised day and night hunters. Hunting provided the people with meat for subsistence purposes.⁸⁸ They also exchanged the meat in the market for other needs in the family, especially before the spread of the European currency notes.

Nevertheless, trade in the period involved movement of goods and services within and beyond Abakaliki.⁸⁹ Traders (local people) and the Aro distant traders exchanged goods and services along the area to meet domestic needs. Transactions took place in exchange of products as well as labour services.⁹⁰ Some commodities, for certain reasons, were exchanged according to the local market days which were often rotational. This continued until the development of a modern market economy and new trading system through the cash economy.⁹¹ Readers may refer to colonial and post colonial economy in subsequent chapters for further discourse.

Notes

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CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION AND GROWTH OF RICE IN ABAKALIKI, 1940-2000s

This chapter examines the coming of rice in Abakaliki. It also examines the stages in the growth of rice production in the area.

Genesis of Rice Production in Abakaliki

In some Igbo communities, rice is called *Osikapa*, in Hausa, it is called *Shinkafa* and *Iresi* in Yoruba language. The Abakaliki people call it *Ereshi*. *Ereshi* could have its etymology in the word 'rice'. The origin, domestication, development of production, marketing and processing of rice in Abakaliki provide useful examples of new revolution in the agricultural industry. Historical as well as archaeological evidence and speculations have shown that the origin and spread of rice are buried in obscurity.¹

There were two cultivated species of the genus, of which *Oryza sativa* was of Asian and *Oryza glaberrima*, African origins.² The argument about the exact place of the Asian species cultivated in Abakaliki has attracted wider interests among scholars in various disciplines. A study of the origin and spread of the crop is approached continentally across the wider world, up to Nigeria, particularly Abakaliki area. An analysis of the theories of origin of Asian rice on the African continent further attempts to reconstruct the actual period and place of origin of the crop.

Asian Origin of Rice

China appears to have recorded the oldest rice culture in Asia. This is because Chinese culture has an agricultural way of life centred on rice. According to Zhang Deci, a source in rice cultivation states that

rice first grew when people, who had lived mainly on hunting, fishing, and fruit collecting, happened to leave some seeds in low-lying areas. Later these people began developing the land... Weeding, rice transplanting and irrigating all originated in the Yellow River Valley region in the north and Honshu Basin region in the northeast.³

For archaeologists in the East or Southeast Asia, it appears that rice agriculture began in South-central China, somewhere along the Yangtze River and spread southwards and to the northeast towards Korea and Japan.⁴ A recent evidence further reveals that the Asian type of rice, both the Indica and Japonica races (belonging to India and China respectively) came from a single domestication account which occurred between 8,200 and 13,500 years ago in the Pearl River Valley region of China.⁵ Extensive archaeological evidence in the Middle Yangtze and Upper Huai Rivers recorded rice cultivation dating at least 8,000 years ago. There is an assumption that the first rice cultivars appeared along the Middle Lower Yangtze Valleys.⁶ Meanwhile, at about 5,000 B.C., domesticated Japonica type of the crop was found throughout the Yangtze Valley, including a large amount of rice kernel in some archaeological sites in China.⁷

From the foregoing, it may be argued that China has the oldest rice domestication account in the world. In the third millennium B.C., for instance, there was a rapid expansion of rice cultivation into the mainland, Southeast Asia and westwards across India and Nepal.⁸ In 2003, Korean archaeologists claimed to have discovered the world's oldest domesticated rice. They accepted the view that rice cultivation originated in China about 12,000 years ago. However, their findings were received by researchers with some doubts if their results were not influenced by a combination of nationalism and regional interests.⁹

Also, in 2011, a combined team of researchers from Stanford University, New York University, Washington University and Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana (all in

the USA) provided one of the most striking evidence that unravelled a single origin of domesticated rice in the Yangtze valley in China.¹⁰ The result of their research has shown that the earliest remains of rice in the Indian sub-continent were found in the *Indo-Gangetic* plain. This finding dates from 7,000 - 6,000 B.C., though the widely accepted date for rice cultivation in the region fell between 3,000 and 2,500.¹¹

Also, a school of thought argues that rice may have originated in Southern India and then spread to the north of the country. The school speculates the spread of the crop from India to China, and then onward to Korea and the Philippines in about 2000 B.C., Japan and Indonesia about 1000 B.C.¹² Members of the school demonstrated optimism that the Persians were known to have been the importers of rice grain, from where it spread to Mesopotamia and Turkestan. It is, therefore, presumed that the school of thought may have believed that when Alexander the Great invaded India in 327 B.C., one of the prized possessions he took back home was rice.¹³ Furthermore, the school claimed that the Arab travellers from Mesopotamia took the crop to Egypt, Morocco and Spain.¹⁴ The Portuguese and Hollanders were also believed to have taken it to their colonies in West Africa, whereas it entered America through the 'Columbian Exchange' of natural resources.¹⁵

Chandrasekaran, Annadurai and Somasundaran have further pointed out that rice was domesticated in China from 2,600 BC. However, they demonstrate that rice has been a valued crop in India since the *Vedic times*. They associated names of some ancient kings of India with rice. For instance, in the 6th century, the king of Nepal was popularly known as Suddhodana, meaning 'Pure Rice'.¹⁶

The theory postulating that cultivated rice originated in Assam and Yunnan, Northeast Indian States, is mainly agricultural than historical. Agricultural scientists have

concluded that Assam and Yunnan were centres of rice mutation in favour of the Yangtze Basin for the origin of rice cultivation.¹⁷ A supporting account reported in India speculates that rice moved north to the Yellow River Basin in central China beginning from 3000-2000B.C.¹⁸ A work in Taiwan and Vietnam recorded one of the earliest rice finds, the same period between 2,500 and 2,000 B.C., in the south of the Yangtze River.¹⁹ This account also produces evidence of rice consumption in the period 7,000-5,000 B.C. In fact, archaeological studies have not shown whether this dispersal primarily consisted of a transfer of cultivation technology or whether the domesticated varieties travelled with the technologies in the period.

From the foregoing, it is possible to establish that China had the earliest documented history of rice domestication than India. For instance, as early as the Chinese Han Dynasty, approximately 100A.D., there had been traces of two different types of rice called *Hsien* and *Keng*.²⁰ They were likely to correspond with the two notable rice species in India and China - *Indica* and *Japonica*. It is hence accepted by some scholars and scientists that the movement of rice crops from China to western India and Sri-Lanka was accomplished as early as 100B.C.²¹ The crop may have also entered Europe through Greece and the neighbouring areas of the Mediterranean on account of the returning members of the Alexander the Great expedition to India.

European Origin of Rice

The origin of rice in Europe is historically anchored on its spread from Asia to Macedonia and Thrace in Greece. Based upon this account, large deposits of rice from the first century A.D., were found in Roman camps in Germany.²² It is, however, believed that the Moors (settlers) brought Asiatic rice to the Iberian Peninsula in the tenth century.²³ An

evidence also indicates that the Muslim settlers brought the crop to Sicily in the thirteenth century A.D. (1468-1475), where its cultivation was encouraged by Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan.²⁴

In the turn of the sixteenth century A.D., rice was found dispersed and spread across Italy and France. In Russia, a short grain similar to the Italian variety was found in the same period (16th century).²⁵ Speculations have it that it could have been the Ottomans that introduced the crop to the Balkans during the flourish of the Ottoman Empire. The introduction of the crop into this part of the Mediterranean could further be traced to the merchant vessels that sailed from the southern waters. With the ability of rice to adapt in deep water, the dispersed grains settled themselves in parts of northern Italy and Spain.²⁶

In Venice, a deliberation of the *Council of Ten*, in July 1533, exempted rice from (excise) tax because it took the place of vegetables in their diet. The provincial writer, Quiqueran de Beaujeu, in 1551, documented rice culture in the province. He said: “one can’t help but notice that rice was being eaten in Europe before the development of *rizi* culture on the Lombardian plains....”²⁷ Rice is synonymous with the Italian cookery in form of *risotto*, which is produced from the short grain variety. *Risotto* shares many similarities with the Spanish dish of Paella, which claims Valencia as its standard consumers.²⁸ This common bond indicates links between two sets of people of diverse kingdoms that often fought for power in the region between fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

American Origin of Rice

Rice in America may have had its way through the colonists. American archaeologists have, in search of this possibility, uncovered the first documented decree on rice planting as enacted by a Chinese Emperor about 2,800 B.C. This result attests that from

China to ancient Greece, Persia to the Nile Delta, rice migrated across the continents and eventually found its way to the western hemisphere.²⁹ It is most likely that rice as a crop may have entered America first through Africa. An account known as ‘Black Rice’ is an exceptionally argued historical investigation into the relationships between the eighteenth century trans-Atlantic slave trade and the rice-based boom economy in the Carolinas between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁰ This is, of course, recent. A similar, but earlier, account testifies that rice cultivation began in America accidentally, when in 1685, a storm-battered ship sailing from Madagascar limped into Charles Town Harbour. To appreciate the gestures of the colonists for the repairs, the captain gave the local planters rice plants.³¹ The two foregoing accounts could be apt in considering the introduction of rice into America from Africa.

African Origin of Rice

The first historical account of the introduction of Asian rice into Africa appears to be referred to as the expedition of Alexander the Great already mentioned in this study. He introduced *Oryza sativa* in Egypt after his invasion of India.³² The rice specie introduced by Alexander the Great could be that of the *Indica* race because China had earlier recorded the domestication of *Japonica* species in Africa. According to Porteres, rice cultivation began in Africa in 639B.C.³³ An earlier account reported by Strabo, the Greek historian and philosopher, shows the growing of *Oryza sativa* in Cyrenica, Libya in about twelveth C.E.³⁴ Madagascar, however, may have encountered Asian rice much earlier than other parts of Africa, when the first settlers from the Far-East arrived the Tuliar region at about 3,000B.C.³⁵ The second and the third major migration accounts took place in Madagascar

and Libya from Indonesia and South India between tenth and twelfth centuries.³⁶ These areas of Africa may have obtained rice varieties in the course of migration.

On the West African coast, there was a caravan route that linked North and West Africa along Cyrenica.³⁷ An account also shows that rice was cultivated in the Fezzan (Libya) by the Garamantes. The Garamantes were farmers and merchants who developed advanced civilisation in Southwestern Libya. They traded on wheat, salt, grapes and slaves in exchange for imported food items (probably rice) and olive oil, across the Sahara.³⁸ They were to Southwestern Libya what the Aro traders were to the Southeastern Nigeria.

Moreover, another account of the introduction of Asian rice to West Africa was reported in the writings of Leo Africanus, who travelled through the regions of Africa in the 1560s. He reported the practice of sowing rice on the waters in the area of present day Sokoto in Northwestern Nigeria.³⁹ However, the Portuguese sailors, *arroz*, were reportedly responsible for bringing the Asian crop to the coast and Central Africa in the mid-fifteenth century.⁴⁰ It is, therefore, assumed that the explorers and colonialists contributed to the introduction and spread of the crop in most parts of West Africa, including Nigeria.

Origin of Rice in Abakaliki, Nigeria, 1940s-1970s

The coming of rice into Abakaliki is not entirely distinct from its origin in every other part of Nigeria. However, a specific account of the introduction and spread of the crop is peculiar to Abakaliki. An account states that the history of rice cultivation (*Oryza sativa*) was assigned to the spread of Asian rice in the 1850s at Abeokuta through the missionary activities.⁴¹ With the coming of the Europeans, commercial and profit-oriented economy was introduced in Nigeria. Further researches discover that the introduction of rice crop into Abakaliki was an accident rather than a planned adventure.⁴² The findings state that it was in

the 1940s that the European colonialists in Nigeria were obliged by famine to encourage the production of food crops. They were compelled by the food crisis in Europe to introduce in West Africa varieties of staple crops during the first and second world wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945 respectively).⁴³ Precisely in 1942, *Oryza sativa* was introduced from the British Guiana to Echara Ikwo, Abakaliki area of Southeast, Nigeria.⁴⁴ It is believed that the crop diffused into other parts of Southeast Nigeria from the Abakaliki areas.

Studies have, however, shown that before the introduction of the Asian brand, there had been indigenous specie of Abakaliki rice with peculiar traditional system of production. Although there was no formal cultivation or domestication of the African specie, the crops were picked and harvested as dispersed wild grass in the region. Following the wave of migration, the traditional practices in the production of (indigenous) *Oryza glaberrima* gradually changed to modern applications, methods and ecological environment.⁴⁵ After several years of test-sampling and evaluation of the Asian varieties, its cultivation as economic crop by small-holder farmers began to expand in the area. By 1948, the volume of production exceeded the capacity of hand-hulling (traditional) methods which led to the introduction of small milling machines by the British colonial government in Abakaliki.⁴⁶ In the second half of the 1950s, ownership of the machines was transferred to private entrepreneurs, whereas more new machines were installed.⁴⁷ For instance, rice production in Abakaliki was popularised by the Rice Production Campaign led by Mr. John Paterson, a colonial official, in 1945, following the transfer of rice milling plant from Baddeggi (now in Niger State), in 1943.⁴⁸ This could be the reason why some sources have referred to 1943 as the year Asian rice was introduced in the Abakaliki area. Incidentally, public and private

investors continued to make policies and initiated improvement programmes that further established the production of rice in Abakaliki.⁴⁹

However, information by Cletus Nwakpu is known to be at variance with the two dates, 1942 and 1943. He holds that rice (Asian rice) had been cultivated much earlier in the area as far back as 1933.⁵⁰ Again, this is in contrast with another account which reports that the cultivation of Asian rice began more recently in Adani, a part of Enugu State, that is also notable for rice production. This source associates rice production with the post-civil war hunger in Nigeria of the 1970s.⁵¹ Corroborating this evidence as it relates to hunger in the period, an elder from Iga community in Adani, maintains that “the government is the fire that burns the house and drives the owner away”.⁵² By the elder’s allusion, fire is hunger. In the opinion of Christian C. Opata, hunger drove the urban population and farmers in Onitsha and other parts of Igboland to switch over from yam cultivation to rice between 1962 and 1967. He believes that tenant rice farmers, after the war, migrated to places such as Abakaliki that offered better opportunities for rice farming. The aftermath of the war and the prompt need to survive war famine were probably responsible for the people’s intervention with fast-yielding Asian species of the crop.⁵³ Similarly, a rice farmer in Adani, Ikechukwu Peter, in an account, asserts that rice farming in Adani is associated with the early settlers who migrated to the area before the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970.⁵⁴ It is, therefore, possible that hunger during and after the war contributed to the growth of rice production in Abakaliki, especially with the influx of migrant tenant rice farmers from neighbouring towns and communities.

Rice Types, Varieties and Agronomy

Following scientific research and argument among crop scientists with bias for rice production, various species and their growing environment were identified. The very rice types and varieties cultivated in Abakaliki constituted a challenge in understanding the specific classification of the cultivars from their diverse origins. Field studies and interviews assisted in demonstrating that the two types of Indian and Chinese origins, as well as those of Asian and African descents were cross-bred to produce the types or varieties cultivated in Abakaliki.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, other researchers and scientists at the various rice research and development institutes have been developing new species of the crop. No doubt, it is expedient to examine rice classifications, varieties and ecological environment with a view to finding those suitable for Abakaliki area.

Rice Types

Rice belongs to the genus *Oryza* of the grass (gramineae) family. *Oryza* genus has 24 species, of which 22 were classified as wild grass and the remaining two namely, *Oryza sativa* and *Oryza glaberrima*, were cultivated and found in Asia and Africa respectively.⁵⁶ All the types now found in Asia, Africa, America and Europe were traced to either of *Indica* or *Japonica* origin. The African indigenous type was reported to have found it difficult to resist a disease called African Rice Gall Midge.⁵⁷ This resulted in further scientific discovery of cross-breeding the two types to resist attack by the New Rice for Africa (NERICA) and African Rice Centre, otherwise known as the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA).⁵⁸

Rice Varieties

Rice was grown in paddies (nurseries) or upland fields, depending on the composite requirements of a particular variety. New varieties were as well produced and disseminated by research institutes or rather imported from Asia.⁵⁹ The spread of these strains was determined by their perceived success. Farmers multiplied seeds when they discovered a particular variety doing well in someone else's field, or where the variety was more appreciated in the market. However, the varieties of rice introduced by the colonial governments and missionaries diffused into Abakaliki. These rice varieties culminated from the Federal Agriculture Research Oryza 1 (FARO 1), introduced between 1942 and 1955, with 135-175 days duration; to FARO 44 and 51(*Cisadane*) with a faster maturity period, introduced and developed between 1992 and 1998 by the National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI).⁶⁰ Research institutions have continued to develop new species suitable for Abakaliki area over time.

Also, other varieties were developed during private and public programmes on rice production. They included FARO 52 medium maturing (lowland variety) for 120-135 days, FARO 57 (lowland rice), among others, with 110-130 days medium maturity period. NERICA 19, 34 and 49 (new lowland varieties), from Africa Rice Centre, WAB 189-B-B-8-HB (upland variety) as well as NERICA 7 and 8 varieties were products of later scientific rice mutation in African Rice Institute with 90-110 days' maturity period.⁶¹ These varieties were further re-named locally by farmers such as *Sipi*, *Mas*, *Gasua*, *R8*, *Chinyelugo*, among other names. It is remarkable that some institutional structures and agencies in rice production assisted the NCRI and Africa Rice Centre in providing breeder seeds for rice

project. The table below shows the data for rice varieties, adaptation and its ecological environment:

Table I

Variety	Ecology	Year of Introduction	Growth Duration	Grain Type	Reaction to Blast
FARO 1	SS	1942-1955	135-174	B	S
FARO 2	SS	1956-1958	135-176	B	S
FARO 3	Upland	1958	95-120	B	S
FARO 4	DS	1959	189-220	B	MR
FARO 5	SS	1960	135-154	B	S
FARO 6	DS	1961	176-198	B	MR
FARO 7	SS	1962	160-217	A	MR
FARO 8	SS	1963	155-60	A	S
FARO 9	SS	1963	189-220	A	S
FARO 10	SS	1963	115-145	A	MR
FARO 11	Upland	1966	115-120	B	R
FARO 12	SS	1969	145-155	B	MR
FARO 13	SS	1970	135-140	B	S
FARO 14	DS	1971	170-198	B	MR
FARO 15	SS	1974	145-160	B	MR
FARO 16	SS	1974	140-160	B	MR
FARO 17	SS	1974	145-160	B	MR
FARO 18	SS	1974	167-179	B	R
FARO 19	SS	1974	135-140	B	MR
FARO 20	SS	1974	125-130	B	MR
FARO 21	SS	1974	90-110	C	R
FARO 22	IS& SS	1974	145-150	B	MR
FARO 23	IS& SS	1974	145-150	B	MR
FARO 24	IS& SS	1974	135-145	A	S
FARO 25	Upland	1976	115-120	B	MR
FARO 26	IS& SS	1982	130-135	B	MR
FARO 27	IS& SS	1982	110-115	A	MR
FARO 28	IS& SS	1984	135-140	A	MR
FARO 29	IS& SS	1986	125-135	B	S
FARO 30	IS	1986	110-115	B	R
FARO 31	IS	1986	110-115	B	R
FARO 32	IS	1986	110-115	B	R
FARO 33	IS	1986	110-115	A	MR
FARO 34	IS&SS	1986	105-115	B	MR
FARO 35	IS	1986	105-115	B	R
FARO 36	IS	1986	120-135	B	R
FARO 37	IS	1986	120-135	A	R
FARO 38	Upland	1986	125-140	C	R

FARO 39	Upland	1986	100-105	C	R
FARO 40	Upland	1986	100-105	B	R
FARO 41	Upland	1986	115-120	B	R
FARO 42	Upland	1986	115-120	B	R
FARO 43	Upland	1986	115-120	B	R
FARO 44	IS	1992	100-105	A	R
FARO 45	Upland	1992	90-100	B	R
FARO 46	Upland	1992	100-105	B	R
FARO 47	Upland	1992	110-115	A	R
FARO 48	Upland	1992	110-115	B	R
FARO 49	Upland	1992	115-120	B	R
FARO 50	SS	1992	130-135	B	R
FARO 51	IS&SS	1998	145-150	B	MR

Keys: **SS** =Shallow Water **A** = Long grain type **MR**= Moderately Resistant **DS**=Deep Swamp **B** = Medium grain type **R**= Resistant **IS**= Irrigated Swamp **C**= Short grain type **S** = Susceptible

Source: Selbut R. Longtau, *Multi- Agency Partnership in West African Agriculture: A Review and Description of Rice Production Systems in Nigeria* (WIS Partners: 5 Lugard Road Jos, 2



Plate 3: Unparboiled paddy



Plate 4: Parboiled paddy



Plate 5: Faro Variety

Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author



Plate 6: Nerica Variety

Rice Systems Agronomy

Much of the natural vegetation had been altered or even destroyed by human interferences which called for the adoption of agro-climatic classifications. Therefore, the differences in soil-water regime reflected either the topographic position of the land or the distance from soil seepage. There were four major rice growing environments found in the Abakaliki area. They included Irrigated Lowland, Rain-fed Lowland, Rain-fed Upland and Deep Inland Water rice.⁶²

The establishment of the River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) in the 1980s, however, boosted rice schemes and irrigated lowland rice production. Irrigation refers to the artificial application of water to the soil for the purpose of supplying moisture essential for growth.⁶³ Irrigation was supplied from rivers, dams, wells, boreholes, wash bores and other sources to supplement rainfall for the cultivation of rice. This system accounted for about 18 per cent of cultivated rice land in the region.⁶⁴ An estimated 25 per cent of rice cultivated in this area of study was rain-fed lowland system. This ecology contributed up to 45 per cent of the region's rice production.⁶⁵ Two sub-types were found for lowland ecologies: shallow water and deep water rice. In Abakaliki area, excessive flooding and lack of water control structures were the bane of lowland (swamp) rice production.⁶⁶

Rain-fed upland rice was found in most ecological areas of Southeast, Nigeria. As the name implies, the crops depended entirely on rainfall. Heavy rainfall led to soil erosion, leaching of plant nutrients and possible flooding.⁶⁷ As a result, in some cases, rice was inter-cropped with cocoyam and sorghum to reduce soil erosion.

Deep inland water rice was a floating rice system. Usually before the rain sets in, the land is prepared and planted by direct seeding; and transplanted at the fourth week before the river banks begin to overflow. E. D. Imolehin and A. C. Wada hold that it constituted 5 to 12 per cent of national rice production area and 10 to 14 per cent of the national rice output.⁶⁸ For the rain-fed lowland and upland systems, the potentials remained untapped in Abakaliki.

The irrigated lowland rice project begged for assistance from the state government for refusal to pay counterpart fund in repairing irrigation infrastructures across Abakaliki.⁶⁹ Consequently, rice farmers were able to grow only a rain-fed crop due to the collapse of the following irrigation facilities: Ezillo, Ezzamgbo, Nduerukwu, Item Ikwo, NORCAP, ABC Farms and Owutu irrigation projects as well as the Onueke water reservoir, all in the Abakaliki area.⁷⁰ In addition, the perennial flooding of the rain-fed upland and lowland rice yield in Ikwo and Ezza due to the intermittent release of water from the Cross River and nearby dams posed another challenge to rice production.⁷¹

Growth of Rice Production, Processing and Marketing in Abakaliki, 1940s-1960s

Here, we intend to examine the stages in the growth of rice production. This may not be achieved without highlighting the activities of the paddy rice farmers and stranger/ tenant rice farmers. In Abakaliki area, accounting for the two-thirds of rice production in the Southeastern region of Nigeria, the 'native' farmers, who lived in the village where they were born, were typically peasants or formerly subsistence farmers, and they constituted nearly all rice farmers.⁷² A second group of tenant farmers, who migrated from more densely populated areas of Igboland, not only produced rice but also usually engaged in paddy trading and processing. Paddy meant half-way before final processing or production.

Paddy rice seeds were planted in nurseries and the seedlings further transplanted into the swamps. Nurseries were planted before the wet-season and harvested at the start of the dry season.⁷³ Paddy rice farmers or migrant tenant rice farmers/ traders were the ‘innovators’ and early adopters largely responsible for the development, growth and expansion of rice cultivation in Abakaliki.⁷⁴ This was because they selected and paid ‘cash rent’ for productive swamps and brought about modification of a traditional land tenure system based on communal ownership into a dynamic institution with private ownership.⁷⁵

The growth of rice production in Abakaliki was also popularised with the establishment of the College of Agriculture, Ikwo, which was changed to College of Education by the Dr. Sam Egwu’s administration. The College of Agriculture was established in the 1960s by the M. I. Okpara’s administration with its origin in the Norwegian Church Agricultural project founded as a Missionary rural development project in Ikwo. This played a major role in rice production in the area through enlightening farmers in new rice species, planting and processing methods, among others.⁷⁶

In addition, the rice industry in Abakaliki was divided into four stages, with a change in ownership of the product usually between each stage. Cultivation and harvesting were the first stage; the second stage involved movement from the farms to the processing centres; storage/ processing (parboiling and milling).⁷⁷ Although a few individuals had integrated stages one and two (mostly ‘tenant trader-farmers’), the product was invariably sold at the end of stage two. The third stage consisted of storage of paddy rice (though optional) and moving the milled rice to consumption centres. Finally, fourth stage encouraged wholesaling and retailing in the cities.⁷⁸

Land was not ploughed until after the first rain of the year, usually by May or June. Production systems were allocated along gender line, but in some cases, men and women worked together. Women were apparently responsible for the threshing and transplanting of seedlings to the fields, whilst it was often the men who hoed.⁷⁹ Most farmers harvested rice annually; however, some made use of private irrigation channels which provided for three-time harvest per annum. Consequently, irrigation protected the crops from being susceptible and vulnerable to pests and diseases.⁸⁰ At the same time, frequent planting exhausted the soil nutrients as fertilizers were expensive. Other peasant farmers experienced deterioration in productivity of the soil. Some used organic fertilizers, for example, dead plants and animals, decomposed rice husks and animal dung were added to the soil.⁸¹ Once the fields had enough water, rice crops grew quickly with some varieties reaching maturity within three months. As a result, varieties that matured quickly were preferred by farmers, as this reduced risk of exposure to diseases and allowed the portion to be used for other crops.⁸²

Significantly, rice processing was usually carried-out at a place away from the farm gates. Many farmers sold their produce before it was harvested, since traders could come to the farms to negotiate prices. At the point of purchase, it was taken away and parboiled to soften the husks before milling.⁸³ Parboiling was carried under fire flame on huge drums/pots. Old drums were cut in halves and placed on several small rocks, leaving a space for fire underneath. After about 30 minutes of soaking with cold water, fire would start until it would be brought to a boiling point. Then the fire would be extinguished while the drum/pot remained covered with empty fertilizer sacks to allow the produce soak for the rest of the day.⁸⁴

In the next morning, water was drained from the drum and a given quantity of fresh water added for the paddy rice to be steamed for one and half hours.⁸⁵ It is noteworthy that the paddy rice could be dried and kept in storage facilities for onward processing in future. At the end of the parboiling processes, the produce would be laid and spread on tarpaulins/ mats to dry in the sun. It was at this stage that there was a danger of small pebbles getting mixed up with rice grains, thereby reducing its marketability and consumption.⁸⁶

The parboiling process was desirable for much of the vitamins and part of the protein contents were retained in the milled rice.⁸⁷ The Lewis Grant Mills (the colonial government mills) were used in the early period of growth in the industry locally known as ‘Planters Mills’, introduced in Abakaliki, in the late 1940s.⁸⁸ Those mills had the capacity of about 500 pounds of paddy rice per hour and were powered by 10-15 Horse Power (HP) Diesel Engine. The engines were horizontal hullers combining hulling and whitening in one operation.⁸⁹ The cleaning/ polishing part of the machine was not maintained, and as a result, the milled rice was not polished. In the outskirts of Abakaliki metropolitan towns, about 180 rice milling complexes with one de-stoner were found in operation in the period immediately after Nigeria’s independence from colonial government in the 1960s.⁹⁰ In the recent past, millers started procuring higher capacity engines such as *Black Stone*, 16 and 26 HP, with precision between 3 and 5 tonnes per hour. Others included medium scale milling machines such as *Simber* and *Lister*, 2-3 HP, with minimum of 3 tonnes per hour, both of either HA or HR brand made in England.⁹¹



Plate 7: Three HP Milling Machine



Plate 8: Two HP Milling Machine



Plate 9: Twenty-six HP (Blackstone) and Plate 10: Three HP (Small-scale) Machines

Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, February, 2017.

Milling was done by Cooperative Millers Associations and thereafter placed on mats/ tarpaulins ready for sale in front of the buildings housing various mills. The millers association was strong and by 1:00pm daily, milling activities were stopped to provide good atmosphere for sales and purchases.⁹² However, there existed traditional methods of rice processing among the rural rice farmers in Abakaliki, who produced only for subsistence before the 1940s. These involved the use of traditional tools and implements such as clay

pot, mortar, pestle and traditional sieve until the introduction of modern technologies after the 1940s, which helped to develop modern rice production in Abakaliki.⁹³

Rice Marketing

Three levels of rice marketing activities existed in Abakaliki. One group sold rice at retail and a second group sold at wholesale level only. The third group constituted ‘younger rice traders’ who sold rice at both (wholesale and retail) levels.⁹⁴ It was only a few among them that maintained permanent stalls in the market places. Some of the (customers) bulk rice buyers booked stocks in advance or disposed produce directly from trucks at the rice mills.⁹⁵ From the main departure point (at Kpirikpiri) market, other than the rice mill complex, the local produce (rice) was moved to other neighbouring major depots like Onitsha, Ogbete, Umuahia, Afikpo, Orié Oba, Afor Obollo and Eke Onu-nwa (Owerri) markets in parts of Igboland.⁹⁶ The wholesalers and wholesaler-retailers in these areas supplied Abakaliki rice to the neighbouring parts of the country such as Calabar, Uyo, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Lagos, among others . The price of produce varied according to quantity, quality and varieties. These products were sold to consumers in measures as *mudu* (measuring bowl) or bushel (measuring tin-container).⁹⁷ Major rice traders measured in jute sacks or nylon bags to be able to sell in townships and village markets. Invariably, the product was re-sold to buyers in measures of ‘milk and cigarette’ cups.⁹⁸ The table below measures the cost of rice produced in Abakaliki at the various destinations in the 1960s before the fluctuations in exchange rate:

Table II

The Cost of Milled Rice (Per tonne) at Abakaliki Rice Mill Complex, Destination, Selling Price at Destination, Margin and Average Size

Destination	Cost of Rice in Naira		Selling Price	Margin	Average
	Price at Mill	Delivered			
Lagos	37.0	41.8	45.4	3.6	830
Onitsha	37.0	38.2	40.0	1.8	980
Aba	36.6	38.4	40.8	2.4	680
Port Harcourt	37.0	39.3	40.7	1.4	740
Enugu	38.0	38.7	40.0	1.3	1,080
Umuahia	36.8	38.4	40.2	1.8	460
Ibadan	37.5	42.6	51.0	8.4	385

Source: Delane E. Welsh, "The Rice Industry in the Abakaliki Area of Eastern Nigeria, 1964," unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1964, 341

Between 1970 and 1980, there was an average of about 10 per cent increase in the population of Abakaliki people, following the 1963 population census figure which was put at 436, 274 (Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo only).⁹⁹ Earlier, in 1953, the population of the area was estimated about 155,856 people.¹⁰⁰ The same rate of population increase may have been witnessed between 1980 and 1990. From 1990 to 2000, with the creation of Ebonyi State, Abakaliki emerged a state capital which attracted more population and other economic activities. According to 1992 population estimate, Abakaliki recorded average of about 285,546. The population of rice producers in Abakaliki increased to average of about 20 per cent during the period 1990 and 2000.¹⁰¹ It was believed that Abakaliki indigenes living abroad went back home to take jobs in the newly created state government. This situation, however, did not significantly add to the population of rice farmers/ producers.

In the years between 2000 and 2011, Abakaliki recorded high demographic increase due probably to the growth of the area into a township. However, government policies occasionally affected local production of rice in the area. From the findings of this study, the 2006 population figure of Abakaliki was estimated 855,000 people, where about 30 per cent of the population comprised rice producers.¹⁰² The population increase was, however,

not in proportion with quantity of rice produced locally. The activities in rice production during the period, 1970-2011, is further represented in a table below.



A Cross-Section of Rice Marking in Abakaliki
Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, February, 2017

Table III

Average Population of Abakaliki People, their Engagement in Rice Production, Quantity of Export and Import in 10 Yearly Periods between 1970 and 2011

S/N	Year	Average Population of Abakaliki	Average Adult Population	Average Population of Rice Producers	Average Percentage of the Producers (%)	Average Quantity of Rice Produced (000 MT)	Average Quantity of Rice Exported (000 MT)	Average Quantity of Rice Import (000 MT)	Remarks
1.	1970-1980	441, 274	338, 802	254, 828	10	2	1	1	Oil boom period
2.	1980-1990	485, 446	372, 682	280, 311	10	4	1	2	Austerity measure and PTF on rice
3.	1990-2000	631, 081	484, 486	336, 373	20	6	4	4	Low import restrictions
4.	2000-2011	946, 621	726,731	437, 284	40	10	5	6	Oscillated policies on rice

Source: This table is generated by the researcher from the findings and readings of the research. **Note:** Majority of the population were peasant farmers.

It has been said that a sophisticated packaging/ bagging of rice began as recently as between 1999 and 2011, with the adoption of the ‘de-stoning’ technology in a few mills including the three Integrated Rice Mill Complexes located in the three senatorial zones of Ebonyi State.¹⁰³ At the time, it was observed that the difference in the prices of the foreign rice and local product was marginal. For instance, one kilogramme of locally milled rice sold for between ₦45 and ₦50 in the urban market between 2009 and 2011. On the other hand, foreign rice sold for ₦60 and ₦65 per kilogramme about the same period.¹⁰⁴ As at September, 2001, arising from the devaluation of the Naira, which exchanged at the rate of ₦112 to 1 US Dollar, foreign rice was sold for between ₦95 and ₦100 per kilogramme, while the price of local rice stood at ₦85 and ₦90 per kilogramme.¹⁰⁵

Rice marketing was an economic cycle. The key players in this cycle were rice farmers, the middlemen who bought the produce and re-sold, millers, transporters and consumers. The farmers normally harvested and took produce to the village markets where the product was bought by the middlemen, who in turn might be traders from other communities (in most cases women).¹⁰⁶ However, rice (paddy and milled) was believed to have been supplied to Abakaliki from other parts across the country and abroad. These areas included, among others, Cross River, Enugu, Anambra, Taraba and Benue States, and as far outside Nigeria as Cameroun, Republic of Benin, Thailand, India and China.¹⁰⁷ This is due to the fact that there were insufficient produce for consumers despite the Abakaliki’s potential in feeding the people around.



Plate 11: Onueke Ezza Rice Mill Complex, Front View



Plate 12: Abakaliki Rice Mill, Line A, Front View
Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, February, 2017.



Plate 13: Packaging Unit of the Integrated Mill Plate 14: Processing Unit of the Mill



Plate 15: De-stoning and Polishing Unit of the Integrated Rice Mill

Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, February, 2017



Plate 16: Integrated Rice Mill, Iboko, Izzi, Front View



Plate 17: UNIDO Rice Mill, Iboko, Izzi, Front View



Plate 18: Private-owned Ebony Rice Mill, Ekpomaka, Ikwo
Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, February, 2017.

Factors that Affected Growth of Rice Production in Abakaliki

There were three major factors that inhibited the production of rice. They included physical, political and socio-economic factors, and are examined as follows:

Physical factor: This has to do with the environment necessary for rice production, and may include temperature, soil condition, rainfall, pests and diseases, among others. Temperature ranging from 25-36⁰C is said to be necessary for the growth and production of rice. Rice is expected to be grown in warm humid tropics, with a vegetative growth of about 30⁰C. It prefers rich clay-loamy soil containing reasonable amount of humus and little oxygen.¹⁰⁸

Political factor: Public and private policies contributed either positively or adversely to rice economy. Government policies in particular affect rice activities ranging from production processes, improved variety research, extension services and marketing. Cletus Nwakpu noted during a field trip that any trade policy that encourages the importation of foreign rice is likely to affect the price of local produce.¹⁰⁹ This situation invariably discouraged the farmers whose productive capacities reduced. On the contrary, such policies that banned or restricted the importation of rice brought about an increased demand for domestic supply. The implication was that the price of rice significantly increased which encouraged the local farmers to produce more.

Socio-economic: The enactment of the Land Use Act in 1978 was another inhibition on the growth and production of rice. The act was promulgated such that influential persons acquired large expanse of agricultural lands from the owners at little or no cost.¹¹⁰ Such lands were not often developed for rice production, as they were used for other purposes

other than farming, thereby limited the production capacities. Details of these inhibiting factors shall be captured in the subsequent chapters of this work.

Institutional Structures in Rice Production, 1960s-2000s

There were a few institutional structures like public and private projects, programmes, organisations, research institutions and agencies saddled with the responsibilities of developing rice production. Some of these institutions were internationally based while others were local programmes and projects within Nigeria, aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity. Their activities directly or indirectly affected and enhanced the production of rice in Abakaliki. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Africa Rice Centre, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI), Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP) and Norwegian Church Agricultural Project (NORCAP), were key institutional structures that contributed to manpower development, seed improvement and multiplication, training and capacity building, extension services, technological adoption and financial aid.¹¹¹

Studies have shown that agricultural research (particularly rice production) on a global scale over the years has become increasingly expensive. Rice programmes and institutions in a difficult environment, as such Abakaliki, for instance, depended on leveraging partnerships and creating permanent, independent institutions, organisations, programmes and agencies on rice production. An insight into the structures is as follows:

International Rice Research Institute

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has become one of the far-reaching networks of rice research centres in the world.¹¹² The IRRI is a non-profit independent rice research and training organisation with the largest connection of rice samples in the genebank.¹¹³ IRRI was established in Laguna, Philippines, by Rockefeller Foundations and the Government of Philippines in 1960, with branch offices in seventeen countries including Nigeria.¹¹⁴ The institute advocates its mission to reduce poverty and hunger through collaborative research, partnership, environmental sustainability of rice farming, improvement of health conditions of rice farmers and strengthening national agricultural research and extension system of the countries concerned.¹¹⁵ Originally, the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR), a consortium of donors organised in 1971, by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided the foundation of IRRI.¹¹⁶

Since its establishment in 1960, the IRRI is known to have released about a thousand improved rice varieties across 78 countries. The varieties released included nine salt tolerant varieties in West Africa, of which three varieties were specially released in Nigeria.¹¹⁷ A senior rice breeder at IRRI, Glenn Gregorio, was quoted as saying that

We are excited over these varieties especially those released in Nigeria. These are the fruits of many years of collaboration that I have personally been a part of during my posting at the Africa rice center station in Nigeria. IRRI worked hard and closely with national breeding programmes and we know that this will lead to more collaborations as demand for rice increases in sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹⁸

The IRRI social and economic research also informed government to formulate policies to improve the supply of rice.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was one of the largest specialised agencies of the United Nations systems for agriculture, forestry, fishery and rural development.¹¹⁹ It was founded in 1945, with a mandate to raising the level of nutrition and standards of living, improve agricultural productivity and condition of rural population. FAO has about 187 member-countries including the Organisation of the European Community.¹²⁰

The FAO started its Nigerian representation office in 1978.¹²¹ It provided support to Nigeria in the formulation and implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and projects in foods, agriculture and natural resources.¹²² The organisation aimed to improve food security and reduce poverty through enhancing the livelihood of small-holder farmers who formed bulk of the rural poor. FAO has the following priority areas:¹²³

1. Support for national food and nutrition security.
2. Support for agricultural policy and regulatory frameworks.
3. Support for the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) for priority value chains, with promotion of decent employment for youth and women.
4. Support for sustainable management of natural resources.
5. Support for disaster risk reduction and emergency management. The rationale behind these five priority areas stemmed from the national commitment to attaining sustainable food security and re-positioning agriculture as leverage for economic growth and employment creation.

Africa Rice Centre (*AfricaRice*)

The Africa Rice Centre, originally known as the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA) was an African organisation for rice research and development. It had its headquarters at Bouake, Valle du Bandama region of Cote d'Ivoire in 1971, when it was officially established.¹²⁴ In the recent past, between the late 1987 and early 1988, following series of political crisis in the region, the headquarters was transferred to Cotonou, Benin Republic, with a constituted membership of 24 African member states including Nigeria.¹²⁵ The centre had regional research stations in Saint Louis, (Senegal), Ibadan, (Nigeria) and Dar-es Salaam, (Tanzania).¹²⁶

Africa Rice (WARDA) aimed to contribute to poverty reduction/ alleviation and food security in Africa through research for development. It, therefore, established close links with agricultural research organisations in the African member-states, universities and research institutes in Europe, Asia and America.¹²⁷ One major achievement of the centre was the development and introduction of new rice varieties that were suitable for the African atmosphere. The centre developed and introduced the “New Rice for Africa”, otherwise known as NERICA varieties.¹²⁸

NERICA varieties were developed through cross breeding of two cultivars involving Africa *Oryza glaberrima* and Asian *Oryza sativa*.¹²⁹ The result yielded about 30 per cent increase in total rice production in West Africa, with small amount of fertilizer application and irrigation.¹³⁰

International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, 1967-1971

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is a non-profit agricultural research-for-development (R4D) organisation, and a member of the CGIAR consortium.

IITA was established in 1967 at its headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations with the desire to advance human welfare.¹³¹ The institute came into existence with the enactment of Decree 32 of 1967.¹³²

The IITA initial goals included to develop a productive farming system, selection and breeding of high yielding crop varieties that could resist diseases and pests.¹³³ Over time, it collaborated with partners to enhance crop quality and productivity, reduce risks in production and consumption, generate wealth from agriculture and fight against hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty.¹³⁴

IITA had a special focus on cereal improvement, grain and legumes production programme, farming system, and root/ tuber programme. For this purpose, it collaborated with other research programmes and institutions. Precisely in 1971, IITA joined the CGAIR consortium which assisted it in operating four research divisions: biotechnology and genetic improvement, natural resources management, social science and agric-business, as well as plant production and plant health.¹³⁵ The IITA has succeeded in establishing about 14 research stations across sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria with branches in Abuja and Kano.¹³⁶ These stations contributed significantly in the growth of rice varieties across Nigeria.

National Cereal Research Institute, 1975-1987

The National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI) was founded in 1898 by the Lagos Colonial Protectorate under Governor-General Alfred Moloney.¹³⁷ In 1915, it was established as Federal Agricultural Station by the Sir Frederick Lugard colonial administration. By 1945, the NCRI changed to Federal Department of Agriculture from

Federal Agricultural Station with a mandate to carry out research on all agricultural crops and farming systems throughout the country.¹³⁸

Three decades after its establishment as Federal Agricultural Station, Decree 13 of 1975 mandated it to conduct research into the genetic improvement and production of major staple like rice, maize, cowpea and sugarcane.¹³⁹ By the decree of 1975, the station assumed its present name, 'National Cereal Research Institute'. The institute as a consequence developed into research system through the re-organisation of the agricultural research system in 1987, with more mandates in new rice varieties, soya beans, beniseed, castor and general farming system, especially in Northern Nigeria.¹⁴⁰

At the time of writing up this research, the NCRI has its headquarters in Badeggi in Niger State, Nigeria. So far, it has released 57 improved rice varieties which most farmers in Abakaliki used. NCRI also developed improved rice processing technology used by multinationals and local entrepreneurs such as the AGIP and the Obasanjo Farms.¹⁴¹

Agricultural Development Programmes, 1979-2004

The first Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) in Nigeria were the enclave projects, each covering a specific region within a state.¹⁴² In 1979, the government of Nigeria conceived the idea of agricultural development in some constituent states of the federation. Their early results impressed the federal and state governments, and there was thus the need to replicate such an approach across all the states.¹⁴³ By 1986, all the 19 states in Nigeria had established ADPs through various edicts. For instance, the old Anambra State established state ADP in 1986.¹⁴⁴ In Ebonyi State, the programme was legally established by Ebonyi State Agricultural Development Law No. 4 of 2003; this was consequent upon the creation of the state on October 1, 1996.¹⁴⁵

The ADPs were designed as response to a fall in agricultural productivity, and hence a concern to sustain domestic food supply. The programme's initial support came from about 1.2 billion dollar agricultural development fund by World Bank Group in 1974.¹⁴⁶ In the 1980s, governments' adoption of the ADPs concept had put the following areas among the audited enclave projects. They included Ilorin and Oyo in the West, whose main crops were rain-fed cereals and root crops; Bauchi, Kano and Sokoto in Northern Nigeria had a cropping zone based on rain-fed cereal crops within the localised areas of low-lying plains (Fadama) in drainage tracks that could support higher value crops.¹⁴⁷ All the five parts of the country during the enclave projects sought to increase food production and farm incomes. It was assumed that productivity would increase from the use of improved technology, especially planting material and fertilizer application.

The agricultural components of the project were therefore further designed to spread across other states through transfer of technology, training of farmers, distribution of modern inputs and land development including small-scale irrigation.¹⁴⁸ It is worthy of note that the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) first started with the growth from the three of the five enclave projects at Funtua, Gusau and Gombe, in 1975/ 1976.¹⁴⁹ Other generations of ADPs were identified as the Accelerated Development Area Programme (ADAP), phased and state-wide ADPs as the case may be. When the project finally became ADP in 1986 in the old Anambra State, for instance, it had the following objectives and goals, among other things:¹⁵⁰

- a) To boost agricultural production as well as contribute to livelihood and food security in the various parts of the state comprising Enugu, Abakaliki, Awka, Nsukka, Onitsha and Aguata zones.

- b) A re-organised and revitalised agricultural extension system.
- c) Effective farm inputs distribution system.
- d) An autonomous ADP management unit with monitoring system.
- e) On-farm adaptive research for crops production through farmers' training.
- f) Media support and infrastructural development.
- g) Rural agro-industrial scheme.
- h) Staff development and programme funding.

The ADP system is believed to have positively affected some of the above-mentioned goals and objectives which otherwise contributed in developing the farming system in the various parts of the federation including Abakaliki.¹⁵¹

Despite numerous challenges, the Ebonyi ADP was reputed to have recorded tremendous support and success in the production of food such as rice, cassava, maize, fishes and yam at least for subsistence.¹⁵² Other achievements of the ADPs included construction of roads, dams, establishment of cassava and rice processing plants. Under the auspices of the ADP project, Ebonyi State government constructed the Ebonyi State Fertilizer and Chemical Company in 2004, located at Onu-ebonyi, Abakaliki. The company has the capacity of supplying farmers with chemicals and fertilizers.¹⁵³

The Ebonyi State ADP has so far collaborated with other local and international projects on agricultural development, such as the World Bank Assisted Commercial Agriculture Project, Rice Value Chain project, USAID Rice Intervention Project and National Fadama Development Programmes, among others.¹⁵⁴

National Fadama Development Programme, 1993-2011

To ensure the laudable objective of self-sufficiency in food production, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1993, approved the implementation of the National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP). Fadama is a Hausa word for low lying plains usually with easily accessible shallow ground water.¹⁵⁵ It is used to describe wet lands or floodable plains. The National Fadama Facility (NFF) was established under the National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP) loan No. 3541 to assist fadama development in the states that met the predetermined eligibility criteria.¹⁵⁶ The NFDP was approved for funding on March 26, 1993, for a loan of 67.5 million US Dollars. It was to build on the achievements of some of the Northern Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) in developing small-scale irrigation through the extraction of shallow ground water, using low cost petrol mechanised pumps. The loan was closed in December 1999, with initial beneficiary states including Bauchi, Kano, Sokoto, Jigawa, Kebbi and Anambra.¹⁵⁷ This was otherwise called Fadama Development Programme I (Fadama I).

The objectives of Fadama I were to raise farmers' incomes and contribute to food security and poverty alleviation; install 50,000 shallow tube wells in the Fadama lands for small-scale irrigation, construct Fadama infrastructure, organise farmers for irrigation services, carry out aquifer studies, monitor and upgrade irrigation technologies and complete a full assessment of the environmental and social impact of Fadama development.¹⁵⁸ Following the widespread adoption of simple and low cost improved irrigation technologies, Fadama farmers realised income increase from various crops, up to 65 per cent for vegetable, 34 per cent for wheat and 49 per cent for rice.¹⁵⁹

The National Fadama Development Programme II (Fadama II) was negotiated and signed on 12th December, 2003. It became loan and disbursement effective on 3rd May, 2004 and 26th July 2005 respectively.¹⁶⁰ The project, which had all operating expenses was co-financed by the various key stakeholders also used the Community Driven Development (CDD) approach in their extension services delivery. The CDD approach was a “bottom up” approach that empowered communities and associations such as cooperative societies. They included some rice producing community associations in the local government areas.

However, Fadama II was developed as a poverty reduction project designed to sustainably increase the income of Fadama rice farmers/users through expansion of farm activities. Other objectives of the phase II project included to improve the living conditions of the rural poor, high value added output, contribute to food security as well as increased access to rural infrastructure.¹⁶¹

The second and third phases of the project, which lasted between May 2004 and 2011 respectively, were aimed at increasing the income of all users of Fadama resources including rice farmers, gatherers of edible and non-edible fruits, fisher folks, hunters, pastoralists and service providers. These two phases of the project were extended to most parts of Southern Nigeria.¹⁶² Rice producing areas of Enugu, Anambra and Ebonyi States, however, benefited from the first quarter of the projects. Agricultural transformation through Fadama II and III depended on the adoption of improved technologies by predominantly traditional farming communities. Proposed Fadama Phase IV was a follow-up project which could not survive at the end of Fadama III. Fadama I started in 1993 – 2004; Fadama II followed in 2005 and ended 2009, while Fadama III took place between 2009 and 2011.¹⁶³

Proposed Fadama IV project on rice could not also survive immediately after the project's phase III.

The National Fadama Development Programme was participatory, whereby potential beneficiary groups were assisted by facilitators to collectively identify and prioritise their production needs. Its components embraced capacity building and advisory services, community infrastructure development, and project management and co-ordination at various levels of government.

A Local Government Fadama Development Team (LGFDT) was created in each participating local government area. This team consisted of three appointees from the following units: Rural Development Unit; Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; and Cell Extension Agent from ADP. At the state level, a State Fadama Development Team (SFDT) was established within each participating state ADP.¹⁶⁴ The team provided support to Fadama Resource Users' Groups (FRUGs) on the implementation processes of the activities, on supervision of the state coordinators. The Federal Government with support from the World Bank established National Fadama Development Office (NFDO), at the national level. The project strengthened this office by appointment of one Senior Monitoring and Evaluation personnel (M&E), a Project Specialist and an Accountant, to ensure that the ADP project interests were taken into account.¹⁶⁵

Norwegian Church Agricultural Project, 1962-1980

The first government's direct attempt to improve rice production in the Abakaliki area through a project was recorded in the introduction and advent of the Norwegian Church Agricultural Project (NORCAP). It was established in Ikwo, in 1962, during the Michael Okpara administration, in collaboration with the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria under the

assistance of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation.¹⁶⁶ Rice production in particular found favour in the “Free from Hunger Campaign” of the M.I. Okpara Agricultural Policy in Eastern Nigeria.¹⁶³ NORCAP project was sponsored and financed by the Norwegian Church Relief, with Norway annual (capital) input of One Hundred and Sixty Thousand Naira, from 1963 onwards.¹⁶⁷

The objectives of the NORCAP, enshrined in a policy agreement signed on 10th January, 1962, by representatives of the Norwegian Church Relief, Eastern Nigeria Government under M.I. Okpara, and Echara Ikwo community, stated as follows:¹⁶⁸

- A. Promoting scientific agriculture by permanent scheme of research, training and extension work.
- B. Empowerment of young rice farmers in groups or individually.
- C. Improving on schemes and sectors that were necessary for development in rice production, good health and general agricultural activities.

NORCAP experimented on rice seeds/ plants multiplication with annual distribution of 250-300 bags of rice seeds. Following a grant from the Norwegian government, two rice mills were additionally established in 1964, including a palm oil processing mill in Abakaliki, in 1965.

Between 1966 and 1967, NORCAP policy encouraged the development of three modern cooperative societies of rice farmers as well as the Ezzikwo Divisional Cooperative Development Union. They were pioneer motivators in the growth of rice production in the period. It is worthy of note that NORCAP established a multi-purpose marketing league in parts of Ezza and Ikwo, in 1977, to promote production, processing and marketing of rice and other agricultural output.¹⁷⁰ It was estimated that the NORCAP project yielded 1000

tonnes of rice for sale after production expenditure in 1976/1977; 1200 tonnes in 1977/1978 and only 300 tonnes through 1978/1979, since NORCAP was already withdrawing its financial support in preparation for departure back to Norway in 1980.¹⁷¹

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CHAPTER FOUR

ISSUES ON RICE ECONOMY IN ABAKALIKI, 1940-2011

This chapter deals with some vital and contentious issues that had either direct or indirect effects in rice production in the Abakaliki area. It also deals with some programmes and policy structures of the various government administrations in Nigeria. These arrangements diffused into the rice farming communities which impacted on the rural farmers in Abakaliki.

Abakaliki Rice and the Factors of Production

The term, factors of production, is used to describe the inputs used in the production of goods and services for subsistence and/or commercial purposes in an economy. There are four major factors of production which include land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship. They are otherwise referred to as the management, machines, services and knowledge.¹ These are pivotal elements in the production cycle both in a peasant economy and in classical capitalist system. Factors of production, in this usage, refer to the joint operations of the resources of production, on the one hand, and social relations of production, on the other hand.²

In this regard, Abakaliki rice production was anchored on the provision of these factors of production which were the principal revolvers of the economic activities in the area. In a consideration of the place of rice in the economy of Abakaliki, it may be unprofessional to sustain a discussion on the processes of rice production without understudying the linkages that existed between rice production and the factors of production. For this reason, we may now turn our attention to these factors.

Land

Land is a resource where all activities of rice production take place. Farming was carried out on land which was the first stage in the production of rice in Abakaliki.³ The use of land for agricultural purposes offered the people (farmers) opportunities to improve on the quality of rice production. Land was usually a limited natural resource and as such, the use was restricted.⁴

Land tenure system was frequently complex and it varied from one place to another within the Abakaliki area of Igboland. In general, however, ownership of land was usually communal, among the families, villages or clan groups.⁵ Land ownership on communal basis by a village or group was made available to the individuals or villagers for farming on certain basis.⁶ An individual could control family land allocated to him and pass it on to his children upon his death. Within the Abakaliki area of Northeastern Igboland, to say that the individuals controlled pieces of land did not infer that their control was absolute. Individual control excluded the rights of alienation as such was only a privilege to cultivate on farm land allocated to the individual.⁷ The remaining large expanses of land lying fallow were subsequently allocated accordingly. Trees and land were separable and the latter might be leased while the owners retained control over the former.⁸

However, as a result of sub-division that occurred from generation to generation, the people demanded for division of the family lands as their inheritance. Consequently, farmers could only acquire pieces of land scattered around the Abakaliki farming areas.⁹ This, in addition, reduced the farm sizes of the farmers. The tenure system, by implication, became adversely challenging for agricultural development, particularly rice cultivation in Abakaliki. One of the most obstructive impediments to rice cultivation was the difficulty in

acquiring additional farm lands by ambitious farmers.¹⁰ The acquisition of land on pledge/ lease was adopted by the farmers. Land pledge/ lease did not offer sufficient security of tenure, since the owner could revoke arrangement at any time, especially when the portions yielded bountifully.¹¹ As a result, a farmer who acquired land on pledge/ lease was not likely to make significant investments to improve on the soil nutrients because he did not know how long the land would be under his control. The second barrier to developing pledged/ leased land was that owners did not permit the condition of planting trees on the land, thereby eliminating investment in oil palm and other economic trees.¹²

Sometimes, although traditional rights to a piece of land were respected, the absence of title to the statutory rights of occupancy did not mean that land disputes occurred frequently. However, in some places like in Ezza, large tracks of land were temporarily rendered useless or unusable because of land disputes between two or more contending owners; or as a result of unclear boundary demarcations.¹³ To eschew certain disputes, the parcels were often allocated or divided among people of the same affinity or consanguinity as their inheritance. This also led to land fragmentation which militated against the production of rice.

In view of this, two things were involved. On the one hand, the transfer of rights to hold land from fathers to sons reduced their sizes. This contributed to the farmers' problems in rice cultivation.¹⁴ On the other hand, the implication of land fragmentation was that a man's total land holdings comprised several small and scattered parcels, where he could not perform extensive farming activities.¹⁵ Thus, land fragmentation actually inhibited rice cultivation and productivity in Abakaliki. For instance, when a farmer cultivated on various rice fields that lay at considerable distances from one another, he wasted much energy and

time walking from one field to another. This situation could not encourage mechanised system of rice cultivation. Moreover, the uses of land conservation mechanism such as irrigation and drainage systems were expensive when it had to do with small units of farm land.¹⁶

Labour

Labour as a factor of production in the rice industry comprised traditional subsistence labour, wage labour and services provided in the production system.¹⁷ In the recent past, labour transcended beyond subsistence to professional or skilled services, paid or unpaid daily jobs and services rendered to earn a living from reward or payment of cash or its equivalent.¹⁸ Rice production in Abakaliki depended on subsistence labour before the coming of migrant tenant farmers and subsequent introduction of modern technologies into the system. The Abakaliki people depended largely on traditional subsistence labour with the use of traditional implements such as digging sticks, cutlasses, hoes and others.¹⁹ The labour force consisted of the family: father, mother and children including dependants and contributory labour from relations, friends and age mates. It was free until the introduction of the monetary system otherwise known as cash economy by the British.²⁰

With the introduction of the small milling machines between 1948 and 1952, migrant labourers and tenant farmers increased their mass exodus into Abakaliki.²¹ Within the context, they adopted the new technologies and employed a work-force to assist in their (rented) farm lands.²² Following the transfer of rice mill from Baddegi, in Niger State, in the early 1960s to the area, traditional hand hulling/ milling was gradually changing to mechanised. This development further led to another influx of the migrant tenant farmers in the area especially after the civil war in the 1970s.²³

Reuben K. Udo is, however, of the opinion that the migration was not only propped up by hunger but also as a result of population increase in the urban districts to those areas which were sparsely peopled. He avers that “the movement involves farmers who, because of the increasing pressure on the already overworked and impoverished soils of their village territories, move to districts favoured with abundant and more fertile farmlands.”²⁴ The migrant tenant farmers engaged themselves not only in rice production, but also in harvesting and processing of palm fruits. They settled in the area and became early adaptors to the new technologies introduced by the governments, to enhance agricultural production.²⁵ This situation provided an opportunity for the tenant farmers to gradually develop and control the rice industry in Abakaliki more than the indigenous people.²⁶ For instance, as early as 1954, the tenant farmers had founded the Cooperative Rice Mills in Abakaliki. In 1955, they founded the City Rice Mill Company located at Nkalagu, a neighbouring community lying on the boundary between Enugu and Ebonyi States.²⁷ These establishments, definitively, were instrumental to the growth of Abakaliki rice production.

Succinctly defined, a migrant tenant farmer is one who resides to farm on land owned by another person called landlord. Tenant farming is an agricultural production system in which land owners (landlords) contribute their land, a sum of operating capital and certain measures of management.²⁸ Tenant farmers only contributed their labour along with varying amount of capital and management. They could, however, lease a farm land and pay cash as rent over a period of time for the purpose of agricultural activities carried on the land.²⁹

There were two types of migrant tenant farmers: short distance movement tenant farmers within twenty miles away from natal village and long distance movement tenant

farmers from far away homes.³⁰ Migrant tenant farmers in Abakaliki were known to have arrived the area from neighbouring Igbo communities and towns such as Awka, Enugwu-Ukwu, Otuocha-Aguleri and Onitsha - all in the present Anambra State. Others came from Nkanu, Adani, Eha-Amufu, Inyi, Awgu, Nsukka and Udi in Enugu State; another group also arrived from Okigwe, Umuahia, Isikwuato, Nkwelle and Isuochi in the Abia/Imo axis of Igboland. There were also a group of migrant farmers from the non-Igbo speaking communities such as Okpoto in Benue State, Obubra and Ogoja in Cross River State, among others.³¹

In 1956, the Abakaliki Rice Mill Owners Association was formed in a coalition of both migrant tenant rice farmers and the native (indigenous) farmers.³² When the Abakaliki Rice Mill Complex was formally established in 1964, by the government of the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria, the tenant rice farmers were first to occupy and control operations in the new mill.³³ Fortunately, their position shifted from mere labour suppliers or serfs to occupiers of the hub of rice production. They were indispensable in decision making at the rice mills.³⁴ In fact, they controlled activities in the mills as they later formed trade unions with personal interests other than public.³⁵ Furthermore, mass exodus of the migrant tenant farmers boosted in the 1970s, following severe hunger and subsequent launching of the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) which came into effect in 1972.³⁶

Until recent times, the migrant tenant farmers still controlled the production cores in the Abakaliki rice industry. However, other service providers such as transporters contributed to the growth and development of the Abakaliki rice economy.³⁷ Abakaliki thus has owned its popularity as the centre for the construction of wooden lorry body for the

haulage of rice to other parts of Igboland since the mid-1970s.³⁸ Other key actors in the labour services included commercial motorcyclists (*Okada*), tri-cyclists (Keke NAPEP), the women, middle-aged children, unprofessional wage labourers such as huskers, loaders, threshers, winnowers and others.³⁹

Capital

Rice production is known to be capital-intensive. Capital is referred to the funding (liquid cash) in the rice industry. The industry was believed to be funded by both public and private ventures on small, medium and large-scale capacities. Funding also came from assisted international and local programmes as well as financial institutions such as the World Bank, Central Bank of Nigeria, Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, commercial banks including the microfinance banks, cooperative/ civil societies as well as local financial institutions.⁴⁰

Credit facilities were normally disbursed as aid, loan, grant and incentives from the Federal Government of Nigeria and a number of international agencies. Rice farmers were encouraged to operate (micro-credit scheme) accounts with the banks involved in disbursing facilities. For instance, during the National Fadama Development Programme I in 2009, rice farmers in Abakaliki were organised into Fadama Resource User Groups (FRUGs) which received loan facilities from microfinance and other commercial banks such as First Bank Plc.⁴¹ The funds were available but sometimes with stringent conditions of accessibility. A farmer in Izzi, Orji Nkwuda Orji, testified that farmers often lacked the information on the availability of such facilities at the banks.⁴² In the recent past, there had been a decline in the number of groups and the volume of loans accessed by rice farmers in the Abakaliki area. This decline could be attributed to the interest rate increase to 12 per cent and untimely

administration of loans.⁴³ The table below shows a relatively high interest rate for bank loans in the USAID MARKET II rice project in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, between 2007 and 2011:

Table I

Year	No. of Groups	Total No. in Groups	Average No. Per Group	Repayment Rate	Total (Naira)
2007	9	65	7	96	11,920,000
2008	19	220	12	91	21,990,000
2009	11	132	12	86	11,650,000
2010	7	59	8	ND	5,500,000
2011	6	53	9	ND	5,420,000
Total					56,480,000

Source: Bank of Agriculture, Abakaliki, Annual Report, 2014, 12

In addition, the cooperative societies made up of farmers from various areas of interest or specialisation such as the cooperative rice farmers, contributed in raising credit facilities and funds to rice farmers. S. J. Ibitoye asserts that “...different actors including rice farmers and associations (farmers’ cooperative) were involved in each step in rice production.”⁴⁴ Rice farmers’ cooperative societies obtained loan facilities from the National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP); other regional cooperative associations outside Abakaliki also made financial contributions among themselves to fund members’ rice projects.⁴⁵

Individually, various farmers from family groups, other economic sub-sectors, civil servants, students and private entrepreneurs managed rice projects at certain scales from personal incomes or thrift system/ periodic financial contributions known as *Isusu* among the Igbo.⁴⁶ Production of rice within this group were at micro and small-scale sizes. However, large-scale rice farmers and investors occasionally empowered potential small-

scale rice farmers who lacked finance. There were conditions attached to such arrangements in which the large-scale rice producers (companies) benefited in return.⁴⁷

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the human capital in the production of rice in Abakaliki. It involved personal skills, expertise and competence in the management of rice industry.⁴⁸ An entrepreneur was expected to possess the following qualities: (a) credible financial management, (b) personal skills and expertise, (c) adaptation to new technologies, (d) innovation in the production system (e) assess environmental impact, (f) monitor market behaviour, and (g) ability to manage conflicts.⁴⁹

It may be instructive to note that a large number of entrepreneurs in the rice industry in Abakaliki were rural farmers and a few others who cultivated rice on part-time basis. Information from G. N. Nwokwu shows that apart from the rural rice farmers, civil servants and artisans also cultivated rice in the area.⁵⁰ He disclosed that no successful individuals in other sub-sectors of the economy existed without their involvements in activities of rice production in Abakaliki.⁵¹

Further enquiry confirms that a good number of persons who took parts in national politics were entrepreneurs in the rice industry. For instance, former governors of Ebonyi State, Sam Egwu and Martins Elechi, were agriculturalist and farmer respectively.⁵² They invested in rice production projects in Abakaliki that reciprocally empowered them and their people. Interactions with Anthonia Ibe-Enwo, Programme Manager, Ebonyi State Agricultural Development Programme (EBADEP) and Cletus Nwakpu, National Fadama III Programme Coordinator, showed that government sub-sectors including the State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, participated in managing their personal rice fields in

Abakaliki.⁵³ Nwakpu also had a rice production consultancy firm, *Agriconnect Nigeria Limited*, located at No. 6B Udude Street, Abakaliki, as well as guided a number of FRUGs for proper management of rice fields in the area.⁵⁴

As may be expected, some rural entrepreneurs were likely to have remained in the use of traditional methods of cultivation and processing of rice. This situation was probably because they lacked basic knowledge in the use of modern technologies – a situation that arose from their lack of western education, finance, cultivable land, adoption to the use of improved varieties of seeds and the inability to manage conflicts among the rural population who constituted the majority of rice farmers in the Abakaliki area.⁵⁵

Economy of Abakaliki, 1940s -1960s

The colonial economy of Abakaliki was not far-fetched from the practice of the British capitalist adventure in other African communities. Karl Marx in the *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* uses capitalist mode of production to mean the development of all forms of capitalism.⁵⁶ This mode of production, however, involved the expansion and exportation of capital to other areas of the world through colonialism, particularly imperialism. Imperialism followed the British suzerainty with heavy demand for raw materials and cash crops.⁵⁷ The capitalist mode of production was an exploitative mechanism which may have sapped the resources of the peasant economy. The consequences of this production theory were obvious because it siphoned the people's resources and economic surpluses.⁵⁸

Before colonial occupation, yam, cocoyam, groundnuts and palm oil had been produced by the Abakaliki people in a situation where they could balance the comparative advantage of concentration on subsistence crops against growing export crops to exchange

for imported goods such as mirror, staff, machetes, hat, jewelries and other items.⁵⁹ Export crops producers were most often domestic staple producers as well. Meanwhile, farmers who produced for exports did not fare better than those who produced for domestic markets. There was thus a balance according to comparative advantage. To favour the British exploitation of Abakaliki, the colonial government, primarily through taxation, forced the people to concentrate on export crops.⁶⁰ This trend, among other policies, continued to taint agricultural (export crops) production in the area. However, with the establishment of railway networks through Enugu to Nkalagu, the evacuation of the locally grown agricultural produce from Abakaliki through the rail transport was easier for the colonialists. The bulks of local agricultural produce were taken away from Abakaliki to the locomotive stations at Nkalagu and Enugu for onward export as raw materials to the new world.⁶¹ Following the proven capacity of the peasants to produce and supply their export requirements, the expatriate firms became satisfied with their monopoly of the import - export trade. A clear indication of this attitude was described in a report by Hugh Clifford, when he explained the government's relationship with the rural farmers in the following words:

The purchasing of native grown agricultural produce will always be mainly in European hands while of the transport of it to the markets of the world will be managed by railways and ships assigned and managed by Europeans.⁶²

Palm oil and kernel constituted commodities for export as local farmers were diverted to the production of palm produce. Oil palm and kernel production took the people's time against producing food crops. The possible result was that the number of palm trees the individuals worked-on out stripped the cultivation of staple crops during the period.⁶³

Furthermore, the introduction of cash economy (a new monetary system that replaced the traditional medium of exchange) required that only those who produced items for sale earned the new exchange medium.⁶⁴ Consequently, the farmers abandoned cultivation and production of food crops for the production of cash crops. In addition, the colonial government established marketing and grains boards that determined the prices of locally grown goods and the nature of purchases in Eastern Nigeria. This errand was restricted to the British firms only and was enforced by the Palm Produce Marketing Board (PPMB). The British colonial government had established the PPMB in 1949.⁶⁵ The primary objectives of the board were to stabilise producers' prices in order to eliminate the seasonal price fluctuations of the export produce. Other reasons were to provide funds for regional government and economic development of the Eastern Region which involved scientific research in agriculture, improvement of the quality of the crops through the grading system, and putting to an end a series of producer protests.⁶⁶

As part of its objectives, the Eastern Region's development programme for 1958-1962, demonstrated that the marketing board was expected to contribute 5 million pounds towards the construction of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, and a further 500,000 pounds to the Eastern Region Development Corporation (ERDC).⁶⁷ The establishment of the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) contributed to the research development of the colonial government in the Eastern Region. Also, people from the local communities within Nsukka and environs gained admissions into the institution to study courses relevant to the general production system in an economy.⁶⁸

During World Wars I and II (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) the economic depression that struck the western world resulted in the palm produce and other export crops fetching

low prices. This situation led to the collapse of export prices of cash crops, and a slump in the production of same. As a strategy for overcoming the depression, the colonial government in the 1940s, introduced what it called Economic Plan for Africa and other colonies, through the instrumentalities of the Colonial Development Act, 1940 and Colonial Welfare Act, 1945.⁶⁹ The Acts created favourable environments for active discussions on improving food crops production. It signalled Britain's commitment to the development of the empire at a time of internal weakness. Thus, at the end of the wars, Britain attempted to expand agricultural production through agricultural research stations, extension programmes, promotion of technology and conservation measures.⁷⁰ For instance, in 1946, after a tour of the agricultural and colonial officers, among whom were A. H. Young, Deputy Director of Industries, Lagos, and J. W. Wallace, Acting Assistant Director of Agriculture, Umuahia, selected sites were opened for the establishment of oil mills. By 1951, there were eleven oil mills operating in Eastern Region.⁷¹

Remarkably, it may be noted that food crops production in the Abakaliki area was revamped after the July 1940 Committee of Agricultural Officers' Meeting in Umuahia, to look into the situation of food crops production in the Eastern Provinces of Nigeria.⁷² In summary, the Committee concluded that "Nigeria as a whole was normally dependent upon imported food to a remarkably small extent, and that the Eastern provinces as a whole were largely self-supporting..."⁷³

Another striking decision of the Committee was the agreement to accelerate arrangement to encourage rice cultivation in suitable areas of the province. Rice production, for instance, was intensified in the region and what was an experiment in the early 1940s, had by the end of the decade, become an important source of local food supply. Precisely in

1950, about 50,000 acres of rice were under cultivation in Abakaliki with annual productivity of about 18,000 tonnes of rice. Fishing was also encouraged with the supply of about 2,000 fishing nets in the area by the Department of Agriculture.⁷⁴

The colonial government also provided *anthelmintic* drugs for the control of parasites in pig production in Abakaliki. Before the end of the 1950s, the construction of the central workshop for agricultural machinery at Abakaliki was completed and became functional.⁷⁵ Between the 1940 and 1960, not only the staple crops production increased to include rice production but also the protein contents increased with the expansion in livestock production.

Nonetheless, the rapid pace of the cultivation of Asian varieties of rice in Abakaliki improved the food situation. Actions in food crops production were replicated in other areas of the Eastern Provinces with surpluses in cassava, yam and cocoyam. Rice, meat, salt and stockfish remained probably imported food items.⁷⁶ These items were regarded as luxury food items only consumed by wealthy people in the urban areas and generally during the festive periods. Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, Abakaliki farmers had discovered that cassava and rice could grow in poor soil and cultivated severally in the same portion. This was unlike yam that needed shifting cultivation and more fertile environment.⁷⁷ Reliance on yam and cocoyam thus shifted to cassava, rice and beans as they henceforth continued to occupy the people's food barns and menu.

Meanwhile, the colonial government started diversification of the local economy through the colonial development plans to other sectors, health, social services, education, environmental management and agriculture continued to receive significant attentions of the government. For instance, in 1946, the government formulated a policy that divided the

Nigerian territory into agricultural zones, corresponding to each area's comparative advantage. Benin and Warri areas, for example, belonged to the export crops (palm oil and kernel) production zone. Ogoja Province, where Abakaliki fell, was grouped along with Oyo Division as food production area.⁷⁸ The policy also tried to address the population pressure on land and soil acidity, as well as adequate food supply and oil palm development. Similar policies of the colonial government are discussed extensively in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Post-colonial Economy and Programmes on Abakaliki Rice Production, Up to the 1980s

It is a fact that Nigeria gained political independence from Britain in 1960. What followed thereafter was the progress for economic independence as already designed in the programmes of the colonial government. With specific attention paid to agriculture, the post-colonial authorities (headed by Nigerians) promised to improve on the food crops production with a wide range of programmes and policies.⁷⁹ This situation meant that after independence, some of the colonial programmes were pursued. The period under review is divided into two. These are the periods before and during the petroleum (oil) economy, between 1960 and 1969 and 1970 and 1980s respectively. The periods were principally characterised by the implementation of the National Development Plans.⁸⁰ During the first period, governments adopted two principal approaches to achieve their goals through community integration and small-holder schemes in the Abakaliki area. The second period was one of neglect of the agricultural sector as a result of the attractive oil prices. This period was also when petroleum became the major source of revenue to the federal government.⁸¹

Meanwhile, during the closing years of the colonial government, it would be recalled that following a series of murders by the secret *Odozi Obodo* society between 1953 and 1958, the Government of Eastern Nigeria decided in 1959, to re-settle the people of Abakaliki into nucleated areas and community plantations.⁸² The rural settlers were also given some stipends in the scheme. It was believed that the scheme would make rice production more attractive to the growing young school leavers.

Moreover, following his election as the Premier of the Eastern Region on 19th December, 1959, the Michael I. Okpara administration introduced several economic revitalisation programmes in the agricultural sector.⁸³ Agriculture, therefore, became paramount in the economic development programme of the region. This programme was further espoused in the National Development Plan of 1962-1968. In the 1962-1968 Eastern Nigeria Development Plan the following government's principal agenda in the field of agriculture were highlighted:

With over 50 per cent of the Region's output in the agricultural sector alone, it follows that no serious improvement in the pace of over-all progress can be made unless very strenuous efforts are made to raise productivity in agriculture. Such increases must manifest themselves not only in the exports but also in food crops... the aim is not to make the region self-sufficient in food but to increase the protein content of the diet and to raise and diversify the production of those crops for which the Region has natural advantages. One of the main objectives of the 1962-1968 Plan is, therefore, the modernisation of agricultural methods through the adoption of improved techniques, intensified agricultural education and changes in land tenure.⁸⁴

Okpara's focus on agricultural sector was further summarised in a paragraph. According to Uchechukwu Igwe:

...his economic policy laid emphasis on the key primary sector and its development. Agricultural development is often regarded as the key to economic development for the following reasons: first, agriculture is spatially rooted in the rural areas... Second, agriculture is still a major

sector of Nigerian economy with over 60 per cent of the labour force in the sector. Third, agriculture has strong backward and forward linkages with the industrial and allied sector...⁸⁵

Another area that received urgent attention during the period included the rehabilitation scheme which involved the distribution of improved rice seeds and varieties of crops as well as free organic fertilizers to rice farmers. There was also the establishment of the Market Garden Division of the Ministry of Agriculture at Enugu, with specific target on rice seed multiplication and improvement in the Eastern Region.⁸⁶

Under the rehabilitation scheme, rural farmers in the Abakaliki area were given varieties of the improved seeds. It was also conceived as a means of rehabilitating existing wild palm groves. Besides, it turned out a scheme to grow oil palm on most of the lands that were previously not planted in the eastern region on payment of subsidy. Over a period of five years, subsidy was paid on this scheme which amounted to 10 pounds per acre to ensure proper agricultural practices. The government received approximately 40 per cent of the market prices of the exported oil palm through the marketing board in return.⁸⁷ The scheme also increased the quantity of oil palm produced. Furthermore, being the least expensive means of increasing oil palm production the rehabilitation scheme resulted in the largest acreage planted by any government programme as illustrated in the table below:

Table II

Target Acreage and Actual Planting under the Three Oil Palm Development Schemes in Eastern Nigeria

Scheme	Target Acreage	Planted Acreage as of March, 1967
Oil Palm Rehabilitation Scheme	60,000	49,951
ENDC Estates	40,000	29,100
Farm Settlements	16, 320	5,353

Source: Malcolm J. Purvis, "Report on a Survey of the Oil Palm Rehabilitation Scheme in Eastern Nigeria - 1967" (East Lansing: Consortium for the Study of Nigerian Rural Development, Michigan State University, 1968, Mimeographed), 4. See also David R. Smock and Audrey C. Smock, *Cultural and Political Aspects of Rural Transportation: A Case Study of Eastern Nigeria*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 89

In addition to the thrust of the programme for increased production of (tree crops) palm oil, kernel, cocoa and rubber, the regional Ministry of Agriculture was also committed to the campaigns to increase local food crops such as rice in Abakaliki area. To increase the production of rice, cassava and maize, more genetically improved varieties of seeds were distributed to the farmers. Efforts were further made to improve on the water control regimes through government subsidised small-scale irrigation schemes at Item-Amagu, Onueke and Akaeze in some parts of Abakaliki. The Market Garden Division of the ministry continued to multiply and sell vegetable seeds to the farmers which added to the increase in production.⁸⁸

However, to increase the quotient of protein intake and quality of food consumed in Abakaliki, the government intervened with the Poultry Expansion Scheme in 1965. The Ministry of Agriculture supplied batteries and day-old chicks, and worked out a scheme for the marketing of eggs from the poultries.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the costs of production were so high and market for eggs was narrow that the chances for expansion became limited. For this reason, limited efforts were made for the production of pigs and other livestock.

As already mentioned in this discussion, the second phase covers the petroleum economy period between the 1970s and 1980s. This period of post colonial economy was characterised by a series of programmes on food crops production which enhanced the growth of rice production in Abakaliki.

National Accelerated Food Production Programme

In Abakaliki, one of the earliest food production programmes for economic recovery and poverty reduction among the rural population was the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) established in 1972 by the Yakubu Gowon administration.⁹⁰ The NAFPP was actually a conception of the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), to recoup food shortages after the civil war.¹⁰⁵ The programme was designed to be funded by the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank (NACB). For instance, the NACB was known to have funded the Ikwo United Cooperative Rice Farmers Association rice production project in collaboration with the Anambra Cooperative Financing Agency in 1976, with the Programme Number ACFA/1/B/18.⁹¹

Under the NAFPP structure, a number of rice farmers in the area were selected to adopt the modern system of seeds production and multiplication, and other improved practices and management of rice production. The NAFPP had the mandates to effectively design, test and transfer technical packages for the production of rice, maize, sorghum, millet and wheat.⁹² By 1978, it was observed that the target crops under the programme produced yields that tripled those obtained by farmers with the adoption of traditional farming practices. However, the NAFPP could not effectively stamp out hunger and food problem, particularly because of certain administrative lapses of the personnel in charge of the programme.⁹³

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the NAFPP had become a colossal waste. Political interferences and consideration were alleged to have marred the survival and sustenance of the programme.⁹⁴ An example was cited that some community leaders induced the agricultural officers in the programme to site service centres in their own communities. This approach disrupted rice production enterprise of majority of the Abakaliki farmers who could not access the terrain of such centres.⁹⁵

Agricultural Development Programme

Somewhere in this study, there was a discourse on the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) as an institutional structure in rice production. In this chapter, ADP is examined as a programme on rice production during the post colonial period in the Abakaliki area. The target of the ADP, according to Onwuka Njoku:

...was the small-scale (rural) farmers who accounted for about 90 per cent of the total national crop output. The overall objective of the programme was to raise the productivity, the income and the living standards of the small-scale farmers through a package of measures which included the provision of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, credit facilities...⁹⁶

The achievement of the ADP and its support to the rural farming were tainted with conflicting claims and criticisms. Some persons have argued that the programme had no significant impact on the agricultural sector.⁹⁷ However, its supporters have claimed that over 9,000 bore holes with hand pumps, nearly 12, 000 bores and tube wells, 129 earth dams, 922 farm service centres, 47 farm training centres and 12 fish ponds were constructed across the nation by end of the 1980s.⁹⁸ In any case, the awareness created by the programme diffused into the rural communities in the Abakaliki area of Igboland. This contributed

immensely to the growth of rice production in the post colonial period, as may be seen in the following:

Operation Feed the Nation

The government of Olusegun Obasanjo, in a national broadcast, on 21st May, 1976, launched the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). The OFN sang the same old tune of self-sufficiency in rice production in Abakaliki and other parts of Nigeria. Under the OFN, government introduced the Land Use Subsidy Decree of 1976, seed and fertilizer supply, credit facilities and mechanisation in agriculture.⁹⁹ During the programme, Abakaliki rice farmers were given encouragement and material assistance in the form of technical advice and the supply of essential farm inputs. This is to protect the rural farmers against a possible fall in the price of rice and other food crops. Also, the government guaranteed a minimum price per metric tonne of the crops for the 1976 agricultural season.¹⁰⁰

It is said that government recruited young university graduates, who it was claimed, were 'ill-prepared' to teach the rural farmers how to farm.¹⁰¹ The effect was that the young graduates found it arduous to train the rice farmers without practical exhibition of their knowledge of rice farming from the universities.¹⁰² This poor arrangement and the composition of the programme might have contributed to its demise. But that situation notwithstanding, the programme's campaign contributed in accentuating the level of rice production in Abakaliki.¹⁰³

Green Revolution

The Green Revolution was a term first used in 1968 by a former director, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), William Gaud. At the time, he had

noted that “the spread of the new technologies in the development of agriculture contained the makings of a new revolution. It was in contrast, not a violent ‘Red Revolution’ like that of the Soviet or was it a ‘White Revolution’ like that of the Shah of Iran. I call it ‘Green Revolution’”.¹⁰⁴ The idea of Green Revolution was thus extended to many countries of the world, including Nigeria.

In 1979, the Federal Government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari declared the intention to bring about green revolution to the agricultural sector in Nigeria, and in 1980, the programme was launched for self-reliance in food crops including rice production. The focus of the Green Revolution (GR) therefore was the rural farmers in most farming communities such as Abakaliki, following the declining state of the nation’s agricultural sector.¹⁰⁵ Green Revolution programme also had the following objectives:(a) increase food production, (b) self-sufficiency in agricultural production, (c) provision of surpluses for export, and (d) provision of raw materials for local industry.¹⁰⁶

Ironically, virtually none of the above objectives was realistic as the government, under the umbrella of the programme, seemed to have employed a strategy that marred local production of rice in Abakaliki. The rural population was deprived of subsistence as poverty level and low living standard tripled.¹⁰⁷ Some communities in the eastern parts of the country, referred to the situation as *ota n’isi*. This is the Igbo way of explaining the austerity measure the then Federal Government had introduced in the economy. *Ota n’isi* means that the measure was biting hard enough even on the head.¹⁰⁸

The administration had embarked on massive importation of (foreign) rice, wheat and other food items which dwindled local production in the Abakaliki area.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the regime rehabilitated some politicians in the National Party of Nigeria

(NPN) during the Second Republic, to carry out a Presidential Task Force on rice importation and distribution. Umaru Dikko, the Transport Minister in the Shagari regime, for instance, was accused of fraud and corruption for his avarice in the rice importation scheme.¹¹⁰ P. Heinecke has argued that the “Green Revolution is a total denial of the creative power of the small farmers to mobilise themselves for food production, and is based on the false assumption that these farmers have failed the nation”.¹¹¹ This statement is an attestation to the failure of the programme which affected rice production in Abakaliki.

Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure

Consequent upon the need to add to agricultural programmes for increased rice production in Abakaliki and other areas of the country, the military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida introduced the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986.¹¹² The mandate of DFRRI was to improve on the quality of living standard, create opportunities for human capital development, enhance rural income levels, empower the rural population to expand the production of consumer goods and services.¹¹³ DFRRI then aimed to eradicate poverty and disease in the Abakaliki areas through the construction of roads and other infrastructure. It was also targeted to reduce rural-urban migration among the productive age (youth) who could be mobilised to provide corking material resources for economic, social, cultural and political laurels of the country.¹¹⁴

Although, DFRRI road networks connected some rural communities in Abakaliki, there was an over-estimation of the amount of money sunk into the project. A colossal figure was mentioned by the president as the cost of providing electricity for about 2,418 communities, 6,170 communities with health facilities and over 2,197 communities with water in Nigeria.¹¹⁵ Above all, DFRRI was considered one of the best programmes aimed at

opening up the rural areas of Abakaliki for accessibility.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, the DFRRRI programme, however, had minimal impact on rice production except for the earth-surface roads to the farming communities in the area.

Structural Adjustment Programme

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was officially launched on July 1, 1986, although its most important element: the Second-tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM), did not take effect until October, 1986.¹¹⁷ The government of Ibrahim Babangida was said to have taken to austerity measures in the SAP as outlined in the World Bank guidelines for economic recovery of the African economies.¹¹⁸ Ngozi Ojiakor is of the opinion that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), SAP and the Export Promotion Decree, led to the devaluation of the Naira and the subsequent poverty of the average Nigerian.¹¹⁹ A contrary opinion believes that SAP was a rescue measure because it was aimed at the following: (i) import liberalisation through a new tariff structure; (ii) removal of subventions of petroleum products; (iii) privatisation and deregulation of some sectors of the economy; (iv) minimum budget deficit and encouragement of financial discipline in the public sector; and (v) diversification of the economy with agriculture in the forefront.¹²⁰

It is said that the emphases of SAP and the Fifth National Development Plan (1988-1992) were to devalue the national currency, remove import licences, reduce tariffs, open up the economy to foreign trade, promote non-oil exports through incentives and achieve national self-sufficiency in (food crops) rice production.¹²¹ Some of these economic indices were known to have had negative implications on the local production of rice in Abakaliki, although, it also encouraged local production. The drafters of the Fifth Development Plan had sought to improve labour and productivity through incentives, privatisation of public

enterprises and adoption of measures to create employment opportunities.¹²² The programme officially came to an end on June 30, 1988.¹²³ The table below shows a chronology of programmes that affected rice production in Abakaliki area between 1972 and 2011:

Table III

S/N	Programme	Year	Head of Government	Target Group	Nature of Intervention
1	NAFPP	1972	Yakubu Gowon	Rural farmers	To educate farmers
2	NACB	1972	Yakubu Gowon	Rural farmers	Agricultural financing
3	OFN	1979	Olusegun Obasanjo	Rural dwellers	Increase food production
4	GR	1980	Olusegun Obasanjo	Rural farmers	Increased food production
5	DFRRI	1986	Ibrahim B. Babangida	Rural dwellers	Feeders, roads rehabilitation, water supply and electricity.
6	SAP	1986	Ibrahim B. Babangida	The entire society	Austerity measure
7	Better Life Programme	1989	Ibrahim B. Babangida	Rural Women	Empowerment/poverty alleviation
8	NALDA	1991	Ibrahim B. Babangida	Rural farmers/dwellers	Increase food production
9	NFDP	1993	Ibrahim B. Babangida	Farmers	Increase food production
10	Family Support Programme	1995	General Sani Abacha	Rural and urban dwellers	Empowerment/poverty alleviation
11	FEAP	1997	General Sani Abacha	Rural and urban dwellers	Empowerment/poverty alleviation
12	NAPEP	2001	President Olusegun Obasanjo	Rural and urban dwellers	Empowerment/poverty alleviation
13	NEEDS	2004	President Olusegun Obasanjo	Rural and urban dwellers	Increase food production, Empowerment/poverty alleviation
14	Agricultural Transformation Agenda	2011	President Goodluck Jonathan	Farmers and rural dwellers	Increase food production, Empowerment/poverty alleviation

Source: K. K. Arogundade, S. O. Adebisi and V. O. Ogunro, "Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria: A Call for Policy Harmonisation", *European Journal of Globalisation and Development Research vol. 1 No. 1*, 2011, 49. For this detailed data of poverty alleviation programmes for food production in Ngeria, See also Ikechukwu Kingsley Agu, "The National Fadama Development Programme and Rice Economy in Northern Igboland, 1993 – 2013", unpublished PhD Seminar Paper I, submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, June, 2015, 3.

Policies on Rice Economy in Abakaliki, 1971-2011

With regard to food crops, particularly rice production in the recent times, the economic policies appeared to represent the terms of a political arrangement or tied between the government and the people. This tie was a kind of agreement in which the costs were borne by the rural dwellers and small-scale producers. Governments, therefore, intervened in the food market in an effort to guarantee availability and supply to the groups that exercised significant control over their political fates. This showed that various levels of government devised viable agricultural policies so as to reduce political risks. The foregoing situation was entirely different if not totally absent in Abakaliki. Policies on food production in Nigeria, for example, were rather used to drive certain political interests or punish political oppositions in disguise. A reiteration may be necessary to buttress the fact that the Abakaliki area of Southeast Nigeria was carved out from Enugu State to form part of Ebonyi State in 1996.¹²⁴ By implication, most of the policies formulated by the governments on rice production extended to the people indirectly from the state level. Therefore, discussion on the above subject will be approached from the international bodies, national government, before looking at the state-oriented and private policies, if existed in the area.

From historical perspectives, the policies on rice production could be discussed with reference to three central periods. These include the pre-ban, ban, post-ban periods.¹²⁵ The

above periods encompass the era of programmes and agencies in rice production in Nigeria, whose thrusts were central to the production of food crops, particularly rice. This is so because to attain a remarkable stride in rice production, certain relevant actions were undertaken by some key actors in collaboration with national and international institutions as shown in the last phase of chapter three of this study. The pre ban period was the time before the introduction of absolute quantitative restrictions on rice importation between 1971 and 1985.¹²⁶ This epoch was further divided into two: the pre-food crisis, 1971-1980 and the crisis periods, 1981-1985. The ban period came between 1986 and 1995 and was characterised by illegal importation of rice, especially through porous land borders. The third, the post-ban period, between 1995 and 2011, saw the decline in the quantitative restrictions on rice importation and general adoption of liberal trade policy on rice imports.¹²⁷

Apart from the policies on imports, there were a number of early policies on local rice production. For instance, on January 10, 1962, the representatives of the Norwegian Church Relief, community leaders from Echara Ikwo and the government of the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria reached an agreement on the following terms: to promote scientific agriculture, empowerment of young rice farmers, improve on the schemes and sectors that were necessary for the development of rice production, good health and general agricultural activities in Abakaliki.¹²⁸

Also, as early as 1965, the M.I. Okpara administration had identified and carried out feasibility studies on some of the rice production sites located at Item Amagu, Enyibirichi in Ikwo; Ndirufu Ndiakparata in Izzi; Ezillo farm in Ishielu; Akaeze Eziyiaku in Ivo; and Owutu Edda in the present Afikpo South Local Government Area. Skeletal works started in

these areas those days but was halted by the civil war of 1967-1970.¹²⁹ Another example of the early policy on rice production in Nigeria was evident in the activities of the Federal Rice Research Station and the Africa Rice Centre in the research and development of the crop, which have been mentioned in chapter three. Let us now consider these phases, one after another:

Pre-ban Policies on Rice Production, 1971-1985

This period, 1971-1985, was characterised by low restrictions on importation of rice. There were liberal policy agencies, projects and programmes on rice production and importation by the governments whose activities eventually eroded the competitiveness of domestic rice and reduced their prices.¹³⁰ The 1971-1980 pre-crisis period, however, has been given accelerated examination in the discourses of the institutional structures on rice production and post-colonial economy of Abakaliki. Of importance to this period were the Abakaliki Rice Project and Land Use Act. The Abakaliki Rice Project was established in 1978 for rice production, processing and marketing.¹³¹ Both the indigenes and rice tenant farmers were granted credit facilities by commercial banks. Some cooperative societies were also able to acquire small and medium scale rice mills. It is reported that the private projects were subsidised by the short-lived Abakaliki Rice Project.¹³² The project was said to have lost potentials to poor management, fragmented land tenure system and the Land Use Act.¹³³

The Land Use Act was promulgated by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration in 1978.¹³⁴ The act was aimed at making it easier for the people to acquire land. The state government would hold such land on trust for the people and be responsible for the allocation of same in all urban areas to the individuals and organisations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes.¹³⁵ Land was, as a consequence, under the

control and management of the state governors across the federation. In rural areas, the policy established that the Land Allocation Advisory Committee was to exercise equivalent functions.¹³⁶ This policy was applicable to Southern Nigeria only. The land tenure system in the North was, however, retained as rights of administration and allocation was yet vested in the emir.¹³⁷

In the Abakaliki area of Northeastern Igboland, the Land Use Act made it possible for some influential persons to acquire large expanse of land from the (rural) owners at a little cost.¹³⁸ Such lands were often not developed for agricultural purposes which actually constrained the production of rice. By the stipulations of the act, the government deprived rice farmers (rural) of their traditional title to hold land resulting in the seizure of their agricultural lands.¹³⁹

In addition, the exchange rate regime determined the rate at which the nation's currency was exchanged for its foreign counterparts. This impliedly determined the price competitiveness of locally produced food items in relation to imported ones.¹⁴⁰ The exchange rate and foreign exchange allocation policies acted as major sources of price distortions and disincentives to farming enterprises in the 1970s. Government pursued exchange rate policies that kept nominal exchange rate constant even amidst the widening gap and divergence between rising domestic inflation and relatively stable international price level.¹⁴¹ There was thus an over-valuation of the (Naira) local currency, and which cheapened the imported commodities, including rice. This situation was characterised by massive importation of rice, a development that made the people to find it easier or cheaper to buy foreign rice rather than produce locally. The extent of the over-valuation of the Naira

was recorded to a 100 per cent between 1971 and 1975, 200 per cent between 1976 and 1979 and about 700-900 per cent during the 1980-1985 period.¹⁴²

It would also be recalled that the locally produced rice enjoyed better prices between 1960 and 1970. This was when the exchange rate was in order, particularly as the domestic inflation kept pace with the international inflationary trends.¹⁴³ In other words, the exchange rate policy of the mid-1980s acted as a great disincentive to the rice farmers as it became more expensive to grow rice than to buy the imported rice. The situation was further exacerbated by the liberal food imports policy, especially during the 1971-1977, when there was little or no tariff on imported food items.¹⁴⁴

Also, between 1977 and 1985, government participated in the marketing of domestic rice through the Nigerian Grains Board. The board was charged with the responsibility of buying milled and paddy rice from (Abakaliki) local rice farmers.¹⁴⁵ They stored the grains and made same available to markets during slack periods. The boards also regulated the quality of rice grains produced in the Abakaliki area.¹⁴⁶ The table below shows rice production figures in Nigeria, where Abakaliki area contributed about 40 per cent between 1971 and 1986:¹⁴⁷

Table IV

Period	Area (hectares)	Rice quantity (tonnes)	Yield (%)	Domestic output (milled)	Rice imports (tonnes)	Self-sufficiency (%)
1971	304,000	388,000	1.276	258,796	255	99.90
1976	172,000	218,000	1.267	145,406	45,377	76.22
1981	600,000	1,241,000	2.068	656.799	656.799	55.76
1986	700,000	1,416,322	2.023	944.687	320,000	74.70

Source: “Summary from Project Coordination Unit (PCU)”, *Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), Nigeria, FAOSTAT in Journal of Agricultural Extension vol. 12, No.2, December, 2008, 77*

Also, during the crisis period, more stringent policies were put in place. As a measure for the ‘food sufficiency’ programme in the crisis period, government was directly involved in rice importation, distribution and marketing.¹⁴⁸ The Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Rice in the 1980s was inaugurated by former President Shehu Shagari, to alleviate the food shortages through importation. The task force was headed by Umaru Dikko, then Minister of Transport.¹⁴⁹ Onwuka Njoku’s opinion on this development is shown below:

Umaru Dikko became a blatant vehicle for prodigal swindling, fraud and party political patronage. The task force was accused of hoarding rice to artificially exacerbate the existing food shortages in order to increase the prices. It also issued import licences to businessmen with connections to the ruling NPN only.¹⁵⁰

Consequently, it was claimed that over 16 billion United States Dollars of the oil revenue was lost between 1979 and 1983, during the Shagari administration. The Chairman of the PTF, Dikko, was said to have embezzled about 3.5 billion Pounds of the project fund.¹⁵¹ When the country’s food payment bills rose from 1 billion Naira in 1979 to 1.9 billion Naira in 1983, Dikko reportedly fled the hunger-ravaged country.¹⁵² The table below also summarises the policy measures on importation of rice in Nigeria before the total rice importation ban by the Nigerian government during the SAP:

Table V: Taxonomy of Nigeria Trade Policy on Rice, 1971-1986

Periods	Measures
1971- April 1974	66.6% tariff
1974-April 1975	20% tariff
1975- April 1978	10% tariff
April 1978 – June 1978	20% tariff
June 1978 – October 1978	19% tariff
October 1978- April 1979	Import in containers under 50kilogramme banned
April 1979	Import under restricted licence (only government agencies).
September 1979	6 months ban on all rice imports
January 1980	Import licence issued for 200,000 tonnes of rice.
October 1980	Rice under general import licence with no quantitative restrictions.

December 1980	Presidential task force on rice was created and it used the Nigerian National Supply Company (NNSC) to issue allocations to customers and traders.
May 1982	Presidential Task Force commenced issuance of allocations directly to customers and traders in addition to those issued by the NNSC.
January 1984	Presidential task force disbanded. Rice importation placed under general licence restrictions.
October 1985	Importation of rice and maize restricted/ banned
July 1986	Introduction of SAP and the abolition of commodity boards to provide production incentives to farmers through increased production prices.

Source:A. J. Arigor, N. I. Nyambi and P. O. Obuo, “Analysis of Effects of Government Trade Policy on Rice Supply in Three Local Government Areas of Cross River State, Nigeria”, *African Journal of Agricultural Research*, vol. 10, No.8, 2015, 830 www.academicjournals.org/AJAR. Accessed on 25th August, 2015.

Ban Period Policies on Rice Production, 1985-1995

This is otherwise the implementation of foreign trade policies such as tariff, import restriction and outright ban on rice importation. The ban on rice importation came into effect in 1985, following President Babangida’s transition-to-power programme.¹⁵³ The policy came as a result of the attempt by the administration to stimulate domestic production of rice through an increase in the price of the imported commodity. The introduction of the SAP by the government in 1986 further reinforced the ban on importation of rice and provided explicit and more technical frameworks for rice trade policies as well as other agricultural policies.¹⁵⁴

As part of the measures to secure and stimulate domestic production of rice, the SAP collaborated with other policy networks in the production of rice to increase yield and output. The International Network for the Genetic Evaluation of Rice (INGER) and the National Agriculture Research Station, partnered with the SAP for domestic food production.¹⁵⁵ They distributed rice nurseries prepared to be able to meet the requirements of rice farmers in Abakaliki. Other collaborators were the Green River Project, an outfit of the

National Agip Oil Company and a series of institutional agencies in rice production. Their campaign for 'self-sufficiency' in rice production in the media spread across Abakaliki and penetrated into the few educated rice farmers and extension agents in the area.¹⁵⁶ The implementation of the SAP, particularly the total deregulation of the nation's economy, accounted for the continued rise in the growth of local rice output between 1986 and 1987.¹⁵⁷ By the mid-1988, however, the growth rate began to slump. This may have resulted from the government's liberalisation policy. The exchange rate liberalisation was an effort at depreciating the value of the 'over-valued' Naira. Thus, between 1988 and 1990, the Naira exchange rate against the dollar depreciated by 87 per cent. There was a sharp rise in the cost of imported farm inputs following the drop in the value of the Naira.¹⁵⁸ The current exchange rate status may have also discouraged investment in agricultural production.

Furthermore, the SAP bridged the gap between the interest rate on loan and the farmers. Prior to the introduction of the SAP, government largely controlled interest rate on loans and gave broad concession to the agricultural sub-sector.¹⁵⁹ With the liberalisation mechanisms, imported along with the SAP, the interest rates increased geometrically. As a result, the agricultural sector had to compete with other economic sectors for loans.¹⁶⁰ Cletus Nwakpu has aptly argued that

...the financial institutions see agriculture as a high-risk sector, which should be treated with caution for purposes of granting loans. Such situation makes it difficult for rice farmers to source enough capital for procurement of equipment and technologies needed for profitable production of rice...¹⁶¹

In consonance with the liberalisation of trade policy, government began to gradually withdraw subsidies on fertilizers and other farm inputs (chemicals). This situation was like 'adding salt to injury' as it provoked the already skyrocketing cost of food production to an

unprecedented height.¹⁶² This could also have been partly responsible for the slump in the growth of rice output during the period.

Post-ban Period Policies on Rice Production, 1995-2011

The post-ban period policies on rice production was a period characterised by low restrictions, temporary suspension of duty, 50 per cent tariff or less, liberalised import and total relaxation of the ban on rice importations.¹⁶³ The decline in domestic production of rice could not only be blamed on increasing imports. In 1995, the government of General Sani Abacha considered the country's policy on rice inconsistent with the aspirations of the public. The reason was that the policy had oscillated between import tariffs and restrictions including outright ban.¹⁶⁴ The administration, therefore, considered lifting the ban with the following reasons:¹⁶⁵

- a) There was a hitting pressure from the international financial institutions such as the World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They argued that the ban on importation was not consistent with the liberalisation advocacy of the government.
- b) The government was believed to have failed in the implementation of the ban policy on the commodity. For instance, rice was yet smuggled through the land borders across the Republic of Benin and Niger Republic. This was evident in the manner the major markets in Nigeria were flooded with imported rice despite restrictions.
- c) There was also pressure on the government by investors in rice importation, who largely constituted urban elite and preferred the consumption of imported rice.

A major government policy on the rice sub-sector during the 1995-1999 (the last period of military administration in Nigeria) was the lifting of the ban on rice imports in

1995. During this period, the remaining subsidy on fertilizers was entirely removed. However, when the Olusegu Obasanjo administration assumed office in a democratic dispensation in 1999, the government re-introduced the fertilizers subsidy. In February, 2000, sequel to a meeting of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), the government retracted the initial pronouncement on subsidising fertilizers.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, the administration liberalised the agricultural inputs market. By implication, government totally disengaged itself from the production, procurement, marketing and distribution of all agricultural inputs including fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, equipment and so forth.¹⁶⁷ Private investors in the market were thus given licences to import and sell products according to the market forces. There was as a follow-up a downward review of the tariff on agricultural machinery and allied spare parts.¹⁶⁸ What this implied was that the prevailing market prices of farm inputs determined the fate of production of local produce.

In 2001, the National Food Security Programme was part of the regional arrangement of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).¹⁶⁹ This arrangement was built on regional trade policies such as import substitution, marketing/price policies, promotion of modern agricultural practices and a Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development programme (CAAD).¹⁷⁰ In recognition of the crucial role of finance in agricultural production, the Central Bank of Nigeria introduced policies aimed at enhancing the delivery of credit to the sector, particularly the rice sub-sector. For instance, the bank introduced 'Refinancing Facility' to encourage deposit money banks to lend long-term facilities to the farmers.¹⁷¹

Also, under the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme, the CBN guaranteed loans to 4,887 rice farmers, worth 154.1 Million Naira in 2001. In addition to this, the Bankers'

Committee on Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS) invested in the agricultural sector and agro-allied industries which included the rice processing and milling industry in the same period. The overall thrusts of these measures were to increase food production, commercialisation and promote the agric-business sector.¹⁷²

Moreover, there were other policy initiatives in the post-ban period that impacted on rice production in Abakaliki. The Presidential Initiative on Increased Rice Production was launched on 17th August, 2002.¹⁷³ The initiative was aimed specifically to reverse import bills, meet domestic target in the production of rice by 2006 and attain the capacity to export by 2007.¹⁷⁴ Other major targets of the initiative were to improve on the milling quality, promote domestic consumption of locally produced rice and reduce national rice importation. The overall goal of the initiative was to produce 15 million tonnes of rice from 3 million hectares of farm land by 2007. The main activities of the presidential policy included: (a) to increase production, inputs and crop protection by increasing yields, enhancing agronomic practices, provide credit to farmers, (b) enhance irrigation and land development scheme through rehabilitation and construction, (c) improve processing, marketing and storage, (d) enhance farmers groups, and (e) seed production through NERICA and *Oryza sativa* cultivars.¹⁷⁵

However, the initiative did not realise its goals. The initiative lacked the political will to implement the above objectives. Meanwhile, there was about 31 per cent increase in rice production in Abakaliki between 2002 and 2007.¹⁷⁶ It was also reported that 81,505 supply packages, known as R-Boxes, containing seeds and agro-chemical, were supplied and distributed in the various states of the federation, including Ebonyi State.¹⁷⁷ The National Seeds Service (NSS) produced 58 tonnes of foundation seeds, 4.92 tonnes of breeder seeds,

25.23 tonnes of Stage 1 NERICA seeds and 12.6 tonnes of lowland varieties produced by the NCRI and Africa Rice Centre during the presidential initiative.¹⁷⁸

The National Fadama Development Programme II was negotiated and signed on 12th December, 2003, as a follow-up to Fadama I, whose activities did not cover most states in the Southeast, Nigeria. The new Fadama II policy which took effect in 2005 was in line with the ADP strategic plan in poverty reduction, private sector promotion, rural development and increase in income of rice farmers.¹⁷⁹ At the end of Fadama II, in 2009, the Fadama III programme carried out a survey on rice production potentials/ situation in Abakaliki, and further reported their submissions to the Minister of Agriculture in the following words which included, among others, that¹⁸⁰

- i. Ebonyi State has carried out several activities to support the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) including support to the rice economy.
- ii. The state implemented the Songhai Agricultural Scheme, under which youths were provided with relevant training and soft loans to embark on agricultural production, processing and marketing including rice agric-business.
- iii. The need to ensure that the market quality of Abakaliki rice is improved.
- iv. The state also purchased 20 units of 4 Wheel Drive tractors and rehabilitated two old ones for tractor hiring services to farmers in the state.
- v. Ebonyi State government established Agricultural Development Cooperation (ADC) which played key roles in transforming rice economy of Ebonyi.
- vi. The state government also successfully participated in the World Bank (assisted) National Fadama Development Programme III (NFDP III).

Apart from the several FRUGs that were funded for rice production and processing under the project, the Ebonyi State Government, in addition, collaborated with Kinky University, Japan and the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation (NCAM), Ilorin in 2011 during the (NFDP III). They carried out the *Sawah* rice technology demonstration, which resulted in achieving 7.0 tonnes per hectare from FARO 52 and 6.5 tonnes per hectare from FARO 44 varieties of rice.¹⁸¹ With the Fadama Additional Financing, it was projected that all the 300,000 hectares lowland rice area in the state would be cultivated. There was also an indication that about 100,000 hectares of the over 250,000 hectares of irrigable rice land were cultivable. This would mean a total output of 2,000,000 tonnes from 400,000 hectares cultivated yearly at an average yield of 5 tonnes per hectare using FARO 52, FARO 44, and FARO 57 varieties of rice.¹⁸²

In 2009, the National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS) was founded with the following policy thrusts:¹⁸³ (a) raise paddy rice output from 3.4 million tonnes in 2007 to 12.8 million tonnes by the end of 2018; (b) post harvest processing and treatment; (c) irrigation development; and (d) input availability-mainly seeds, fertilizers and farming equipment. The NRDS aimed also to contribute 50 per cent subsidy for seeds and 25 per cent for fertilizers, reduce customs tariffs on imports of specific agricultural machineries.¹⁸⁴ Under the NRDS policy, the National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC) was made to be in charge of seed production and certification, while the NCRI and Africa Rice Centre regulated their delivery to producers.¹⁸⁵

In 2011, Presidential Transformation Agenda was launched to strengthen and transform agriculture in Nigeria. This policy on the agricultural sector was otherwise called the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) by President Goodluck Jonathan.¹⁸⁶ The

policy defined agriculture as a business and sought to promote private sector investment in agriculture. Rice, cassava, sorghum, coca and cotton were among key priorities of the transformation policy. To achieve some of its targets, the strategy was aimed at improving rice quality and quantity, a situation that would bridge the demand and supply deficit for self-sufficiency in rice production in some parts of the country, including Abakaliki.¹⁸⁷ The table below shows a series of policies on rice production/ importation in the ban and post-ban periods, 1986-2011:

Table VI

Periods	Measures
October 1986	Implementation of SAP and total abolition of rice imports; abolition of commodity boards to provide incentives to farmers through increased producer prices
1995	100% tariff
1996	50% tariff
1997	50% tariff
1998	50% tariff
1999	50% tariff
2000	85% tariff
2001-2002	150% tariff; (Presidential Initiative on Rice).
2003-2005	50% tariff
2006-2007	Duty temporarily suspended.
2008	Duty reintroduced.
2009	5 - 30% tariff; differential tariff.
2010	30-50% tariff, differential tariff.
2011	30% tariff, Agricultural Transformation Agenda for increased rice production and self-sufficiency campaign.

Source: Ahmed O. Busari and K. M. Idris-Adeniyi, "Trade Policy and Nigeria Rice Economy," *International Journal of Agricultural Research and Review* vol. 3 No. 1, January, 2015, 154

The 'sustainable' rice production objective of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda concentrated on domestic production target over a four-year-period, when it was

expected that the country would become self-sufficient in rice production.¹⁸⁸ This, by implication, meant that the policy set a deadline for the last batch of rice import. To this effect, the presidential agenda was projected to enhance irrigation and mechanisation system through the private sector involvement.¹⁸⁹ This could be part of the reasons the Federal Executive Council, under President Jonathan administration, between 2009 and 2011, approved the establishment 10 integrated large-scale rice processing plants in major rice producing areas of 12 states of the federation. The summary of the approved schedule of companies projected to meet the ‘self-sufficiency’ target is indicated below:

Table VII

S/N	Company	State to Operate	Location	Numbers	Unit Cost (N)	Total Cost (N)	40% Credit Amount Recommended (N)
1	Ada Rice Production Limited	Enugu	Adani	2	1.4BN	2.8BN	1.120BN
2	Bayelsa Farm Company	Bayelsa	Yenogoa	2	1.4BN	2.8BN	1.120BN
3	Deansmanger Project Ltd.	Niger	Wuya & Bida	2	1.4BN	2.8BN	1.120BN
4	Ebony Agro	Ebonyi	Ikwo	1	1.4BN	1.4BN	560MN
5	Isyaku Rabiw & Sons Ltd.	Kano	Sharada	2	1.4BN	2.8BN	1.120BN
6	Labana Global Ventures Ltd.	Kebbi	Brinnin Kebbi	2	1.4BN	2.8BN	1.120BN
7	Ofada Vetee Rice Nig. Ltd.	Ogun	Itori	1	1.4BN	1.4BN	560MN
8	Olam Nig. Limited	Kwara Adamawa Benue	Pategi Yola Makrudi	3	1.4BN	4.2BN	1.680BN
9	Stine Industries Ltd	Anambra	Amichi	1	1.4BN	1.4BN	560MN
10	Tara-Agro Ind. Limited	Taraba	Wukari	1	1.4BN	1.4BN	560MN

Total Cost= **N23.8BN**, Total 40 per cent credit = **N9.5BN**, N= Naira, BN = Billion Naira, MN= Million Naira. **Source:** Federal Ministry of Agriculture “Action Plan for Rice Agenda” *Rice Transformation Proposal 2013*, 24

The purpose of this approval was to utilise the sum of 10 Billion Naira from the rice levy account for a credit scheme to support local rice production.¹⁹⁰ The 40 per cent subsidy approved by the government was meant to increase the mills’ processing capacity, expansion through procurement and installation in a public-private partnership, with 40 per cent from the federal government and 60 per cent investors share.¹⁹¹

At the state level, rice development policies were either weak or almost non-existent as earlier observed. Policies on rice from the federal government, however, were implemented in Abakaliki, but such policies were mostly applicable to large-scale rice production, processing and marketing enterprises.¹⁹² Since after the establishment of the Abakaliki Rice Mill Complex in 1964, rice production has not encountered significant policies from the state government. However, in 2009, the government of Chief Martins Elechi considered the installation of integrated rice mills in the cluster areas of the three senatorial zones of Ebonyi State thus: State Government owned Rice Mill Cluster located at Iboko, Izzi area, with an annual paddy processing capacity of 54,000 metric tonnes. The remaining mills were located at Ekpomaka Ikwo cluster and Oso Edda, Afikpo area, with 54,000 metric tonnes (volume) capacity. Each of the rice mills operated at 5 tonnes per hour (speed).¹⁹³ The figure below shows the detailed intervention costs of the three Rice Mill Clusters project by the Elechi administration in Ebonyi State:

Figure I

S/N	ITEM	COST
1.	Equipment for 3 Sites including Custom Clearing	N1,005,319,691.00
2.	3 Parboiling Unit Equipment	1,029,296,151.90

3.	3 Parboiling Houses	450,000,000.00
4.	3 Factory buildings	887,745,615.00
5.	Landscaping for the 3 sites and clusters	45,000,000.00
6.	5 Warehouses	300,000,000.00
7.	3 Administrative Blocks	90,000,000.00
8.	3 Ware bridge houses/ Gate houses	30,000,000.00
9.	Fencing (4 hectares) of the 3 sites	30,000,000.00
10.	15km Road networks with Asphalts	1,000,000,000.00
11.	Police Posts	30,000,000.00
12.	Health Centres	30,000,000.00
13.	Reticulation of Water from the Mega Water Schemes (Ifuruekpe & Ukawu)	4,500,000,000.00
14.	30 Cluster Buildings	300,000,000.00
15.	Sub Total=	N16,743,636,150.00
16.	Take off Amount=	N1,893,065,306.00
17.	Net Total Required	N14,850,570,844.00

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, “Draft Ebonyi State of Nigeria Agricultural Policy”, Government of Ebonyi State, August, 2008, pp. 46-47

It may be necessary to reiterate that the state government had not formulated policies that could practically improve on the conditions of the privately owned or managed rice mill complexes in the state. For example, the Abakaliki (Cooperative) Rice Mill Ltd. was said to have serviced about 800 mills within the complex in the 1970s, with about 1,344,000 metric tonnes per annum without state government support.¹⁹⁴

Between the last decade of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first centuries, there were about 2,000 rice mills within the complex, ranging from 2, 3, 16 to 26 Horse Power HR, HA and Black Stone machines, variously operating at 2, 3 and 5 tonnes per hour respectively.¹⁹⁵ An informant alleged that there were oscillations on the proposed policy of the government to relocate Abakaliki rice mill complex to the cluster areas with the integrated rice mills. The proposal of the state government was probably stopped by a

court injunction in favour of the Abakaliki Rice Mill Industrial Limited, who claimed that the integrated rice mills had no provisions for small-scale producers.¹⁹⁶ There were two other large-scale rice mills, the United Nations Industrial Development (UNIDO assisted) Rice Mill at Iboko, installed in 2003. In 2004, the *Ebony Agro* Rice Mill, Ikwo, owned by Engr. Charles Ugwu, former Minister of Commerce and Industry, was also established. The two integrated rice mills also operated at 5 tonnes per hour each, with 21, 600 metric tonnes of paddy capacity.

Meanwhile, there were still indications that the government had not made favourable laws that could enhance the operations of the mills.¹⁹⁷ The situation may be similar to the small-holder rice mills scattered all over Abakaliki. However, in 2008, the state government made a policy statement which demonstrated its willingness to develop a globally competitive crop production sub-sector, consistent with the vision of the state agricultural development policy. The policy highlighted key priority areas that would enhance rice production in Abakaliki. The priority areas were as follows: (i) imposition of rice development levy, (ii) tax free dividends for a period of five years, (iii) tax free on agricultural loans with moratorium of over eighteen months and repayment period of not more than seven years, and (iv) tax relief for pioneer industries engaged in the cultivation, processing and preservation.¹⁹⁸

It may be recalled that in 2004 the Ebonyi State Government established a state-owned fertilizers and chemical company at Onuebonyi in Izzi. This was sequel to the government's policy to encourage competition in the fertilizers sub-sector of the economy to be able to widen the scope of the market and supply of the commodity to the farmers.¹⁹⁹ But, besides, it has been argued that apart from fertilizers and credit facilities, there were no

significant policies of the state government that directly impacted on small-scale rice production in Abakaliki.²⁰⁰ For instance, the agricultural loan policy of the state government in 2007 aimed to disburse to 1,000 farmers yearly was said to be too poor to be commended by the local rice producers. Rice farmers or producers may not have constituted about 40 per cent of the beneficiaries in the scheme, which was a charade.²⁰¹

Despite policies that fell within the above periodisation (pre ban, ban and post- ban), there were other regular policies that impacted either directly or indirectly on rice production. They included the 2005 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Common External Tariff Regime (CET). The CET policy harmonised its tariff ban among ECOWAS member states. In doing so, it reduced import duties on a number of essential items including rice.²⁰²

Also, the taxation policy of the Ebonyi State affected the invisible incomes of the producers. A lot of taxes were as a result paid on items, which invariably reduced the quantity of domestic rice production.²⁰³ It has been said that the private policies on rice production that existed in Abakaliki were traced to regulations and conducts of some associations and individual actors in the production of rice. These included cooperative societies, millers, transporters unions and so forth. Most of the policies at this level were not pronounced since they had little or no effect on small-scale rice production.²⁰⁴ In most cases, large-scale producers have been accused of influencing the decisions and policies of the government, sometimes for their selfish interest.²⁰⁵

External Factors in Rice Production

Generally, rice production and importation in Nigeria are known to have been peddled by ‘carrot and stick’ influences of the private entrepreneurs in the rice agric-

business. However, the international instruments of trade liberalisation at the forum of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) allowed for free trade, which was sometimes hazardous. Some activities of other external mercenaries in the importations or rice trade and production had had more pains than win-win approach.²⁰⁶ The mercenaries in this enterprise included the rice importers, producers (investment groups), smugglers and policy-makers such as politicians and some personnel of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS). They contributed, sometimes, adversely to the flourished external influences of the ‘cabals’ and ‘stakeholders’ in the rice industry in Nigeria.²⁰⁷ Therefore, this section examines the two major factors: trade liberalisation and importation, which on the above allusion, influenced rice production over the years.

The Effects of Trade Liberalisation on Rice Economy

The major strengths of the Abakaliki economy were its rich agricultural and human resources suitable for the development of the area. Its most pressing weakness on the other hand was the inability or rather difficulty in harnessing the potentials of the resources in a strategic approach that could diversify the economy and reduce its dependence upon imported commodities including rice. Consequently, the Abakaliki economy remained vulnerable to external influences in the rice sub-sector.²⁰⁸

In Nigeria, for instance, the consequences of the external influences and internal imbalances manifested themselves in an adverse balance of payment (deficit), high rate of unemployment, low capacity utilisation in the manufacturing industries and severe deterioration of quality of life. This was otherwise the characteristic of the trade liberalisation policy of the SAP regime of the 1980s. Trade liberalisation simply means the condition of low restrictions in importation of goods and services or an absence of trade

policies such as tariffs, quantitative and qualitative restrictions and other devices obstructing the movement of goods and services between countries.²⁰⁹ Liberalisation is invariably the opposite of protectionism, which entails policies meant to manipulate international trade in order to strengthen one or more domestic productions or industries.²¹⁰

International trade in goods and services was based on the Ricardian theory of comparative advantage by David Ricardo. The theory outlines, in simple terms, conditions under which two countries can engage in trade.²¹¹ One of its ear-marking terms states that, even if a country had absolute advantage in the production of two commodities, it would be better for the country to produce that commodity in which it had relative comparative advantage over the other. The demand for the second commodity could be met, according to the theory, by importation from other countries which had the relative comparative advantage in producing the second commodity.²¹² This theory is based on the assumption of the Free Trade Policy or International Trade Liberalisation. Liberalisation strategies were seen as a means of solving serious economic problems and hopefully arresting the dwindling trend in the economy.

Nigeria was an import dependent nation and may have been affected adversely by the international trade policy of liberalisation. However, it may be important to underline that Nigeria had no “Agreement on Agriculture” reduction commitments which were negotiated in 1994, during the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).²¹³ This then may mean that Nigeria had no regional or bilateral trade agreement that squares within the rice trade and production. The unrestricted importation advocated by the GATT also implied a free environment for foreign rice producers like Thailand, India, China, Philippines, among others, to exploit the opportunities in the

quantity of imported rice consumed locally. Based on the assumptions of the free trade policy and in the context of the Ricardian theory, it appeared that liberalisation in food imports was a charade.²¹⁴ The reasons were because it failed to take into consideration the trends in rice consumption and agricultural production. For instance, the search for absolute advantage in profit or capital could always be at the cost of local food security and farmers' survival. Let us consider another simple example, suppose a country enjoys a comparative advantage in the production of maize which has largely been produced by relatively large-scale farmers and has a comparative disadvantage in the production of rice, produced by small-scale (rural) farmers. By implication of the theory, the country should export maize and import rice. This must definitely undermine the local food security because the consumption of rice is far beyond maize.²¹⁵ Thus, there will be increase in the price of maize in the country as well. Secondly, the economic base and formation of the rural farmers would be destabilised because of the imports of rice from another country.

Another possible reason why liberalisation in food trade was detrimental could have stemmed from ethical aspects of food production. It is inevitable for a society to exist without food production. Therefore, no country could survive without producing at least a substitute for subsistence.²¹⁶ What is necessary was the enhancement and efficiency of resource use as indicated in the theory of comparative advantage. The application of the comparative advantage theory in the international market forces led to decline in the local food security, especially when the commodity (rice) imported constituted the major proportion of the nation's food basket and calories intake.²¹⁷ Also, Nigeria's major partners in rice importation were developed nations which enjoyed the rise in the import prices in their countries with retrogressive effects on Nigeria's export prices. This trend was

characteristic of the balance of payment deficit in Nigeria's rice imports particularly in the late 1980s and 1990s.²¹⁸ The degrees of international trade have meant greater distances between producers and decision-makers. There were indications that the position of the government on the direction of rice production shifted from the rice farmers to the big-time investors in the sector and food retailing companies.²¹⁹ What this implied was a loss of confidence in the local rice production in favour of imported produce. The position of the major international agency on food security such the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was not far from the above submission when it avers that,²²⁰

1. import will permit consumption to grow by reducing prices and increasing supply in domestic markets;
2. trade liberalisation increases per capital availability of food; and
3. trade liberalisation is good because it raises the general level of efficiency both in sectors liberalised and in the wider economy.

In theory, these assumptions are accepted, but realistically they appear to be impracticable, particularly in the rice sub-sector in Nigeria. The first and second assumptions could have given way for the flooding of imported rice in the Nigerian markets at a cheaper rate which dislocated local producers to countries where rice production attracted better prices.²²¹ The third assumption of the FAO above would not have brought any significant efficiency in the sector. It rather dispensed of the services of other actors and sub-sectors in the rice economy. The testimony of Kelvin Watkins was an eye opener in the food situation in Africa, when he responded to the international trade policy in the following words:

It is true that international trade in food products will raise consumption of imports. And that is precisely a part of the food security problem for

many countries. For example, in Sahel Africa, per capita consumption of imported cereals like rice and wheat has increased with parallel decline in per capita production in coarse grains. The second assumption that trade increases per capita availability of food is also true.²²²

At the same time, food security from the consumption angle is more than mere food availability. As pointed out in the beginning, it must take into account consumers' ability to buy and access to food. However, most international trade in food is directed towards people who are relatively well fed and have the purchasing power to pay for imports.²²³ One may as well question the theoretical validity of the foregoing assumptions. For instance, trade may decrease per capita availability of food as a result of increased food aid which is detrimental to local food production. This condition also had adverse effects on rural-urban food availability and distribution, as food aid is often directed to the urban population.²²⁴

Economic history may have made useful, although limited, contributions to a better understanding of the relationships between exports and imports as well as economic expansion of the developed and developing countries. In the context of the present study, the discipline attempted to demonstrate that trade liberalisation may have favourable, neutral or adverse effects in the economic growth and structural changes of the developing economies. The major determinant of the effects depended upon the operations of such related considerations as the kind of ownership (foreign or domestic) dominance, natural resources endowment, vocational advantages and world market conditions. Other determinants of the operations of the international trade liberalisation included supply of capital, entrepreneurship and labour skills, the nature of export, production functions, type of industrialisation and other policies of the governments.²²⁵ In the rural economy of the Abakaliki area, these macro-economic indices were hardly present.

The Importation Factor in Rice Production

Importation is a fundamental concept in international trade which involves the exchange of goods across sovereign national boundaries. It is the act of bringing commodities such as consumer goods into a country from another country. The antonym is exportation which is the movement of goods and services from one nation to another in the very terms of foreign trade. The concept of importation, in this context, underscores the underlying rules or criteria for bringing in commodities such as (foreign) rice into Nigeria. It attempts to examine the 'recklessness' in importation and its impact on the Abakaliki rice economy, especially on local production of the crop.

From historical perspectives, therefore, until the mid-1950s, agricultural commodity exports earned Nigeria more than the cost of imports of other goods. The demand for imported items was limited as the country specialised in the production of primary goods and paid for imports of secondary products such as chemicals, machinery, transportation equipment and other manufactures.²²⁶ Primary commodities such as food, mineral, raw materials and so forth, represented 98 per cent of the total exports and 21 per cent of imports in 1955; 92 per cent of exports and 19 per cent imports in 1975; 98 per cent of exports and 24 per cent of imports in 1985.²²⁷ Agricultural products and solid minerals accounted for an increasing proportion of exports through the 1970s with an output of 13 per cent already recorded in 1955 to 5 per cent in 1965. By 1975, the increase in the proportion of export and output rose to 93 per cent and 96 per cent in 1985.²²⁸ The increase in the prices of petroleum in world market induced Nigeria's dependence on oil and a few export commodities in the 1980s.²²⁹ This development made the nation become vulnerable to the world oil price fluctuations.

Practically, in the wake of the economic crisis that hit Nigeria as a result of dependence on oil revenue in the early 1980s, the government of President Shehu Shagari responded with a set of economic apparatuses. For example, the Economic Stabilisation (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1982, enacted by the administration, had stipulated some curtailments of importation into Nigeria.²³⁰ The law advocated for protectionism and restricted imports to the government through a task force in the 1980s called Presidential Task Force on Rice (PTF), already mentioned in this study elsewhere.²³¹ Meanwhile, throughout the world, the rice exports market was becoming highly concentrated, with top five rice exporters accounting for about 80 per cent of the global rice trade.²³² The consumption of rice increased in the period after the 1970s.

In the 1990s, rice was consumed by over 4.8 billion people in 176 countries.²³³ In Asia, for instance, it became the most important food crop for over 2.89 billion people; more than 40 million people in Africa and about 150.3 million Americans. The export of the crop became sporadic with Thailand contributing about 30 per cent of total exports, Vietnam 20 per cent, India 11 per cent, Pakistan and the United States contributing 10 per cent of the total exports.²³⁴ China was the largest rice producer in the world, although in the times, with 30 per cent total export in 2011. India followed with 21 per cent, while Indonesia and Bangladesh contributed eight per cent and seven per cent respectively. Africa accounted for more than half of the total world's rice purchase.²³⁵

The high importation and consumption rate could, however, be linked to the increasing population of the Abakaliki as well as the increase in the share of rice diet.²³⁶ The consumption rate of rice in the country, including the Abakaliki area, is reputed to have grown rapidly over the past three decades which stood at million metric tonnes in the 1990s.

In 1999, for instance, the value of rice imports stood at 259 million dollars which by 2001 increased to 655 million dollars. Between 1990 and 2002, Nigeria imported 5,132,616 million tonnes valued at 1,883,553 million dollars. Between 2001 and 2005, a total of over 55 million tonnes of rice was imported into the country.²³⁷ There was also an increase in the local production of the crop between 2002 and 2006, probably because of the presidential initiative. Meanwhile, as a result of rich harvest in the immediate past, there was a decline in the local production in 2007. However, between 2008 and 2009, there occurred a remarkable increase in the production of the commodity.

Despite the improvement in local production, the consumption and importation of rice continued to increase. It was estimated that by end of 2010, the Nigerian government had expended 403,578,202 million dollars on 677,016 million tonnes of paddy rice importation. In 2011, the consumption escalated to seven million metric tonnes. Unfortunately, only about 2.7 million metric tonnes was produced locally, which represented demand-supply deficit of 4.3 million metric tonnes.²³⁸ This situation clearly inferred that the country had only 49 per cent sufficiency ratio. The remaining gap in supply was resorted to importation.²³⁹ Although, there had been fluctuations in the rate of importations due to various government policies during the decades, the country was believed to have spent an average of 1 Billion Naira daily to augment the supply deficit. This amounted to 365 Billion Naira annually.²⁴⁰ The above data represent official importations. Unofficial transactions through the country's porous borders with neighbouring countries are not captured.

Accordingly, the local production of the commodity (rice) fluctuated between 2,400 and 3,600 metric tonnes in the previous five years before 2011. However, importations grew

from 4,800 to 5,850 within the same period, geometrically.²⁴¹ From 2010 to 2011, without capturing the informal estimates of illegal importation from land borders, imports exceeded local production amounting to over 50 per cent consumption of foreign rice.²⁴² This was a situation that was very unhealthy for local production and infant industries. Major foreign merchants in the rice importation were said have cashed in on the opportunity against Nigeria. They included merchants from Brazil, Thailand, India, Vietnam, China and the United States of America.²⁴³ The expectations of the rice industry was as a consequence characterised by uncertainty, and the importers, particularly a few foreigners (cartel) dominated the business.

Besides, there were two categories of this group. Group A represented importers without significant rice industry in Nigeria and Group B comprised investors in the local production as well as importers.²⁴⁴ These groups were companies (either local or foreign ownership) that identified with the government for rice production. They included the Stallion Group (Vaswani Brothers), Olam/ Vetee Farm, Popular Farms and Mills, African Farms, Conti-Agro Company, Central Trading and Export Company, Honeywell Group, Elephant Group, Flour Mills of Nigeria, to mention a few.²⁴⁵ Another sectional group in rice importation and production was called the rice 'stakeholders'. This group was a set of faceless interest group (cabals) that influenced both the decisions of government and the rice companies.²⁴⁶

Criteria for Rice Importation in Nigeria

Most developing countries including Nigeria were said to have provided incentives, conditions and criteria to encourage capital formation in some sectors like the food production of the economy. These incentives and laid-down conditions for the importation

of food items could be seen in the import duty waiver, variable tariff charges such as differential duties/ levies and customs excise, which constituted the integral part of the revenue and tax system of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS).²⁴⁷

To meet the requirements of the NCS and other allied agencies for the importation of goods, five principal documents were needed for the shipping process. They were.²⁴⁸

1. **Form M:** a document issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) through commercial banks for permit.
2. **Insurance Certificate:** document needed to cover any loss or damage during shipping of the goods to Nigeria.
3. **Agency Certificate:** attestation issued with reference to the type of goods imported, for instance; to ship manufactured goods, a certificate called SONCAP was issued by the Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON).
4. **Bill of Landing/Airway Bill:** this document was issued by shipping company that transported the goods from the Ports of Loading to the Ports of Destination
5. **Commercial or Pro Forma Invoice:** this document attested to the monetary value/ declaration of goods. It was needed for assessment reports.

Moreover, these instruments were legal entities that had background or backup in the following laws: (1) Customs and Excise Management Act (CEMA) No. 5 of 1958 (CAP 84 of 1990) and the Customs and Excise Tariff (Consolidated) Act No. 4 of 1995.²⁴⁹

It could be seen that the acts represented two periods logically. The first period was before the (food) crisis and the second period started after the rice crisis, particularly during the relaxation of the importation ban policy in 1995.²⁵⁰ By the express implication of CEMA of 1958, the Customs, Immigration and Prisons Service Board was charged with the

responsibilities of management and administration of the customs and excise laws and collecting the revenue for customs and excise duties, as well as account for the revenue.²⁵¹

The second act governs the tariff charge and waiving of customs duties in Nigeria. Schedule I of the Customs and Excise Tariff (Consolidated Act No. 4 of 1995) listed the duties chargeable on all imported goods, while schedule II (two) indicated goods that were exempted from duty payment. However, section 11 (eleven) of the same act gave the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal of Nigeria (FRN), powers to grant waivers outside the laws. It specifically stipulated that the president may, on the recommendations of the Tariff Review (TR) by order, impose, vary or remove any duty or levy; add to or vary any of the schedules or delete the whole or any part of any of the schedules or substitute a new schedule or schedules thereto.²⁵² The use of the import duty waivers dates back to 1999, during the Olusegun Obasanjo civilian administration.²⁵³ Other successive government functionaries continued to grant waivers indiscriminately. This situation was evident in the NCS circular issued with Reference Number NCS/DGG/CUS/018/8.4 Vol. 8 of October 5, 2000, sent to all zonal coordinators, custom controllers and officers.²⁵⁴ The memo directed officers to ignore requests and grants of import duty waivers unless approved by the president.

Other criteria or incentives for importation of rice in Nigeria existed as quantitative restrictions or concessional grants to investors in the rice business.²⁵⁵ Under such arrangements, owners of rice mills and new investors in the Nigeria rice economy were allowed to import rice at 10 per cent duty and 20 per cent levy (30 per cent); while other merchants who had no significant contributions to local production, other than 'reckless' importation, were charged 10 per cent duty and 60 per cent levy (70 per cent).²⁵⁶ The

incentives to the first group were technically adopted to subsidise the growth of local capacity in rice production. To adopt this measure, in 2000, an inter-ministerial committee of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade and Investment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, National Planning Commission, the Nigerian Customs Service and Central Bank of Nigeria, was set up.²⁵⁷ Although, on paper, the committee determined beneficiaries and allocated import quotas based on the following key criteria for assessing investments in local rice production:²⁵⁸

- a. A Domestic Rice Production plan (DRPP) that showed evidence of planned investment in local rice production for at least a three-year period.
- b. Paddy rice purchase from Paddy Aggregation Centres (PAC). There must be evidence of a clear plan of purchase of paddy from PACs, the location of the PACs and volumes of paddy to be purchased.
- c. The investors must demonstrate a paddy rice purchase from out grower farmers and farmers' cooperatives; with a clear indication of the location of the farms, volumes of paddy to be purchased from the farms and other determinants such as access roads.
- d. There should be proof of ownership of integrated rice milling facility with parboilers and de-huskers. This condition also involved proof of size of planned installed capacity as well as acquisition of integrated rice milling equipment.

Based on the pre-determined criteria, import quotas were thus granted to the companies. A few companies, many of them of foreign ownership, decided to import beyond allocation. Dubiously, companies that had no investments in the rice value chain were allegedly granted quotas to import.²⁵⁹ These companies, knowing that they did not invest in any of the rice production lines, in turn, sold their quotas to importers who already

had vessels on the high sea, waiting purchase of the quota (document) before they anchored and offloaded.²⁶⁰ In the process, the importers dumped more than specified quantity of rice in the Nigerian markets. As a result, there was excess supply which crashed the price of the commodity. The local farmers on their part could not sell at a relative cost of production, which in the long run discouraged local production.²⁶¹

Smuggling was another issue that gave the Abakaliki rice producers concern over the uncontrolled importation of rice into the markets.²⁶² In an interview with the General Manager, Oyus Brown Rice, Francis Okpani, he disclosed that smuggling of rice into the country affected the genuine business of the private individuals who were willing to contribute to the growth of the local economy.²⁶³ The statistics of the activities (illegal importation) of rice through the porous Nigerian land borders with the Republic of Benin, Niger Republic and Cameroun, may hardly be estimated. Information available to this study shows that there was a warehouse called *Defezi* located close to the Cotonou Port with over 400,000 units of 50 kilogramme bags of Indian and Thailand rice in 2011.²⁶⁴ These bags were bound to penetrate Nigerian markets through Seme border in Lagos, Idiroko border in Ogun and Shaki in Oyo, as well as Chikanda border in Kwara State.²⁶⁵

A rice trader in the Cotonou axis was quoted to have said that “customs’ claim that they are fighting smugglers or smuggling are not correct. Go there and do a private investigation. They collect between N2,000 and N4,000 bribe for one or two bags of rice”.²⁶⁶ Probably, if such an amount of money could be accepted for a bag or two, one may imagine the cost of production and getting it to Cotonou Port, which seems that the production cost was cheaper abroad. Smuggling not only flooded the Nigerian market, reduced local enterprises in rice production, but it also adversely affected the revenue

collection to the government as well as rice production in Abakaliki. The subsequent chapters shall examine related constraints to rice production.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEXUS BETWEEN ABAKALIKI RICE AND EMPOWERMENT

This chapter examines the various aspects of empowerment, employment and job creation as a result of the rice production and enterprise in the Abakaliki area. It also examines the economic, social, cultural as well as religious impact of the rice industry on the rural and urban communities in Abakaliki.

The Place of Rice in Hunger and Rural Poverty in Abakaliki

The rice crop assumed a new trend and position in the rural lives of the Abakaliki people in the 1970s, soon after the Nigeria-Biafra war (1967 -1970); however, there had been a little growth in rice production in the 1960s¹. Before the outbreak of the war in the mid-1960s, rice was produced for commercial purposes at a relatively insignificant proportion. It was hunger and poverty in the aftermath of the war in the 1970s that appeared to have compelled the people to change to short term duration crops such as rice which matured between 90 and 110 days. The people also discovered that rice could be prepared and eaten with oil palm and salt, unlike other staples cooked with much ingredient.²

The hunger situation could have undoubtedly changed the status of rice as a luxury food item which by extension encouraged the people to include it in their menu. Another factor that recommended rice to the people was that it was easy to prepare. A number of people who could not be sustained by other staple crops such as cassava, yam and cocoyam, switched over to rice farming. For instance, yam and cassava took a longer duration and were more difficult to process as well as more tasking to produce than rice.³ Thus, because rice enjoyed these advantages over other crops, the Abakaliki people further accommodated it as part of their subsistence.

Besides, some of the people discovered that it was possible to borrow to offset a project timed for three months (usually the harvesting period of rice). In other words, lenders were better disposed to granting loans to rice farmers in the hope of remittance after harvests.⁴ With this opportunity offered by rice production, the people were secured from hunger after the war. They could also sell rice to buy other food items needed in their families. The people, who had no money to access medical treatment, were also able to do so. Besides, they were able to provide shelters for themselves in the aftermath of the devastations of the war.⁵

For the Abakaliki people, one of the most important external connections became their westward trade in rice, yam and cattle, and the eastward movement of manufactured goods and prepared foods to Abakaliki, which integrated the area economically with the rest of the Eastern Region.⁶ Trade relations enabled the people to adopt other ways of utilising the economic values of rice and preparing its various dishes. To emphasise the roles rice played in hunger and rural poverty, particularly in the aftermath of the war, the Abakaliki people locally named species of rice, *Ogboo-ogu*, meaning peace-keeper in a war for its fast response in ensuring food security among the people.⁷ For the war indeed provided avenue for hunger in the real sense of the word, after the physical civil war of 1967-1970.

Importance and Uses of Rice

Apart from its highly nutritious value, rice is one of the most important grains in Abakaliki. It provided more than fifty per cent of the calories in the diet⁸. However, there were varieties of rice with diverse genetic components which varied nutritionally; some breeds of rice were genetically modified to manufacture specified products such as alcohol, flakes, wine, laundry starch, raw material for abrasive, livestock feed and other

confectionaries.⁹ The rice husk was used for making asbestos' roofing sheets and particle boards for carpentry work. It was also used as fuel for cooking. Most developed poultry farms used the rice husk as mattress which provided warmth for the birds.

The importance of rice was derived mainly from two central factors: (a) the position of rice in the people's diet, and (b) raising of the average income of the rural as well as urban communities. Rice production provided employment and job opportunities for the rural population. From the point of cultivation, there were paid jobs for activities in plant nursery, land clearing, tilling, planting, weeding, fertilizer application, harvesting and threshing.¹⁰ At the processing stage, jobs existed in parboiling and drying, milling operations, bagging, among others. Other services that provided the people with the means of livelihood included loading, off-loading, transportation and a web of other activities that earned the people incomes on daily basis. Rice also provided about twenty-one per cent of carbohydrate (energy) and fifteen per cent of protein. Other nutritional constituents of the crop included minerals, vitamins and fiber.¹¹

Economic Impact of Rice Production on Abakaliki

The economic contributions of the Abakaliki rice industry are presented in three central parts: the farm gate unit, processing and milling sector and rice sub-sector activities. These parts of the enterprise are disaggregated into direct, indirect and induced effects in the rice sub-sector in Abakaliki. The direct effects are the total efforts or contributions specifically attributed to the activities at the farm-gates, processing/ trading sector and the rice sub-sector economy such as jobs supported by businesses that supply inputs to the three central parts. In addition, the indirect and induced effects are the jobs or employments created through the interaction of the activities propelled by the rice industry.¹² These three

categories of activities in rice production enjoyed output, value added and employment opportunities. Let us examine them further.

The Impact of Rice at the Farm-Gates in Abakaliki

Although, there appears to be no existing data or record of figures to represent the exact proportion of the economic activities in rice production in Abakaliki, the findings of this research have shown that the people were sustained through the provision of inputs and services in the rice farms.¹³ Land rental first proved a substantial source of income, although, often for a nominal sum. The rental also led to the beginning of a trend towards individual control of land through lease or hire within roughly fifteen miles from Abakaliki township.¹⁴

By selecting and paying cash rent for rice farms, the tenant rice farmers could modify the traditional land tenure system of Abakaliki. Between 1955 and 1960, for instance, the indigenous people of Abakaliki were hired as labourers to work in rice farms by the tenant farmers. Some of the labourers utilised this opportunity to fend for their families and expand individual farms.¹⁵ They used the wages to cater for activities on their personal farms. In 1956, following the destruction of food crops by heavy rains, there occurred a decline in the population of the area. The local farmers as a result migrated to other parts of Igboland, leading to a reduction in the supply of labour. This meant an increase in the cost of hiring the available labourers to work on rice farms.¹⁶ Shortly before the civil war in 1967, it was reported that some local labourers who had integrated themselves with the 'civilised' non-indigenes could save money to send their children to schools as well as marry more wives to assist on rice farms.¹⁷

Also, following the outbreak of the civil war in 1967, Abakaliki was one of the defenseless targets and areas to be captured by the Nigerian troops. This situation affected rice production in Abakaliki and consequently led to the return of a good number of the stranger farmers to their indigenous homes to witness the extent of destruction. Meanwhile, some migrant wage labourers of the Ezza extraction, for instance, who had earlier absconded from their indigenous homes and settled somewhere in the Nike area of Igboland, also returned home during the war.¹⁸ Thus, both the tenants and the indigenous farmers returned to Abakaliki after the war with borrowed ideas of rice farming.

But these notwithstanding, the use of traditional implements remained prevalent among the people. Local blacksmiths made hoes, cutlasses, metal pots, axes and chisels for working on the farms. The locally-made hoe and cutlass were sold for 2 shillings (about 18 naira) and 1 shilling respectively between 1971 and 1974.¹⁹ The women and middle-aged children, who worked with these implements or for other farm activities during the mid-1970s, were paid about 6 naira 75 kobo per day. Sometimes, they charged for the clearing and cultivation of about an acre or above.²⁰ It was from these services and other subsistence activities that the people were able to raise their children and send same to schools or apprenticeship in driving, motor mechanic, lorry body construction, metal and wood works, and so forth.²¹

Modern technology transfer could have played a role in the growth of rice in the Abakaliki economy. With the new trend, there began to occur an upsurge in the farm input suppliers of chemicals and insecticides to control pests and diseases on rice farms. A notable dealer among this group was Chief B. U. Okoli, who became known as “Okoli Agriculture”. He was a rice farmer and supplier of agro-chemicals in Abakaliki. His enterprise grew

beyond this activity at the rice farms and mills.²² Between the late 1950s and the 1990s, the trends of growth and development in the demand and supply of rice had affected the production costs which otherwise added value to the wealth and income at the farm-gates. For instance, during this period, rice farmers appeared to have ascended to certain social and political positions among the elite in Abakaliki.²³ This progress continued even after the lifting of the ban on the importation of rice in the area between 1995 and 2011.²⁴

Some of the local farmers invested in other social and economic sectors such as politics, education, humanitarian services, religion and health care. For example, between 1999 and 2007, a rice farmer, Dr. Sam Egwu emerged the governor of Ebonyi State. Chief Martins Elechi, also a rice farmer and miller became the governor of the state between 2007 and 2011.²⁵ Elechi had appointed a colleague in the rice farming business, Chief Fidelis O. U. Mbam, as the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) between 2007 and 2011. Chief Mbam on his part had established a rice mill company known as Fidemol at the Abakaliki Rice Mill Complex in the 1980s.²⁶

Mr. Marcellus Ezaka, a rice farmer in Ezza, had informed the researcher during a field trip that he joined the rice farming (business) in 1971, after trading on tobacco along the Onitsha and Cotonou axis for fifteen years.²⁷ He stated that when he got married, he resolved to avoid the risk involved in trading along the borders of Nigeria and Benin Republic. “When I permanently returned home in the early 1970s”, he added, “I settled at Onueke Ezza village for rice farming”. According to Mr. Ezaka, he had trained all his children in tertiary institutions, including Dr. Chidi Ezaka of the Federal Medical Centre, Abakaliki, with the profits generated from rice farming and trading. Other professionals among his children were said to be working in the public service.²⁸

The Impact of Rice Economy through the Processing/ Trading Sub-Sector on Abakaliki

This sub-sector of the rice economy in Abakaliki was said to have provided better chances for profit-making by the mill workers and rice dealers. Much of the profits was made at the processing and milling stages. For this reason, the millers became the principal actors in the rice agric-business since after the replacement of hand-hulling method in 1948 by the milling system.²⁹ The era of milling rice had impacted on the value addition although with limitations. Pounding to remove rice husks with mortar and pestle required more energy with lower precision than machines. However, the local users were able to feed and provide shelter from this service over time.³⁰ Mechanised milling became rampant in the late 1950s, a situation which gradually changed the impression, precision and speed of production, quality of produce and attracted better prices. Abakaliki rice following this became more acceptable in the markets.³¹

Between 1955 and the mid-1960s, the Abakaliki Rice Millers' Association and other cooperative societies were formed at the old rice mill site (now meat market). Following the above development, the benefits of rice production became more enhanced with the millers among the top gainers.³² It became the role of the tenant rice farmers (non indigenous Igbo groups) and the indigenous rural people to collectively improve the production of rice in Abakaliki. It has been pointed out that it was the non indigenous Igbo groups living in Abakaliki town that first had easy contact with the Agriculture Department in Abakaliki as middlemen in paddy purchase. In a report in 1963, Delane E. Welsh said that,

...there were probably not over 150 stranger Igbo paddy farmers in Abakaliki Division; nevertheless, they had a significant impact on production since they averaged 28 acre per farmer compared to 3.7 acres for indigenous Igbo farmers...³³

These non indigenous Igbo groups made money from the paddy business and established personal mills. At a time, they dominated the mill industry and the cooperative societies which, however, disaggregated into progressive unions according to their various homes of origin.³⁴

The paddy rice purchase by the non indigenous Igbo groups from the rural areas in Abakaliki, on the one hand, stimulated the growth of trading centres such as the Iboko, Kpirikpiri and Nkalagu markets. The trade in rice and other agricultural produce also led to the construction of roads between the centres and the Abakaliki town. For instance, the Effium - Nwofe road was constructed in the 1980s.³⁵ This situation was said to have opened up the town for further commercial activities.

On the other hand, the progressive unions formed among the non indigenous Igbo resident in the town and the rural areas replicated aspects of home culture and leadership. They gave loans to members for rice business and other purposes. This was partly because the foreign banks were often unwilling to lend funds to Nigerians.³⁶ These people also provided other social services to members who were predominantly rice millers/ farmers. To this end, members rose to become land owners and successful entrepreneurs. They in turn invested the profits they had made from the rice mills in other sectors such as transport, construction companies and petrol stations in Abakaliki.³⁷

The non indigenous Igbo groups further empowered themselves in a home-based cooperative rice millers/ farmers association. They built ware-houses, town halls and invested in the rice mills as well as petroleum business in the area.³⁸ For instance, there were

the famous Enugwu Ukwu, Arondizuogu, Adazi Nnukwu, Njikoka and Udoka Halls, some of which were attached to rice storage/ warehouses. To identify with their places of origin, the rice millers, who were predominantly stranger Igbo, often named their rice mills thus: *Awka Amaka, Ugobueze, Nnanyelugo, Akalabo-Amesi* Rice Mills and so forth.³⁹ In the late 1980s, this aspect of nationalism had been copied by the indigenous rice mill owners who were said to have named their rice mills *Noyo, Nodo, Ezekuna* Rice Mills, representing the three clans of *Ikwo, Izzi and Ezza* respectively.⁴⁰

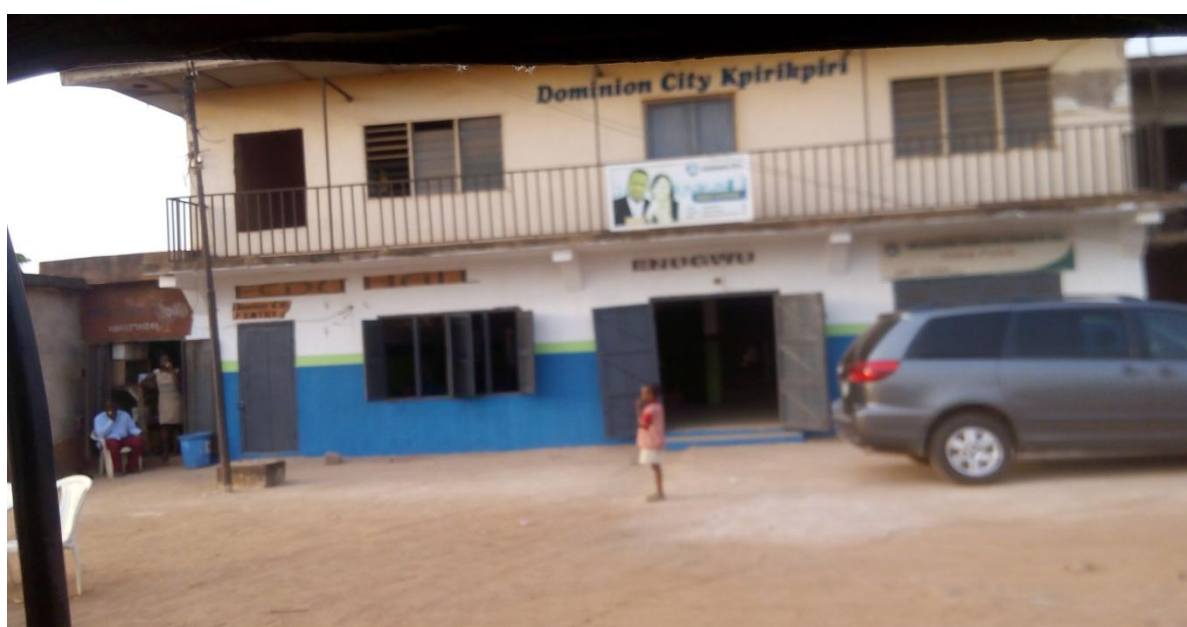


Plate 19: Enugwu-ukwu Tenant Rice Farmers' Cooperative Hall, Kpiri-kpiri



Plate 20: Abakaliki Farmers' Cooperative Rice Mill Petrol Station, Vanco/Ogoja Road

Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, November, 2016.

Furthermore, the rice mills housed a number of workers who earned significantly well and subsequently established themselves in the business or other ventures. A famous rice mill owner/ trader in Ezza, who could not complete primary school education after class three, Mr. Donatus Nweke, regretted that he did not name one of his children after 'rice', considering the economic role the crop played in his life. He recounted the successes and extent of empowerment from the rice business, despite his poor background. According to him;

I have been in the rice business, as an operator and miller for twenty nine years. I started apprenticeship here in Onueke in 1988 and became independent in 1990. Between 1990 and 1997, I was into parboiling business. Since 1997 to 2011, I have been a rice miller/ trader. I also operate the engine and do some mechanical repairs. By my experience and through communication with people and friends in the business, I was able to establish myself and train my only brother, Titus Monday Nweke, who is now serving as a Medical Laboratory Scientist at Martha Hospital Afikpo. My first son, Philip Ogochukwu Nweke, is doing his Third Year in the Department of Public Administration, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. He is now the course representative. I have been able to build a well fenced edifice, roofed with step-tiles sheets, with a car attached to it. In fact, am living well. I have also established a provision store for my wife who has eight children for me (five females and three boys), in the schools. I could remember how I started with 350 Naira in the early 1990s. I was able to purchase about 10 bushels at 35 Naira a bushel.⁴¹

There were numerous millers with similar experiences in the growth to certain economic status and social positions through their activities in the rice industry in the area. For instance, Mr. Joseph Nwali, also a rice miller/ trader at Onueke Ezza was able to erect two different storey buildings in Abakaliki town and another at his home town in Ezza. Others included Justice Ngele Aleh, who trained himself and children from rice farming; Senators Chris Nshi and Anthony Agbo, among others, were all in the rice business.⁴²

Workers such as jobs men and labourers survived from the activities at the various processing mills, particularly in the Abakaliki rice mill complex. The winnowers were often women and young girls (mostly secondary school leavers). They were responsible for the evacuation of the rice husks from the mills to the disposal sites.⁴³ In addition to the daily pay, the winnowers gathered remnants of rice deposits in the husks and assembled them for sale or consumption. One of them informed the researcher that she made an average ₦800 on daily basis from picking rice deposits in the husks apart from regular income for the job at the milling complex.⁴⁴

The engine operators were a set of workers sustained by the rice economy in Abakaliki. They worked for the mill owners, although some operators owned personal mills in the complex and as well were hired to work for others. According to Mr. Benjamin Oroke, “In the late 1990 and the early 2000s, an operator was paid between ₦12 and ₦20 to mill a bushel of rice which was sold for ₦500. By 2005, the price of milling had changed to ₦50, and then to ₦100 between 2009 and 2010.”⁴⁵

By December 2011, the cost of milling a bushel was ₦200. There were other avenues of income for the operators outside the above illustrations. The mill owners paid the operators between ₦5,000 and ₦6,000 monthly. In addition to the monthly salary, the

owners of the produce also gave the operators stipends in the neighbourhood of ₦300 or ₦500, after each day's service. In addition to this, they were paid between ₦200 and ₦300 for daily feeding from the mill owners.⁴⁶ The major funds from the cost of milling/ service charge were normally remitted to the mill owners, while the operators lived by the salary and stipends from their employers and customers. Some of operators were able to provide shelter for themselves, train their children in schools, establish personal rice mills and farms, and ascend to certain social status such as title taking.⁴⁷

It is noteworthy that extra costs and charges were inherited from de-stoning rice which had specialised machines in Abakaliki rice mill complex. The cost of de-stoning rice in the first decade of the twenty first century ranged between ₦20 and ₦80, for one hundred cigarette cups. In 2011, it had cost ₦100 which together with milling the same quantity amounted to ₦300.⁴⁸

Bagging of rice was an important activity and a viable means of livelihood for the people. Young school leavers and students complemented the efforts of their parents, guardians and sponsors, with the wages from rice bagging and stitching jobs. It was indicated that one person could bag and stitch one hundred bags in a day. Between 2007 and 2009, for instance, baggers were paid ₦3 to stitch a 50 kilogramme bag of rice. By 2010, the price had risen to ₦5, and then to ₦10 by the end of 2011.⁴⁹ At the end of the day they went home with some substantial sum of money for their personal savings and upkeep for their families.⁵⁰

Also, within the premises of the rice mill complex, there were persons specialised in parboiling and drying of rice (mostly the Ezza). Joseph Oken and Ezekiel Aleke, who hail from Effium and Umuaru Okposi in Ezza respectively, informed the researcher that the job had remained their means of survival since 2005.⁵¹ Parboiling and drying of the 44-gallon-

metal drum content cost ₦450 and ₦650 between 2006 and 2009. Towards the end of 2010 and 2011, they collected the sum of ₦800 for each drum. The labourers said they could parboil and dry only two sets of paddy rice per day. A set was usually made up of two 44-gallons-metal drums which contained sixteen bushels each.⁵² This meant a total of ₦3,200, although the owners of the paddy was said to provide the necessary items for the labour, including water and firewood.

Moreover, James Alo, from Ohaukwu area of the Ezza clan, testified to the pervasiveness of the rice parboiling and drying business in Abakaliki. Despite the tedious nature of these activities (parboiling and drying of paddy) and the time spent, parboiling, which usually lasted between 2:00 am and 5:00 am and drying, which lasted between 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm, the labourers involved in them were known to make significant income. They could also find time to attend to other personal economic activities at the close of work. This showed that they would have combined it with other jobs which naturally would widen the scope of their sources of income.⁵³

Consequent upon trade in the commodity within the Abakaliki rice mills complex and the neighbouring towns, the impact of rice production on Abakaliki was obvious than imagined. A rice trader, Mr. Godwin Nwobodo, from Amagunze in Nkanu-East Local Government Area of Enugu State, was sighted at the mills complex, loading his purchases in a truck bounded for Ogbete Main Market, Enugu. He informed the researcher that since 1976 he had been booking/ loading consignments of the produce from the Abakaliki rice mill to Enugu on weekly basis.⁵⁴ Nwobodo was enthusiastic to catalogue his achievements through the trade in the local rice at the shop Number Zero 11 Number 11 Ogbete Market, Enugu. It appears from all indications that Mr. Nwobodo, by dealing in rice, was able to pay

for the university education of his five children, and also has a personal residence in Enugu town. Also, a set of young people was reported to have passed through his tutelage/ training in the rice trade.⁵⁵

Similar progress was attested to by rice traders in the local markets within and outside Abakaliki. The wholesalers, retailers and middlemen, for instance, a set of women rice traders from Port Harcourt and Aba, may have made relatively high profits from the enterprise and used the returns to solve domestic problems and other economic needs.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s, rice traders and price speculators came to purchase rice in Abakaliki from parts of Southern Nigeria such as Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Lagos, Warri and Benin.⁵⁷ This consequently led to an increase in the volume of trade in Abakaliki rice. The increase in the volume of rice traded, however, enlarged the number of internal (local) markets in the Abakaliki area to include Oye Iboko, Eke Izzi, Nkwo Ezza, Nkwo Nkalagu and Nkwagu Ikwo. The expansion of the local markets occasioned the emergence of small group of wealthy indigenous middlemen in the rice trade. The middlemen later became rice merchants and owned private rice mills.⁵⁸

Also, with the expansion of the rice trade in the local markets, the indigenous people, the Igbo and non-Igbo stranger groups alike began to acquire wealth for investments in other commodities and luxury goods. They were spurred to trade in foreign products in the mid-1970s, especially after the Nigeria-Biafra war that ended in 1970. The people had diversified to establish other sources of income and trading posts for materials such as clothing, umbrella, hats, hot drinks (gin) and other household articles.⁵⁹ Rice trade offered the Abakaliki people (rural and tenant/ non indigenous Igbo groups) the opportunities of material improvement and exposition to foreign ideas about economic life.

Other Value Chains of Rice Economy

The discourse on the rice sub-sector borders on the impact of the rice value chain activities and the end-users' contributions to the general economy of the Abakaliki people. This grossly entailed the impact of other activities surrounding rice production in Abakaliki such as transport, services and activities that led to economic, social, political, cultural and religious growth of the area. Let us consider them one after another.

The Transport Sector

The growth in the transport sector was boosted as a result of the progress in rice production in Abakaliki, which in turn enhanced the rice market. Lorry loads of bags of rice were hauled (in tonnes) to various destinations such as Lagos, Onitsha, Calabar, Ibadan, Uyo, Obubra, Mamfe and Yahe in the early and mid-1960s.⁶⁰ There was a partnership of two brothers from part of Northern Igboland (the present Anambra) who engaged in the rice economy in Abakaliki. They invested in the transport sector with the business name, *Spera and Deo Transport Limited*. The partnership owned and operated a rice mill, bought milled rice and transported same to as far as Onitsha in its own trucks. This became a well known rice business and transport company that further used hired trucks and lorries (wooden body Mercedes 911) to convey rice from Onitsha to Lagos, since there was a union regulating the limits of rice movements through the haulage system from place to place during the period.⁶¹

Other rice millers in a like manner ventured into the haulage business. A famous transport during the period, known as *Ogo Amaka* (in-law is good) was empowered by his father-in-law, a rice miller from the Anambra area of Northern Igboland. The father-in-law was known to have donated to his son-in-law two *Mercedes 911* lorries to commence life

with the daughter, and the son-in-law in turn named the vehicles thus: *Ogo Amaka*. *Ogo Amaka* was among the first-class transporters that moved rice from the Abakaliki rice mills to other parts of Nigeria.⁶²

As the growth in production increased, several vehicles appeared at each of the village markets on the market days to convey paddy to the mills. Between 1962 and 1965, most of the paddies sold in these markets were in 50 to 60 pound weights basket. Some were bagged in John Holt bags (75kg) and arranged for the vehicles to deliver in the Abakaliki town.⁶³ Transportation charges usually varied from day-to-day depending on the number of vehicles that arrived at the markets. At times, the transporters charged 7 shillings per tonne of rice for each mile. Milled rice was transported to various parts of Nigeria, while the unprocessed paddies were purchased from within and outside the country like the Republic of Benin (then Dahomey) and Cameroun.⁶⁴ The table below shows the cost of transportation of paddy or milled rice to and from Abakaliki town in the 1960s:

Table VIII

Distance in Miles	Pence Per Tonne/ Mile
5-12	15
18-45	8
72-120	5
284- from Benin	3
560	3
900 Sokoto	5.3

Source: Delane E. Welsh, "Rice Industry in Abakaliki Area of Eastern Nigeria", unpublished PhD Thesis at the Michigan State University, Michigan, 1964, 330.

The table above shows that costs declined as distance increased. This indicates that the higher the distance, the lower the cost of transportation from 5 to 200 miles. The Sokoto trip probably involved ferry charges and possibly a union problem which required loads to be transferred from one truck to another, as was the case from Onitsha to Lagos about the same period.⁶⁵ The transport sector, especially haulage, was actively involved in the rice economy

in Abakaliki. As a result of a better offer in the sector, some businessmen abandoned their traditional enterprises and joined the rice haulage which fetched quicker money.⁶⁶

From the mid-1960s through the 1970s, Abakaliki had grown as a centre for the motor lorry body construction site. One of the most stimulating enterprises in the transport sector became the construction of the wooden haulage body for movement of tonnes of milled and paddy rice to and from Abakaliki.⁶⁷ By the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the site had grown to an independent workshop and construction site, where industrialists visited to borrow ideas of lorry body construction for the haulage of goods and other manufactures.⁶⁸ An interview with the Chairman, Lorry Body Builders' Association, whose tenure lasted between 2007 and 2011, Mr. Sunday Ibeme, showed that the construction of the motor body sequel to rice production, alleviated poverty among the artisans in the business. He re-emphasised how they established themselves, families and relatives through the wood work.⁶⁹

Rice production also increased the use and sale of bicycle in Abakaliki, especially between 1970 and 1980. Dealers on Raleigh, a brand of bicycle, extended their outlets to Abakaliki.⁷⁰ The people (mostly women) used the brand to convey paddy from the rural communities to the Abakaliki rice mills complex. Bicycles could carry between 1 and 2 tonnes of rice (about 35 bushels or more, whereas a bushel contains 100 cigarette cups) to a distance below 5 miles.⁷¹ A very few traders (middlemen) owned a motorcycle which was sold for ₦1500 by 1975 and 1977. Alternatively, they purchased bicycle which was sold for ₦ 200 or ₦250 for either of the sexes between 1974 and 1978.⁷² By these means, the people were able to convey paddy to the processing mills or rather earned money for the services

rendered with their transportation vehicles. This situation led to the growth of the rice industry, and as well provided the people with the means of livelihood.⁷³

In the late 1980s, there occurred what may be referred to a revolution in the area resulting in more motorcycles, although most of the owners predominantly rice traders/businessmen in Abakaliki, were confronted with the economic changes between 1986 and 1995. There was a slack in the production and distribution of rice. Some of the people, who were not sustained by harsh economy which had affected rice production in the area, switched to the use of motorcycle for commercial purposes. This was the beginning of the commercial motorcycle transport (*Okada*) revolution.⁷⁴ As a result of the austerity measure introduced in the economy at the time, the rice farmers, millers and traders, who were struck by the hardship, used their motorcycles for commercial purposes. They conveyed rice from the various points to places such as the Nkalagu railway station, Abakaliki town, Afikpo and so forth.⁷⁵

Also, towards the end of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first centuries, the commercial motorcycle (*Okada*) business had developed into an organised means of livelihood for users in the rice mills complex in Abakaliki. They constituted about seventy per cent of the total transporters of rice from the Abakaliki mills to areas within the town.⁷⁶ At the time, *Okada* charged ₦500 for each 100 kilogramme bag of rice from the mills to the various destinations as far as 10 miles or more. The Abakaliki Rice Mills Industrial Association Limited also collected ₦20 per bag of rice from the *Okada* riders as revenue to the state government.⁷⁷

In addition, among the same group of transporters was the tricycle group that transported rice in a vehicle known as *Keke NAPEP*.⁷⁸ The prefix, *Keke*, is said to have been

derived from the brand name of the first tricycle introduced in Lagos, Nigeria, in the mid-1990s, while the suffix, *NAPEP*, could be ascribed to the launching of the National Poverty Eradication Programme by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2001, when a number of people were given some tricycles for commercial transport. The tricycles had the inscription, *Keke NAPEP*, which became widely adopted as a general name.⁷⁹ This group constituted the bulk of rice transporters within short distances in the locality and Abakaliki town. They paid some revenues at the rice mills at the instance of each trip. Some of them also expanded to other means of transporting rice such as wheel barrow and truck hire, in order to increase their incomes.⁸⁰

Services

A web and/or networks of service provisions by workers and activities as a result of the opportunities offered by rice production in Abakaliki added to the economic value of the area. These activities have been classified as indirect and induced employment by the study and shall be examined as follows:

First, the introduction and growth of rice production exposed the people of Abakaliki to other economic activities other than the traditional system of subsistence economy. With the development of the village markets and the spread of the rice industry, the people gradually became integrated into modern economies and service provisions such as repairs of automobiles, milling machines, bicycles and in other activities that earned them daily incomes such as carpentry, welding and commerce.⁸¹ Delane E. Welsh has argued thus:

...despite the conservative image the indigenous rural Igbo farmers had among the British, stranger Igbo and others in the town, the Abakaliki people were reluctant to change, they made reasonable and rational economic responses to the development of the rice industry from which they gained reasonably.⁸²

In addition to the responses of the people to the effect of economic changes on the introduction of rice in Abakaliki, a former colonial official in Eastern Nigeria, G. I. Jones, wrote this of the people:

My work in Eastern Nigeria has consistently proved that, where the demand justified it, people were prepared to change, but that the change was initiated by those who could afford to do so. These were not farmers initially, but the government agricultural research departments and following them the businessmen with capital to risk.⁸³

The emphasis here was that the introduction of rice spurred changes in the economic activities in Abakaliki area.

Secondly, the introduction of rice was also one of the major factors that led to the emergence and growth of Abakaliki township. In 1943, there were about 1,000 Africans and Europeans in the town. At attainment of independence in 1960, the town had grown to more than 17,000 persons representing eighty five per cent of both the indigenous and stranger Igbo.⁸⁴ The remaining percentage of the population were perhaps, northerners and different peoples from Yorubaland, Efikland, Ibibioland and Europe. The Europeans, for instance, were known to have begun the growing of rice paddy so as to alleviate food shortages since World War II period (1939-1945), while the non indigenous Igbo groups quickly went into growing, trading and milling of rice.⁸⁵ The town consequently expanded its commercial horizon and became an important centre for administrative, political and economic structures.



Plate 21: Njikoka Abakaliki Farmers' Multi-purpose Cooperative Society Building (Housing PANDA Restaurant and Recreation Centre), Vanco/ Ogoja Road



Plate 22: Wooden Motor Lorry Body Construction Site, Industrial Site, Abakaliki
Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, March, 2017.

Thirdly, it may be necessary to underline that the local production and demand for the imported counterpart (rice) and the spices for preparing rice stimulated international

trade on the produce. International trade in these items and other consumer goods in Abakaliki stimulated foreign exchange earnings.⁸⁶ Foreign exchange earning was a factor in the strength and advancement of external trade in other commodities which improved on the general economy of Abakaliki. This condition facilitated the growth of the area as one of the townships in Igboland. Joseph Ununu has asserted that Abakaliki would have been nowhere if rice production were removed from the area.⁸⁷ In a like manner, Fidelis Igwe has posited that the Abakaliki rice mills complex was the hub of the economy of the entire Ebonyi State.⁸⁸

Nonetheless, there were other cottage activities aided by rice production in Abakaliki. These activities included trade in firewood and mat, airtime, water and food vending. Others included hawking, petrol dispensary, patent and traditional medicine care, *Bureau de Change* (black market), auto spare-parts and rice by-product management. All these (induced) activities primarily thrived from the rice economy which, otherwise in a circular flow of income theory, sustained the rice industry in Abakaliki.⁸⁹

Uzoamaka Josephine Nworie, in an interview, outlined the lucrative opportunities she found in the firewood trade in connection with rice parboiling in Abakaliki. The aged woman, who had spent over thirty years in firewood trade near the rice mills complex, noted that firewood was the only source of fire for the paddy production in Abakaliki.⁹⁰ This situation has undoubtedly placed her in a comparative advantage over the rice millers. It appears she has trained and established her children including two graduates of the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, through the trade.⁹¹

Besides, heaps of firewood of bamboo extractions and other thick logs were normally purchased by the people from the rural communities and forests, and subsequently

transported to the selling points or parboiling centres. According to James Agasa, a length of bamboo measuring between fifteen and twenty feet was sold for 3 pence in the mid-1960s. Heavy logs of hardwood such as mahogany were sold for 6 pence for sizes below six feet. By the end of the 1960s, the price had increased to about 1 shilling. After the change of the currency unit in Nigeria in the early 1970s, three tonnes of firewood was sold for ₦50, which was enough for parboiling more than 140 bushels of paddy.⁹² Between 2010 and 2011, one tonne of firewood was sold for ₦26, 000, and an additional ₦7, 000, for breaking it into smaller pieces.⁹³ These activities provided certain empowerment opportunities and increased the people's living standard.

Also, water was needed for various purposes such as parboiling, hydration of radiation tanks and as coolants. The metal drum took 44 gallons of water in a single parboiling operation. The second parboiling or soaking also took another 44 gallons of fresh water.⁹⁴ This meant that water supply was indispensable in rice parboiling. At the mills, the engines such as *Black Stone*, *Simber* and *Lister* (HR and H2) products from England, needed water as coolants.⁹⁵ Although, some milling machines could work without water, majority of the millers in the Abakaliki rice mills sourced water for operations to be effective. This condition normally created employment opportunities for water vendors. Each engine consumed about 250 litres of water to work between 12:00 pm and 6:00 pm daily for about one week.⁹⁶

In 2011, rice millers were known to have paid water vendors the sum of ₦200 for 250 litres. Ezekiel Igwe and Chinonso Onyema were students at the Community Secondary School, Amuzu and the Model Secondary School, Ameka, respectively. They developed passion for taking part-time employment in the water supply business as a means of income

to complete their secondary school education between 2009 and 2011. Apart from the students (people) that used water supply as part-time jobs, there were specialised water vendors with wheel barrows, tricycles and water supply vehicles. They were sustained by funds raised in the activities of water supply.⁹⁷

In addition, it may be necessary to note that the Abakaliki Rice Mills Industrial Limited and the Abakaliki Cooperative Rice Farmers' Association have investments in petrol stations. These establishments were sources of income to the associations. The associations in turn invested the fund in rice production.⁹⁸

There were hawkers of different items and articles for household use in the rice mill complex. Cooked rice and other food vendors were found at the rice mills with a good sense of profit-making and employment.⁹⁹ Rice production brought about an increase in banking activities in Abakaliki. It is believed that banking activities facilitated the proliferation of *Bureau de Change* for rice dealers from places such as the Republics of Benin, Cameroun, Ghana and Niger.¹⁰⁰ These nationals were mainly traders and middlemen who brought paddy to the mills and took back milled rice.

The *Bureau de Change* also serviced importers who brought rice into Abakaliki. As a matter of importance, it may be necessary to remark that imported rice was brought into Abakaliki, partly for comparison between the two products which aided standard or quality evaluation. Abakaliki rice millers attempted to examine and copy the physical properties of foreign rice for onward adoption in the processing section of local production.¹⁰¹ These activities are known to facilitate the 'exchange of hands' among sets of merchants which added to the economic importance of rice in the area.



Plate 23: Rice Husks Dump Site (Hazard Area)



Plate 24: Emerging Rice Husks Disposal Site



Plate 25: Firewood for Parboiling Rice

Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, March, 2017.

Above all, the rice husk was exported to its scarce area for other uses in the manufacturing, poultry and domestic industries. An interview with James Elom Oge showed that rice husks had other economic benefits although it is not well harnessed in Abakaliki. He narrated how the by-product was bagged and exported to parts of Northern Nigeria for various purposes.¹⁰²

Moreover, rice production was a source of revenue. It was a source of internally generated revenue for Abakaliki Rice Mills Industrial Limited and the Ebonyi State Government in particular. The traders, farmers, and other actors in the production chain paid taxes of various kinds like business premises, produce, tolls, transport haulage, Ministry of Transport (MoT) and others to revenue contractors and agents of the government.¹⁰³

Social Impact of Rice Production on Abakaliki

This section examines the social empowerment of the rice economy for the rural communities and the people in Abakaliki township which had, however, an extended impact

on other places within and outside Northeastern Igboland. Let us look at them in the under-listed themes.

Development of New Land Ownership System

It was believed that the rice industry offered the non indigenous Igbo or migrant tenants the opportunity of becoming landlords/ landowners in a place away from their indigenous homes. The ‘new’ development apparently changed their status in the society. They were as a result revered and respected among the indigenous people who then incorporated them on certain issues relating to landlords and tenants.¹⁰⁴ It has been pointed out that land ownership by the strangers gave Abakaliki a new image in the administrative and political structures of the town with some economic implications. People bought lands and started building structures suitable for offices, political party houses, private schools, hotels, companies and entertainment centres. The new tenure system in turn altered the people’s traditional system of land ownership in favour of urban development in Abakaliki.¹⁰⁵

Emergence of the Elite and Social Class

According to Simon Ottenberg, “the elites are persons with power to act on others and get others to act for them”.¹⁰⁶ The introduction of rice and development of the industry were partly responsible for the emergence of four categories of elite and social classes in Abakaliki. These four categories included those in the senior government service, elected public officials, prominent business persons and traditional leaders.¹⁰⁷

Although, the Europeans had conquered the area in 1905, earlier before the introduction of Asian rice in 1942, the activities surrounding rice production engendered the

influx of bureaucratic elite such as Heads and Assistant Heads of Regional and Federal Departments in Public Works and Agriculture, Water, Power, Mining, Transport and Revenue in the 1960s.¹⁰⁸

Rice production could, therefore, be said to have attracted regional and central government interests in Abakaliki. This condition meant a modification of the social and political structures of the area for administrative convenience. In the 1950s, more indigenous people had assumed certain political status in the mould of court messengers, warrant chiefs, magistrates and members of the councils in Abakaliki. The traditional political system was as a result said to have been also altered considerably to accommodate the European system.¹⁰⁹

In addition, prominent businessmen and professionals emerged mostly among the stranger Igbo, who engaged in rice farming, trade and transport. For instance, the *Spera* and *Deo* was among the elites that later established a construction company in Abakaliki in the 1980s. *Spera* and *Deo* (earlier mentioned in the research) Company was said to have constructed most of the major roads in Abakaliki town in the old Anambra State.¹¹⁰

Also, on the list of the elite category were a number of influential persons and community leaders, who rose to indispensable and crucial positions in the rural communities such as B. O. Ike. This group of elites became persons of means through rice farming, land speculation and rental. They were also represented by a group of traders in paddy and yam that contested elections and became officials in the old Anambra State House of Assembly. They included Honourable Anthony Agbo, Honourable Boniface Ofoke and Honourable Felix Mgbada in the first republic.¹¹¹ Others in the elite group included the Aro who had become wealthy and influential through rice trade and farming. They had settlements in the

rural communities of Abakaliki, and were regarded as members of the host communities from where they embarked on rice trade and farming.¹¹²

The Growth of Abakaliki Township

Uchenna Casmir Anyanwu strongly believes that the foundation for the growth of Abakaliki into a township was laid by the inter-relationship between the northeastern Igbo groups and the British.¹¹³ Therefore, the continued interest of the British in the Abakaliki area between the 1940s and 1950s was in the trajectory of agriculture and mining.¹¹⁴ Rice production in particular was among the major concerns of the Agricultural Department in the area. The department had posted agricultural officials to Abakaliki from the regional Ministry of Agriculture in Enugu in the late 1940s. These officials were partly drawn from grain officers, paddy traders, technical officers, medical personnel, produce inspection officers and employees of the veterinary.¹¹⁵ They carried out various campaigns about rice production in their disciplines. The officials provided free medical services to human beings and animals. Their activities in Abakaliki had a significant impact on the growth of rice production and the quality of health of the (rural) rice farmers. The growth of rice production then attracted more government officials which enhanced the relationship between the Europeans and the indigenous people. For instance, in 1946, four years after the introduction of rice, the British had desired that the indigenous leaders should see that they faced common problems requiring similar solutions, and the leaders/ councils served as platforms on government policies for the colonial officers.¹¹⁶ This cooperation led to the appointment of the educated rural people into the (British) new council in 1953.¹¹⁷ There was thus a creation of six councils in the Abakaliki district, which included the Izzi, Ezza,

Ikwo, Ishielu (comprising Ezillo and Nkalagu), Ngbo and Orri/Agba areas, represented by the indigenous councillors.¹¹⁸

Moreover, the rice industry in Abakaliki contributed to the administrative restructuring of the Eastern Region. With the increase in the population of Africans and Europeans as a result of the area's proven potential in agriculture and solid mineral, the government had to separate the area from Ogoja Province in September 1959.¹¹⁹ This situation stimulated growth in government services which spurred the emergence of a group of educated Nigerians and professionals such as architects, tailors, plumbers, electricians, accountants and clerks.¹²⁰ These workers lived in Abakaliki and spent their salaries there. Following this, there occurred a great deal of house building, establishment of hotels, shops and bars. Markets flourished as never before, which formed outlets for the marketing of rice in a development that favoured the rice farmers and millers.¹²¹

There was also a monumental increase in the growth of persons working in Abakaliki government station. In 1948, there were 41 regular African employees at the station. By 1960, the workforce in the government offices had increased to 1,100 Africans.¹²² Government workers bought rice produced by the rural farmers. As a result, a series of economic relationships emerged which inter-connected the rural communities with the government and among themselves.

Rice was transported to the urban centres of the then Eastern and Western Regions. This actually prompted the growth of allied developments such as the lorry transport and haulage system.¹²³ Also, there occurred an increase in the number of petrol stations, companies, cottage industries and hospitals, schools, churches, workshops, stalls, construction sites, markets, motor parks, among others. The activities of these allied sectors

may have further attracted private and public attentions to Abakaliki with the provision of social amenities such as electricity, roads and media networks, as well as healthcare centres, housing, education and water projects.¹²⁴ The presence of these amenities would have facilitated the growth of human population working in Abakaliki.

Emergence of Improvement Associations and/ or Town Unions

Improvement Associations and/ or Town Unions represented a symbolic catalyst that opened up Abakaliki into a township. Members of these organisations were tenants and non-indigenes who utilised the opportunities offered by the introduction and production of rice. A cluster of this group of non-indigenes had been found in Abakaliki town and some rural communities in the area since the mid-1940s.¹²⁵ Although, a few arrived the area earlier in the 1930s, a teeming population of this category may have come after the civil war in the early 1970s. Since then, they have expanded the scope of their businesses away from rice farming and trading.¹²⁶

Following successful integration into the local society as acknowledged tenant rice farmers/ traders, the non indigenous Igbo groups were granted the opportunity to own lands for agricultural and other purposes.¹²⁷ This situation facilitated common ties and cooperation with the indigenous people of Northeastern Igboland. They became more nationalistic with the feelings of common identities along certain ethnic backgrounds. For instance, the people from the Awka axis including a group from Amanuke had the feeling of *nwannee* (communion and brotherhood) for being found together in a place far away from their homes. The same was applicable to a group of tenant rice farmers and traders from Owerri, who had the feelings of *erimma*, similar to *Ujaama* in Tanzania. Also, among other town unions were the Aro, Nsukka, Nkanu, Udi, Umuahia, Ngwa, Okigwe, Aguata, Onitsha,

Enugwu-Ukwu, Asaba, Afikpo, Ora-Eri groups, among others, resident in the Abakaliki area.¹²⁸

Also, groups of farmers and traders of Igbo and non-Igbo extractions in Abakaliki formed various unions and associations. The associations served as a forum for unity, common identity, business interest, conflicts resolution and thrift system. They became an avenue for the non-indigenous rice farmers/ traders to exercise reasonable pressure on the government and the local people. For example, the stranger/ tenant rice farmers and traders used the organisations as ‘dialogue boxes’ for uniform rents on lands for rice farming. Between the mid-1970s and the 1980s, the associations were reported to have paid taxes centrally to the government.¹²⁹

In Abakaliki town, these unions replicated aspects of home culture and leadership. Members were given loans for business, trade in rice and other purposes. They provided scholarships for members’ children.¹³⁰ The improvement associations and/ or town unions in Abakaliki displayed a high sense of western influence, education and wealth. They made money from farming, trading and other businesses particularly rice production. This situation enhanced the empowerment of their host communities, because they built town halls, ware-houses, slaughter houses and rice mills. The individual members also built residential homes, private schools and vocational centres, restaurants, chalets and shops. They established transport firms such as *Anyi-Anyi*, *Ogadinma*, *Amandianaeze*, *Onye-Ewena Iwe* and construction companies like *Presco* and *Spera and Deo*, among others.¹³¹

In sports, the unions in Abakaliki maintained inter-group relationships through annual sports festivals, traditional ceremonies and dance contests at the Johnson’s Ground. This fiesta started in Abakaliki in the 1960 Independence Day celebration.¹³²

The Growth of Western Education

In 1953, every adult in Abakaliki was made to pay an education levy. Men were levied 1 pound and women paid 7 pence to make free education possible.¹³³ The education fund was largely generated from paddy rice production and sales by the local farmers. This contribution was part of the funds in establishing some schools in the area. It is useful at this point to indicate that rice production was central to the people's attempt in acquiring the whiteman's style. Some of the local people who passed through western education were known to have benefited from the opportunities provided by the rice economy. Their sponsors sold paddy rice after harvesting which was subsequently used in paying their fees in the schools and training centres. After the training, it appeared they ascended to certain positions in the public service and community development such as civil service, politics, academics, health, industries and manufactures.¹³⁴

Typical rice farmers and traders in Abakaliki and neighbouring communities produced scholars and professionals. Examples of the beneficiaries of the opportunities could be found in Professor Ebonyi Ozor of the Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria Nsukka; Ambassador Lawrence N. Nwurukwu, former Nigerian Ambassador to Costa Rica; Dr. Icha Ituma, former Secretary to the State Government; Dr Clement O. Mgbada, former Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; Dr Bernard Ifeanyi Odoh, Department of Geology and Geological Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Dr. Boniface N. Chima, among others.¹³⁵

The rice industry in Abakaliki is known to have stimulated the establishment of community schools. Some of the communities partnered with governmental and non-governmental agencies for the school projects. They provided counterpart funds mostly from

rice harvests, which were channelled to Community Service Development Projects (CSDPs) in Abakaliki.¹³⁶ In 1999, for example, the Amuzu community in Ezza raised the sum of Four Hundred Thousand Naira (₦400,000.00) counterpart funds. The fund was meant to supplement the cost of 2 classroom Blocks Project of the Education Trust Fund (ETF) from which the Community Secondary School, Amuzu, benefited.¹³⁷ In addition, it was believed that private individuals in the rice business also established Nursery/ Primary and Secondary Schools in the area.¹³⁸

Meanwhile, in the early 1980s, there were several collaborations between the United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) and the communities in Abakaliki for school projects. It was observed that major contributors to the efforts were rice farmers, millers and traders.¹³⁹ A number of schools was as a result established in Abakaliki with such collaborations as those of UNICEF and Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF). They included the Community Secondary School, Iboko, established in 1981, Community Secondary School, Ezza-Egu founded in 1982; Community Secondary School, Ekawoke, Ikwo, established in 1982; and Community Secondary School, Azuinyaba, also established in Ezza in 1990; all of which were funded in collaborations with the rice producing communities and the UNICEF or PTF.¹⁴⁰

Table IX

A representation of Secondary Schools in Abakaliki area established by local rice producers in collaboration with UNICEF and Petroleum Trust Fund.

S/N	Name of School	Year Found/ Established	Location	Project Sponsors
1.	Community Secondary School, Iboko	1981	Izzi	Rice Producers and UNICEF.
2.	Community Secondary School, Ezza-Egu	1982	Ezza	PTF and Rice Producers from the community.
3.	Community Secondary School, Ekawoke	1982	Ikwo	Rice Producers/ Community effort.

4.	Community Secondary School, Azuinyaba	1990	Ezza	UNICEF and Rice Producers from the Community.
5.	Comprehensive Secondary School, Amuzu	1999	Ezza	Community effort, rice producers and state government

Source: This table is generated by the researcher from the findings and readings of the current research

Cultural and Religious Impact of Rice on Abakaliki

Kenneth Onwuka Dike has observed that “the people’s exposure to external influence could have led to cultural diffusion”.¹⁴¹ The rice industry in Abakaliki is known to have facilitated external contacts and influences, especially through trade. People of diverse cultural backgrounds traded in rice in the area.¹⁴² Inter-group relationships as a result of rice trade and marriages further facilitated cultural similarities which blended with the people. Cultural similarities among the various Igbo and non-Igbo groups in Abakaliki have been attributed to the cordial interactions in the rice industry and other activities necessitated by rice production.

An informant would want us to believe that “some of the customs and traditions in Abakaliki like *Akpana*, *Igba-echi*, *ivo* and *ima-ekete* were all borrowed from outside”.¹⁴³ There have been indications that the people may have lost the most correct ways of pronouncing Abakaliki words, most especially in the Ezza area, as a result of the degree of mix-up with the people of foreign accent during the trade in rice and yam. For instance, the Ezza were believed to have copied other accents, where *tokfehu* was pronounced *tokwehu*.¹⁴⁴ The mode of dressing was also affected. The local people through commercial contacts with foreigners were encouraged to abandon nudity in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁴⁵ They emulated European dress culture. Activities surrounding rice production and trade influenced the local people to change their dressing pattern.

Also, prominent rice traders, millers and farmers sold their surpluses in an attempt to take traditional titles such as *Ogbu-inyinya*. Most of the successful and wealthy rice traders and farmers saw traditional title-taking as a condition for express acceptance among the social realm in the Abakaliki area.¹⁴⁶ They assumed certain social positions and hierarchies of decision making in the communities through their investments in rice production.

In Abakaliki area of Northeastern Igboland, religion could not be separated from culture. Every part of their culture had religious significance. The people were aware of and revered super-natural powers such as divinities, earth-goddess and cosmic forces. This could be the reason they held land sacred and anything produced from their soil was sacrosanct according to their tradition.¹⁴⁷ The individuals had personal shrines and gods deposited in their rice farms for protection from the evil forces or attacks. These gods were offered with sacrifices for rich rice harvests before and after each farming season, in anticipation of bountiful yields.¹⁴⁸

In the rice market, the people had the tradition of appealing to the gods of trade to intervene in the sales. The market deity is assumed to have the answer as to whether a rice trader would do well or not.¹⁴⁹ The various gods of harvest had specific roles they played in the lives of the rice farmers and traders. The people worshipped them with sagacity, as anything in reference to the gods was done in sanctity and sacredness.¹⁵⁰ Christians, alike, had their ways of appreciating God for rich rice harvests. They made donations in the Churches in the form of thanksgiving to the Almighty God, who had blessed them with surpluses. Some farmers gave money and other valuable items to the priests as tithes in anticipation of better opportunities in rice harvests.¹⁵¹

Christian churches also invested in rice production and promoted the industry. An example was the rice project of the Norwegian Church Agricultural (Relief) Programme (NORCAP) of the Church of Scotland Mission in Abakaliki in the 1960s.¹⁵² The Presbyterian Church of Norway used NORCAP to propagate the message of increased rice production in Abakaliki.¹⁵³ Again, a rice miller and trader, Emmanuel Ujebe, had accumulated all he invested in the rice industry and channelled the value to worship of God in a christian ministry called Believers Assembly (Evangelical) in 1997. The Ministry was established in the 1970s and located at No. 39 Onwe Road, Abakaliki.¹⁵⁴

In addition, rice as a food consumed among the Abakaliki had some religious impact especially during inexplicable sicknesses. Children who had severe fever were offered with cooked rice (dish) to eat with their peers and age mates in a sacrifice called *oshadaka* to the gods for quick recovery.¹⁵⁵ By extension of the sacrifice, if the fever persisted, the local people often took cooked or uncooked rice with other sacrificial items such as soft drinks (mineral), sweet/ chewing-gums (mints), candle sticks of various colours, among others, to the tri-sectional points of the road known among the people as *njakata uzo*. It was believed that the people have performed stronger sacrifices for liberation from the evil possession such as *ogbanje*. This ritual, whose principal element included rice, was known as *igba-eja* among the local people.¹⁵⁶

Moreover, among the elites and Christians in the urban and rural areas, rice was prepared as a special dish during celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and on Sundays. During social functions like wedding, birthdays as well as traditional marriage ceremonies, rice was among the top menu for distinguished guests.¹⁵⁷

In summary, therefore, it is necessary to note that the various economic, socio-political, cultural and religious impact of rice production on Abakaliki had coordinated some enhanced nexus of empowerment in the rural and urban communities of the area.

Notes

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18. Ikenna Odife, c53 years, University Lecturer, Interview at Awka, 25thFebruary, 2017
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20. Jame Obasi, interview cited
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CHAPTER SIX

CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES OF RICE PRODUCTION IN ABAKALIKI

In this chapter, major hindrances to the rice economy in Abakaliki are examined. The chapter identifies the problems that militated against rice production despite the potentials in the area, with a view to recommending possible solutions in the subsequent chapter. This chapter also points out the negative challenges of rice production in the Abakaliki area. Therefore, the constraints and challenges facing rice production in the area are presented under the following sub-headings: (a) Land Acquisition and Tenure Challenges (b) Farm-gate Production Problems (c) Economic Constraints (d) Information/ Technological Adoption Problems (e) Environmental Health Challenges (f) Policy Inconsistencies (g) Government Intervention/ Local Politics, and (h) Infrastructural Challenges.

Land Acquisition and Tenure Challenges

Land is one of the most valuable resources among the people of Abakaliki and as such has over the years constituted the major constraint to rice production. The Abakaliki traditionally settled in a dispersed land pattern. The people have always maintained spatial positions in their living patterns. The Ezza, for example, were more popular for this settlement pattern, probably because of their expansionist ambition.¹ The fear about the possible occupation of their territories by their neighbours also led to such a settlement style in scattered hamlets.² This ambition is believed to have resulted in the fragmentation of the people's land. Land fragmentation discouraged mechanised rice farming. For instance, where a rice farmer could procure or hire equipment, he was faced with the problem of access to the farm because of boundary demarcations between one's farm and another.

Despite the promulgation of the Land Use Decree (Act) of 1978, which conferred rights of ownership of land to the government, the traditional land tenure system continued to exist among some families in Abakaliki clans. The indigenous tenure system, however, did not confer rights of ownership to women³. It is hence important to reiterate that majority of the labourers and active participants in rice production were women, children and middle aged youth. None of these groups in active rice production exercised the rights over ownership of land, especially while the eldest man in the family was alive.⁴ As a result of this, selection of choice land for rice farming became a challenge. Most often, rice farmers had to hire, rent or lease land before they could cultivate, which was relatively costly.⁵ Land holders (trustees) became the eldest men in the family or village who were often aged beyond the active productive population. They hardly alienated or leased land to foreigners, unfortunately, for a long period of time. Land was also communally owned which entailed rigorous conditions for rental, lease or alienation.⁶

Contrary to the traditional tenure system, the Land Use Act further militated against rice production in Abakaliki. The Act established that land in Nigeria belonged to the governor of the state.⁷ This implied that the state government exercised certain rights of ownership of land over the traditional system. This Act was, hence, recklessly implemented for individual acquisition of land for residential and other purposes against agriculture such as rice production.⁸

Moreover, the Land Use Act did not state explicitly the condition for obtaining land titles. However, while land titles were obtained, they could not be used as collateral for agricultural lending under the Act.⁹ The land Act also restricted land acquisition to medium and large-scale commercial farming.¹⁰ This indicated that there was a rare opportunity for

small-scale individual investors in rice production to own or manage land for rice production in Abakaliki.

In addition, the topography of parts of the rice-producing communities such as Ndufu-Alike, Enyigba and Echara in Abakaliki, contributed to poor output in rice production. The shape, height and other physical features including slopes and mountains in the area tremendously reduced the sizes of cultivable lands. Some parts of Abakaliki were mountainous and mixed with stones and dry clay which affected water retention. A few areas featured rivers with water diversions to the rice farms, especially during heavy rains.¹¹ These floodable diversions destroyed the crops, which consequently reduced the quantity of rice produced. In fact, some farmlands became inaccessible with vehicles because of the topography, bad terrain and poor road networks.¹²

Land dispute is another problem that hampered the needed rice yields. Some cultivable lands were left fallow even during growing seasons as a result of conflicts and crises consequent upon land disputes and unclear boundary demarcations. For instance, the Ezza and Ezillo had in the past waged several land disputes which resulted in the loss of lives of rice farmers.¹³ For this reason, a lot of cultivable portions were left fallow to avoid recurrent inter-communal clashes until the matter was resolved.¹⁴

Affordability of land was one of the constraints to local rice production. Land was leased at relatively high rates to the tenant rice farmers.¹⁵ It was indicated that both the tenant and the local rice farmers encountered the difficulty of procuring land for rice farms. For instance, the large expanses of land that may have been used with mechanisation belonged to groups such as village, community or family which otherwise entailed rigorous approaches and high costs for acquisition.¹⁶ This condition discouraged large-scale

production of rice as the millers/ traders had to source for paddy rice outside Abakaliki in places like Lafia in Nasarawa State; Gboko in Benue; Wukari, Donga and Gidinderuwa in Taraba; Ogoja, Ugep, Ikom and Effium in Cross River State. Some local farmers and traders were also reported to have migrated to places such as Cameroun in the mid-1990s, where it appeared they had more opportunities for paddy rice production.¹⁷

Farm-Gate Production Problems

Among the challenges that faced rice production in Abakaliki during the study period were soil acidity, fertility, water management and drought. Others were production cost, pests and diseases, temperature and farm inputs application. Dr. G. N. Nwokwu is of the opinion that about seventy per cent of the total agricultural lands in Abakaliki contained salt and other acidic elements such as zinc, sulphur and iron.¹⁸ Although, the crop needed some percentage of these elements for growth, excessive water retention in the soil contributed to the prevalence of ferrous iron known as iron toxicity in the lowland rice ecology. Iron toxicity is a common soil problem in lowland rice production in Abakaliki. The substance is known to impair rice growth and by extension this normally leads to about sixty per cent reduction in yield.¹⁹ There were other sources of the toxic metals such as aluminum and magnesium deposited in the rice farms in Abakaliki. These toxic and acidic elements also came from mining activities, waste dumps/ disposal and other agricultural activities.²⁰

Generally, alkaline and acidity problem appeared more critical to the upland varieties of rice. Though, alkalinity or acidity in rice soils either encouraged toxicities or deficiencies of some nutrient elements with their resultant negative impact on rice growth.²¹ Again, the salinity of the soil adversely affected rice yield. This situation further resulted in complex

nutrient imbalances and disorders in the crop which negatively affected general rice production.²²

Poor soil fertility and nutrient composition of the soil immensely reduced total outputs of cultivated rice. The Abakaliki soil was easily flooded during the rainy seasons. Flood washed away soil nutrients that could have been absorbed by the crops. It appeared that heavy rains, sometimes, washed away fertilizers before two days of its application.²³ This situation often misled the farmers to re-apply fertilizers which increased the chemical contents of the soil. The increase in the chemical contents of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium (NPK) caused imbalance in soil nutrients which affected grains.²⁴ Besides, the use of NPK had become popular among the rural farmers in Abakaliki. These compound (mineral) fertilizers had some limitations occasioned by certain factors. These factors included method of manufacture (production processes), method and time of application, soil condition (moisture level), and the quality and quantity applied on the rice farms.²⁵

On the other hand, organic fertilizers such as animal dung, dead parts and others mentioned in the previous chapters, constituted good sources of balanced elements for lowland rice farms. However, the organic manures were insufficient and sometimes confronted by delayed decomposition which eluded the appropriate timing for the rice plants' consumption.²⁶ It took about two seasons before they properly decomposed while some of the farmers were not permitted by the land owners to cultivate rice more than once on the same portion.²⁷ This stringent condition denied the rice farmers avenues to improve on soil fertility that could have resulted in optimum yields.

The excessiveness or deficiency of fertilizer application and inappropriate use of agro-chemical is another factor that has also marred the growth and development of rice.

Some farmers applied one bag (50kg) NPK fertilizer per hectare instead of the required six bags for lowland rice ecology.²⁸ On the other hand, wrong measurement or the quantity and period of application of the chemicals resulted in poor productivity. These improper applications of the farm inputs exposed the crops to diseases, environmental hazards, health implications on human body and poor harvests.²⁹

It has also been argued that poor handling of water channels in the rice farms in Abakaliki is another worry. During the period of our field study, few farmers were known to have constructed drainages in their farms to reduce cases of flood submerge of plants and rice farms. There were few farmers that constructed drainages in their farms. Flood submerged the plants and introduced stagnant water to the rice farms.³⁰ It is a known fact that excessive rainfall at the early stage of the plants' growth usually affected flowering and pollination.³¹ This situation called for proper management of water which the farmers rarely practised. The continuous release of water from nearby dams added to this menace. For instance, in 2011, there was an overflow of water from the Cameroun dams along the Cross River estuary which destroyed crops in the neighbourhood.³²

Rice needed as much rains as possible provided it was not in excess during the early growth. Absence of water or rains usually leads to drought. The Abakaliki soil was easily vulnerable to this condition.³³ The soil textures naturally absorbed enough water with little rain and dried quickly after a short drop from the source. Severe drought, therefore, is known to lead to limited growth and production of rice. Irrigation was entirely absent on a large-scale. Small-scale irrigation was practised by a few individuals using rivers, streams, wells and washbores.³⁴ The skeletal irrigation facilities and water regimes at various

locations in the area were not functional. This poor condition did not encourage an all-year-round rice production.³⁵

Apart from poor water management and drought, excessive velocity of wind in the form of hurricanes and tornadoes are known to be another source of worry to the rice plants. Strong wind changed the Carbon (IV) Oxide concentration of the plants at their vegetative and later stages. It also hindered effective pollination.³⁶ Also, during the harvesting period, violent wind threshed and dispersed the crops. This type of wind constituted harvest and post-harvest losses.³⁷

Moreover, high cost of labour, mechanisation, farm inputs such as chemicals and fertilizers, land rental and professional services contributed to poor rice production in Abakaliki. In the mid-1970s, for instance, a labourer was paid between ₦10 and ₦15 per day for his labour. However, there occurred a spontaneous increase in the cost of labour in the rice farms in the 1980s, when it rose to ₦20, and later ₦50. By the 1990s, the cost of weeding, for example, had risen to ₦100 per day.³⁸ By the turn of the twenty-first century, farmers started paying ₦200 for tilling and later in the first decade of the century, labourers in rice farms collected between ₦250 and ₦400 day job, for the same purpose.³⁹ In the early years of the second decade of the twenty-first century, labour cost had astronomically increased to between ₦750 and ₦1000, depending on the labourer's proficiency in a given job.⁴⁰

The use of tractors, harvesters and other mechanical equipment that would have aided rice production in Abakaliki was rare consequent upon the hiring cost or procurement rate. Similarly, the cost of chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides and insecticides was relatively high above affordable means.⁴¹ Fertilizer, for instance, was subsidised in the 1980s

and early 1990s, but the government later removed subsidies on fertilizers and other farm chemicals.⁴² As a result of this, the farmers have since been faced with the challenges of the cost of production at the on-farm level.

Economic Constraints

The rice economy in Abakaliki witnessed continued economic constraints over a long period of time. Following the introduction of the rice grain in the 1940s as highlighted previously in the study, the industry has experienced some significant growth, especially during the early years of 1957 to 1972. This development could, for instance, be gleaned from the remarkable changes in the traditional economic system and ideology of capital accumulation.⁴³ To this effect, this section discusses the lapses in rice production in relation to inadequate finance, exchange rate problems, marketing challenges, management problems and the oil economy menace. The various ways in which the above indices negated self-sufficiency in rice production are examined in the foregoing paragraphs.

First, the introduction and development of rice production in the rural Igbo communities such as Abakaliki ought to have left the people with a new mode of production. This mode of production refers to the joint operation of the forces of productions like human labour, land, and work implements on the one hand, and the social relations of production on the other.⁴⁴ These joint operations in production mode had been espoused in a capitalist sense of production which involved profit maximisation. The capitalist mode of production was believed to have altered the indigenous African economic system that was based on communalism. This could be why Mike Odugbo Odey believes that

...every family masterminded its reproductive activities. Thus, without chronological data, the concept of mode of production explains what happened far back in time by looking at the contemporary forces of

production. The concept of mode of production move between history and cultural anthropology to political and agricultural economic history. This is accomplished with the flexibility and imagination that characterises the Marxian frame of thought.⁴⁵

The 'forces of production' enunciated in the Marxian theory, as cited in Odey's work, generated the new market system, changes in labour supply and exploitative ideology which resulted in stopping profit motive among the people.⁴⁶ Rice production incidentally introduced the people into a new era in the commercial expansion of individual resources. Their primary goals centred around profit-making, capital accumulation and modern wealth creation. This ideology contrasted sharply with the traditional values and economic relationships before the advent of the European system. Alphosus Nweke Alagu has envisaged this anomaly when he opined that

Many people started to use this reshuffling of drives of motivation to build up a capitalist tendency. Even in the profit motives there has been lack of restraints by some people in the practice of capitalism of the colonial system. The joy of excelling in the society drove the new entrants to abandoning their traditional values of being their brothers' keepers. This became a threat to the traditional practice of communalism.⁴⁷

The Abakaliki as a typical Igbo community was traditionally identified with the communal lineage, characterised by peasantry and common ownership of wealth, which was devoid of payment for labour supply.⁴⁸ The drive for personal wealth creation and capital accumulation through the rice economy gradually devastated the traditional standard.

Secondly, inadequate funds to finance rice projects drastically affected the rice industry in Abakaliki. The major sources of funds available to the people such as the thrift system, bank facilities, co-operative loans, among others, had inherent challenges. Periodic thrift contributions provided avenues for few beneficiaries (probably one person) over a period of time. This was because the money contributed was often insufficient to go round

among the farmer/ trader members as quickly as needed. Even when arrangements were made to share the fund, its meagerness would not allow it to meet the desired purpose of the facility. Bank loans were serviced at relatively high interest rates.⁴⁹

At times, the banks granted facilities to the rice farmers/ traders very late which defeated their purposes.⁵⁰ Government loans disbursed through the commercial and micro-finance banks were often not equitably disbursed. For instance, between 2007 and 2011, it was indicated that the agricultural loans from the Bank of Agriculture and Industry were not published to spread across the rural rice farmers. It was indicated that the fund was made available to a group of entrepreneurs outside the rice farmers circle in the area, especially those of them who had political influences to lobby for such facilities as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) loan.⁵¹ The same experience might have pulled down the co-operative members who could not access credit facilities easily from the banks.

Delay in granting loan facilities constituted untimely administration of the production projects which marred rice productivity.⁵² What the rice farmers usually did was to borrow money from the millers on condition that they would return paddy to the millers for final production. This situation made the farmers to be more vulnerable to untold exploitation by the rice millers, who ultimately would sell the farmers' produce to recover their funds.⁵³ These practices aggregated to certain levels that large-scale production of rice became almost impossible.

In addition, the fluctuations in the exchange rate against Nigerian currency impeded large-scale rice production. Most of the agro-chemicals and other farm inputs such as fertilizers were imported.⁵⁴ The foreign trade and transaction in some agricultural items and services was influenced by the high Dollar exchange rate against the Naira. Between the

1970s and early 1980s, (the oil boom in particular) Nigeria experienced an artificial exchange rate of 40 United States (US) cents to ₦1.00. The effect of this exchange rate was not noticed because of government subsidies and fat foreign reserve.⁵⁵ By the early days of the mid-1986, subsidies on farm inputs were gradually being removed, whereas the impact of the fluctuations of the currency became evident. This time, ₦5 was exchanged for 1 US Dollar.⁵⁶ In the closing years of the twentieth century, the Naira was officially exchanged for ₦112 per Dollar, while currency speculators exchanged one Dollar for ₦140.⁵⁷ This situation affected farm inputs importation and supply to the rice farmers.

Between the early 1990s and 2000s, the exchange rate began to have serious implications on rice production. Small-holder rice farmers and cottage rice industries could not continue to produce under such austerity. A few individuals survived the hardship as a result of considerable rise in the production cost.⁵⁸ In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the exchange of the Dollar against the Naira was mystical. This development brought an astronomical and geometrical increase in the prices of agro-chemicals, fertilizers and other equipment such as milling machines, tractors, tillers and ploughs. During this period, one Dollar was exchanged for between ₦155 and ₦165 by the year 2008 up to 2011.⁵⁹ The figure below shows the fluctuations of the Naira exchange rates against the Dollar between 1985 and 2011.

Figure 2

Value of Naira to the US Dollar, 1985-2011

Year	Naira	Dollar
1985	1	1
1986	5	2
1987	5	2
1988	7	2
1989	7	3
1990	10	5
1995	40	20
1997	90	22
1999	100	22
2001	112	112
2003	115	112
2006	120	112
2010	155	155
2011	155	165

Source: Selbut R. Longtau, *Multi-Agency Partnership in West African Agriculture: A Review and Description of Rice Production Systems in Nigeria* (Jos WIS Partners 5 Lugard Road, Jos, April, 2003), 34-35, See also Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report 2013”, 17

At the macro-economic level, currency instability (depreciation of the naira) seems to have destabilised investments in imported inputs. The risk of importation of agro-chemicals and fertilizers was so high which otherwise confined some investors to flood the markets with sub-standard products.⁶⁰ These products had little or no effects in the expected quantity of rice production in Abakaliki. Given the constraints resulting from inadequate finance, there was a limitation to farm input market development. This limitation was also affected by the Naira depreciation. The inputs markets were liberalised by the government without good mechanisms for quality control.⁶¹ This is one of the marketing challenges that created avenues for adulteration and sale of inferior quality or expired products.

Lack of proper market facilities such as spacious stalls, outlets for sales and market calendar which remained traditionally rotational within five days and taxation on goods,

reduced the marketability of Abakaliki rice.⁶² Inconsistencies in the measurement, poor packaging and presence of stones and impurities, as well as unattractive physical appearances of the Abakaliki rice ought to have contributed to the reduction in the quantity consumed. Rice traders and dealers may not have adhered to certain marketing strategies and innovations that could have attracted consumers.⁶³ Indications show that the workers who specialised in measuring rice in bushels commonly known as *blanders* employed sharp practices of reducing the quantity of cigarette cups in a bushel of rice.⁶⁴

Poor packaging also limited acceptability of rice in the markets. Abakaliki rice is known to have no specified, customised and cosmetic packaging or branding in bags.⁶⁵ Rice was sold in different sacks of various sizes and shapes, which otherwise had no single identity for consumers' confidence. This restricted the produce to be patronised mainly by a few customers that could identify particular varieties for a given purpose. For instance, there were varieties that had good proportions of nutrients such as *Sipi*, *R8* and *Gasua* of the improved FARO family, but could not easily be accepted in the markets because of their physical (colour or short grains) structure.

Another major problem that reduced the marketability of Abakaliki rice was the presence of stones and mixed impurities of chaffs and rice husks.⁶⁶ Up to the terminal date of this study, majority of the entrepreneurs in the rice industry in Abakaliki were yet to install a near-perfection-de-stoner machines.⁶⁷ The major quantity of Abakaliki rice in the market was not de-stoned which contributed to low competitiveness in favour of imported rice.⁶⁸

On-farm management practices, maintenance culture at various levels of production, as well as financial and human capital management in rice production, poorly received the attention of the entrepreneurs in the business. In the Abakaliki area, for instance, it was

observed that some rice fields did not receive the necessary attention at the appropriate time.⁶⁹ This could be as a result of the farmers laxity or ‘I don’t care attitude’ especially among those with other means of livelihood. Sometimes, weeding and other farm practices were carried out very late. In addition, it was gathered that rarely did the rice millers adhere to the service/maintenance instructions on the milling machines for efficient operation. Ifeoma Nkwuda, a sales representative in repairs and installation workshop at the rice mill complex known as Kotech Mechanic Workshop and Sales Services, reveals that some millers only serviced their engines when they break down and had stopped working.⁷⁰

Some employers in the rice industry were alleged to be aggressive at their employees who were also poorly remunerated. The employees were, sometimes, humiliated and summarily dismissed which consequently affected rice production.⁷¹ Misappropriation of funds and fiscal management also bedevilled the rice industry in Abakaliki. Most of the farmers/ traders accessed bank facilities and cooperative loans without remittances until their collateral were threatened or confiscated.⁷² All the above clipped the wings of production of rice in the area.

The oil economy in the 1980s tended to derail the interest in agriculture and other means of production. The people depended on oil revenue from the government and other allied agencies. Rice production was almost entirely abandoned while the nation enjoyed the revenue from oil.⁷³ This situation left untold hardship among the people for undermining the mainstay of their economy - rice production. The oil economy had two striking effects on the rice economy.



Plate 26: Gasua (FARO) Low Sugar Rice



Plate 27: Milled Rice with Impurities



Plate 28: Researcher at Integrated Rice Mill, Ikwo
Source: Personal Photo-shots by the Author, March, 2017.

First, majority of the Abakaliki people abandoned rice cultivation. Secondly, the remaining insignificant population produced rice on a small-scale.⁷⁴

Between the mid-1980s and a decade into the twenty-first century, rice production potentials depreciated against what it used to be between the 1960s and early 1980s.⁷⁵ This development further dwindled local rice production in Abakaliki.

Information/ Technology Adoption Problems

The farmers were sometimes ill-informed or lacked relevant information at a given point in time. Information from subsidiary agencies and extension workers was poorly disseminated. This was, sometimes, because of the inadequate extension agents from various institutions such as the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).⁷⁶ Majority of the Abakaliki rice farmers/ traders may not have attended schools and as such lacked the ability to read and write. This tended to include them among the illiterate class, who did not receive western education.⁷⁷ The absence of western education limited their access to professional assistance and information. In the 1990s, it was observed that the formal seed system, which involved the development, production and distribution of seeds by the specialised institutions and agencies such as Agricultural Development Programme, National Fadama Development Programme, among others, to the farmers was defeated for lack of specialised and adequate staff of the organisations.⁷⁸ Rice farmers, however, received seeds through the informal farmer-to-farmer system which was often deficient of proper instructional information for enhanced seeds. These gaps in effective information and technology adoption have been identified as a problem in rice production.

Poor access to western education and the media had been reported to have contributed to low production of rice in Abakaliki. Some economic actors in rice production were not in

the position to read scholarly and published works on rice production, newspapers, listen to the radio or watch television broadcast and access mobile telecommunication.⁷⁹ Access to these popular media was limited to the elites in the township who were tangential in the actual rice economy in the area.

However, on technology adoption, the rural rice farmers continued to engage the indigenous farming culture. In some parts of the rice farming communities, farmers still used the powder of old dry-cell batteries as a kind of seed dressing (chemical) before planting rice by broadcasting.⁸⁰ This chemical was not only hazardous to the farmers, but also to the soil. A farmer at Echara Ikwo, Maduabuchukwu Makpa, reported the benefits of using old dry-cell powder (although in ignorance of the adverse effects) as a formidable means of scaring the birds and other rodents away from the seeds thereby reducing the risk of re-planting.⁸¹ This statement shows the level of his awareness. Poor technology adoption in the past and at beginning of the twenty-first century, among the rural rice farmers in Abakaliki, adversely affected rice production. Some farmers lacked skills to apply certain farming techniques. The use of mechanisation was not widespread in Abakaliki. A few individuals that practised mechanised system were limited by certain professional mishaps.⁸² As a result of this, professional skills were hardly transferable. The cost of procuring equipment or hiring machines reduced their application in rice production in Abakaliki. For instance, between 2009 and 2011, a de-stoning machine cost about ₦2.4 million. The same was applicable to fairly used milling machines such as *HA* and *HR* brands which were procured for about ₦800,000.00 and ₦900,000.00. The cost of tractor was so high that a few rice farmers procured it for a day's service at ₦17, 000 and above without the cost of petrol during the period.⁸³

Towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, rice farmers/ millers continued to combine traditional and contemporary milling systems together. Parboling and drying of rice, for instance, were done manually.⁸⁴ In the Abakaliki rice mill complex, there was no (advanced) integrated rice mill plant that could process rice in a single operation. The integrated rice mill plants belonged to the government and were sited at the Ikwo and Iboko Industrial Clusters. There were indications that they had some limitations according to rice farmers/ traders in the area.⁸⁵ Stages in processing rice in some parts of Abakaliki with machines such as *Black Stone*, *Lister* and *Simber* reduced the precision and efficiency of milled rice over a given time frame. Their capacities were said to be sufficient but they lacked efficiency and standard.⁸⁶

Environmental Health Challenges

Environmental issues that resulted from activities in rice production further degenerated to health challenges in Abakaliki. This, however, resulted in the degradation and pollution of natural resources such as water, air, land and the atmosphere. Consequent upon the increase in the population of the people in the area, activities in rice production exerted more pressure on the land. The soil became more contaminated with constant application of fertilizers and agro-chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.⁸⁷ Some farmers in Abakaliki applied fertilizers to control the weeds. This practice was wrongly conceived based on the notion that inorganic fertilizers would tenderize the weeds and make them easier to be removed by hand-weeding. The practice was said to be highly counter-productive with negative multiplier effects on the soil.⁸⁸ It may have possibly increased the soil's concentrations of toxic metals, acid and alkaline. This condition caused deficiencies in the soil nutrients which affected the vegetation of rice. Retarded vegetation of rice plants reduced

the rate of flowering and photosynthesis. Poor photosynthesis as a result of the absence of chlorophyll not only affected the chloroplast of the plants, it also reduced the amount of carbon dioxide in the air, for human and animal consumption.⁸⁹

Land degradation, nonetheless, resulted from the unsustainable rice (agricultural) production practice, deforestation and other forms of removal of natural vegetation. Bush burning and cutting down of trees for firewood constituted emission on the ozone layer and defaced the natural ecology respectively.⁹⁰ After harvesting, the residue of rice plants were likely to have generated methane (a colourless gas that can be burned for fuel), which causes green house effects.⁹¹ Other liquid and solid wastes generated from the rice industry were often channeled to the drainage tracks, rivers and dump sites. It was indicated that some of these actions contaminated the drinking water, air and when it was disposed into the farms it increased soil toxicity.⁹² Also, the quantity of firewood needed for the parboiling of rice was estimated to run in million tonnes annually. This situation entailed a high degree of deforestation of the natural harbour in Abakaliki, since firewood was the only source of fuel. The burning of this fuel further contributed to the emission of carbon monoxide and ozone layer depletion, as earlier noted.⁹³

The dump sites of the rice husks, for instance, constituted both environmental and health challenges to the people and animals around. There were about sixteen rice husks dump sites found around Abakaliki rice mill complex alone.⁹⁴ Other sites existed at the various locations of the mills scattered all over the area. The heaps of the husks at certain level of decomposition generated heat and ignited itself which burned year to year.⁹⁵ This 'silent' fire became a threat to the inhabitants. It was reported that, in 1994, two brothers were victims of the 'death trap' when they ran into one of the dump sites while hunting (in search

of grass cutters) around the sites.⁹⁶ James Elom Oge added that it had drowned more than twenty cattles and a number of other domestic animals on yearly basis.⁹⁷

Apart from the above scenario, ashes from the dump sites had been said to have contaminated their food, drinking water and other edibles. The dump sites were said to have also polluted the air with violent winds that dangerously affected workers' sights.⁹⁸ Juliana Nweke, a winnower, believes that her optical challenges resulted from her activities around the dump site. Mrs. Nweke was diagnosed of *cataract* and *glaucoma* diseases of the eyes in 2010.⁹⁹ There was a corollary between Nweke's health challenges and the experiences of other workers around the 'ash points'. One of the informants around the husks dump site explained that the hazard had constrained them to start work early enough in the morning between 2:00 am and 4:00 am, when the weather was expected to be favourable.¹⁰⁰

The rice industry in Abakaliki may have contributed to the urban development. The growth of the city and the influx of people of all categories increased the number of prostitutes, commercial sex workers, criminals, as well as students. Their contagious sexual escapades may have contributed to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as Human Immune Virus/ Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).¹⁰¹

Policy Inconsistencies

One of the major constraints that nearly frustrated rice production was the waiver (importation) policy of the government. The Federal Government was accused of lacking the political will to implement the necessary criteria for rice importation waiver and quota allocation. Importation waiver on tariffs and quotas were allegedly granted to importers without appropriate check.¹⁰² This exercise on waiver of the government to accredited importers and investors was allegedly abused to the extent of flooding the markets around

Abakaliki with supply of foreign rice. Local rice farmers could not produce more as a result of the inability of the local produce to compete favourably with the imported rice.¹⁰³

Apart from this, Nigeria was said to have lost huge revenue resulting from the duty waiver granted to companies, which would have helped in strengthening the local rice economy. Between 2000 and 2008, for instance, the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) recorded a loss of ₦276.9 billion to customs duty waiver on rice importation.¹⁰⁴ Some of the beneficiaries of the waiver included Dangote Industries, Aswani Group, Stallion Group, Golden Penny and Umza International Farms Limited.¹⁰⁵ It may be necessary to re-state that the waiver policy had specified that

Owners of existing rice mills and new investors with verifiable backward integration in the rice value chain will be allowed to import rice at 10 per cent duty and 20 per cent levy (30 per cent); while merchants who have nothing to contribute to local production in form of rice farms or mills will be charged 10 per cent duty and 60 per cent levy (70 per cent).¹⁰⁶

It was observed that the above criterion was abused by both the government agencies and the companies. Some companies that had nothing to do with local rice production were also granted concessional waivers.¹⁰⁷ This situation did not only amount to non-payment of duty (revenue), the companies further imported above the quota allocated to each beneficiary.¹⁰⁸ For instance, between 2005 and 2009, the following companies benefited from the quota scheme: Milan Rice, Bua Industries, AN Ibrahim, Stine Rice Mill, JMK Foods, Labana Rice Mill, Elephant Group, Honeywell, Kerksuk Farms, Wacot, Mikap Rice, Tara-Agro, Ebony-Agro, Atari Rice Industry, Ashi Foods, JAI Industries, Arewa Rice Mill, Onyx Rice Mill, Bansara Rice, Danmodi and Klysat, all of which were rice companies and investors. Some of these companies received funds from the Federal Government as subsidies to import rice (milled or paddy) to supplement domestic shortages.¹⁰⁹

Other instances show that companies like Umza Farms Limited had no other investment in local rice production, except the mill in Kano with a capacity of 30,000 metric tonnes. However, the company was given import allocations in two categories between 2009 and 2011. These allocations consisted of 36,000 Metric Tonnes (MT) from millers' allocation and 49,207 MT investor allocation categories. In the same period, Dangote and Golden Penny had no existing mills but were given 115, 204 MT and 91,887 MT respectively. Stallion also got 89,989 MT of rice importation quota at lower tariffs and subsidies from federal government of Nigeria.¹¹⁰ The intention of government was probably to bridge the gap between rice supply deficits and demand which otherwise became detrimental to local rice production in Abakaliki.

An indication shows that these companies supplied below allocations in a sharp practice of embezzling funds from the subsidies and as well evaded taxes. Some companies with allocations to supply above 30,000 MT, for instance, supplied below 20,000 MT and made claims for the allocated quota above 30,000 MT.¹¹¹ These were funds and revenues that would have gone into the development of the Abakaliki rice production. Also, sometimes, independent investors without government subsidies, but were granted concessional waivers, supplied cargoes of rice above the approved (quantity) quota. Another group who could not access subsidies from the government, but were granted import duty waivers, sold their quotas to unaccredited investors.¹¹² These are often faceless groups who were termed 'stakeholders, investors and value-chain actors' in rice production. Their activities seem to have discouraged the local rice farmers and traders in Abakaliki who abandoned domestic production for other businesses and places.

In addition, corruption is said to have re-cycled a lot of unholy practices into the government policies. Most of the investors were top Nigerian politicians whose ‘immunities’ appeared to have shielded them from the eyes of the law. For instance, Mikap Rice Company is owned by a former Attorney General of the Federation, Michael Aondoakaa, Ebony Agro is owned by Engr. Charles Ugwu, a former Minister of Commerce and Industry, the former Governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswan owns Ashi Foods; Bua Industries is owned by Ishaku Rabi; Honeywell is also owned by Oba Otudeko; while Elephant Group is owned by Tunji Owoye; Labana Rice is owned by former Governor of Kebbi State, Adamu Aliero; and Kersuk Rice is owned by Rotimi Williams.¹¹³ Incidentally, Adamu Aliero became a senator in 2011 and was elected the Senate Committee Chairman to investigate the massive fraud in Nigeria’s ₦117 Billion Rice Import Waiver/ Quota Scheme.¹¹⁴ This is the paradox of corruption in the rice policy, that had adversely affected the domestic rice production in Abakaliki.

As illustrated above, every government in Nigeria had its own interests, and resources were being allocated through policies. These interests may not be necessarily adopted for the common good rather they were considered national interests at the same time. Since the 1960s, there have been regular changes in government and the attendant policy implementations.¹¹⁵ Policy instability contributed to the poor conditions of the rice economy in Abakaliki because the domestic actors (farmers, millers and traders) could not plan ahead of a long period of time. During the colonial era, there were a number of agricultural schemes. The schemes were basically experimental stations and strategies to improve the income of rice farmers. They were not sustainable over time by the emerging governments. For instance, after the introduction of rice in 1942, there was the Abakaliki Rice Scheme by

the colonial government. The scheme introduced cultivation of rice in suitable areas that could not favour yam cultivation. With the scheme, there were job opportunities such as parboiling rice, fabrication of parboiling drums, milling jobs, and others. Rice production flourished until the 1990s, when the government headed by Nigerians removed subsidy on fertilizers. Rice farmers could not have fertilizers at the right time and in quantity required.¹¹⁶ This unforeseen development coincided with the expiration of the funding by the World Bank assisted project in the period. In 1999, the government imposed a twenty per cent subsidy on fertilizer import which resulted in the scarcity of the commodity.¹¹⁷ The subsidy policy, however, went to large-scale (rice) farmers against the interest of the small-holder rice farmers.

In the same vein, government continued to recycle the programmes of successive administration in a new nomenclature. This situation meant reversal, duplication and overlap of functions which had no significant changes in the rice economy in Abakaliki.¹¹⁸ This situation rather displaced the degree of implementation as already collated from the database of the predecessor programme. Farmers' adaptation to new technologies and farm applications became problematic, as the new programmes continued to cause imbalance in farmers' decisions.¹¹⁹

Rice farmers/ traders were faced with rigid and double taxation policies. The government imposed compulsory taxes such as business premises, toll, income tax, haulage, Ministry of Transport (MoT) and other sources of revenue generation.¹²⁰ It was also indicated that the government itself had fiscal challenges of disbursing and appropriating funds among the farmers or traders, to carry-out their activities in rice production in Abakaliki.¹²¹ Allocation of funds and resources to the priority areas became a challenge to the government.

There were indications that people who often benefited from certain budgetary allocations and loans for agriculture, were not farmers but persons with political affiliations.¹²²

Above all, over the past two decades, especially between the 1980s and 1990s, inconsistencies resulting from shifts between free and protectionist trade policy had characterised the rice policy in Nigeria. Such international trade changes hindered the ability of the rice producers in Abakaliki to develop a long term strategy.¹²³ While trade policy had been considered as a viable option for developing the Abakaliki rice sub-sector, there had been lack of policy to take advantage of the protection mechanism (importation ban) and enhance the efficiency of the domestic production. The ban on importation as observed in chapter five of the study was difficult to enforce. There existed internal sabotage and lapses in implementation of the policies.¹²⁴ Rice importation continued to travail on domestic production. Consequent upon this, locally produced Abakaliki rice may have been confronted by poor image in the market and ought to have lost the self-sufficiency in meeting local demand of rice for the populace.

Government Intervention/ Local Politics

The intervention of the governments in the structural sectors of activities in the Abakaliki rice economy was said to have been considered as a problem, on the one hand. On the other hand, political influences as a result of political party affiliations; clan, ethnic or kin relationships, cultural ties and religious interest may have contributed to the challenges of rice production in Abakaliki.¹²⁵ The various unions and organisations in the Abakaliki rice mill complex and environs were said to have been divided along the above social strata. Attachment to each of the divides was said to have fashioned the philosophy of any government that had interest in the rice production in Abakaliki.¹²⁶ This could be the reason

why it was believed that the governments had influenced the election of unpopular candidates into the various positions in the trade unions and government.

Between 1987 and 1988, there was an indication that rice production was stagnated as a result of government intervention. During this period, the Chairman, Abakaliki Local Government Area, Chief Fidelis O. U. Mbam had attempted to force the rice millers to strictly use government rice mill machines only.¹²⁷ This order was said to have been resisted by the Chairman of the Abakaliki Rice Millers' Industrial Association Limited, Chief Chris Nshi. The latter was said to be unpopular in the former's government but the latter's opponent during the election to the office of the millers association was government's candidate.¹²⁸ In an industrial action, the rice millers and farmers suspended operations at the mills. There were further pressures from the government to mandate the farmers to be milling their paddy rice in government machines which could not be sustained due probably to the cooperation that existed between the farmers and the millers.¹²⁹ As a result of the suspension, rice production in Abakaliki rice mill complex was halted for more than nine weeks.

In the late 1990s, shortly after the creation of Ebonyi State, the government of Walter Feghabor (first military governor of Ebonyi State) implemented indigenisation policy which also adversely affected the operations of rice production in the area.¹³⁰ There was a speculation then that a group of local rice farmers and traders, formed a movement to eject and expel the non-indigenes, who controlled the trade unions and other activities at the Abakaliki rice mill complex. Following their population and strength in the Abakaliki rice production, there was a recession and slack in the production of rice in Abakaliki, until a group of stakeholders from the governments, traders, farmers and investors in rice production intervened.¹³¹

The government intervened on certain issues such as conflicts among the farmers, rural communities and in sharing of resources, allocations or incentives to the farmers. For instance, between 2009 and 2011, during the Fadama Development Programme III, there were actual rice farmers and those farmers who as a result of their influences in the government could access the benefits of the programme.¹³² They gained access to Fadama facilities such as loans under the auspices of the rice farmers group which they were not. These two categories of rice farmers were said to have formed Fadama Community Associations (FCA) with diverse and conflicting interests that often severed their harmonious relationships and contributions to rice production in Abakaliki.¹³³

Moreover, it was believed that selfish political agenda and interferences of the government may have drastically reduced rice production in Abakaliki. In 2009, for instance, the government of Chief Martins Elechi enacted a law requiring the rice mill complex at Abakaliki township to relocate to Ikwo Industrial Cluster, where the state- owned integrated rice mill was sited.¹³⁴ It was said that the Elechi government was not disposed to the former Chairman of the Abakaliki Rice Mill Industrial Association, Hon. Vincent Nwibo, and as such did not support his election. The trade union was said to have refuted government order to relocate and filed a suit at the National Industrial Court in Abakaliki in 2010.¹³⁵

According to an informant, rice production and other activities at the rice mill declined following it. There was an indication that rice farmers and traders from Abakaliki and environs, including customers from far and wide became jittery of possible evacuation or relocation order to the area considered unfavorable for production and trade.¹³⁶ The following reasons were considered: (i) no access to banking/ banking facilities (ii) insufficient paddy

rice supply (iii) poor road networks (iv) poor communication gadgets (v) lack of infrastructure such as electricity, water, market stores, transport system, among others.¹³⁷

But the last was yet heard of the tussle, for while the court case subsisted, rice producers began to withdraw from major parts of the capital (Abakaliki) in the agric-business for fear of favourable decision for government. Customers from other parts of Igboland and beyond diverted to alternative markets like those in northern Nigeria to purchase or sell paddy or milled rice.¹³⁸ Also, in 2011, there was tension following government intervention in the union's election through the sponsorship of a candidate, Deacon Joseph Ununu, for the post of the Chairman of the rice trade union. Joseph Ununu from Okpanko Okpaitumo in Abakaliki Local Government Area, had contested the position against Emeka Nwankashi, from Idenyi Ogwa in Izzi.¹³⁹ In a parallel election held at the end of 2011 at the rice mill and state stadium complexes, Deacon Umunuu was declared winner.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the other factions at the stadium were dispersed by the police, while some voters sustained injuries, as a result of attack by political thugs.¹⁴¹

Few weeks before the election, which was held in December 2011, a Mercedes 911 lorry belonging to Mr. Chijioke Ilodinuba was burnt down at the rice mill complex by unknown persons at night.¹⁴² This action further increased the level of tension in the rice mill, which stopped activities in rice production in one of the most popular rice mill complexes in Abakaliki. Mr. Ilodinuba was said to have supported Mr. Nwankashi during the campaigns.¹⁴³

Infrastructural Challenges

The Abakaliki rice farmers/ traders were constrained by inadequate infrastructure. Infrastructural facilities such as roads, irrigation system, standard market, storage facilities, electricity, water, healthcare centre, among others, were poorly developed or totally absent in

some rural communities of Abakaliki.¹⁴⁴ Although there were arrangements to put some of the infrastructures in place by the various programmes such as the River Basin Development Authority and National Fadama Development Programme, the proposals were allegedly defeated by embezzlement of the funds by the coordinators, project managers and other personnel, including state government functionaries.¹⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the various initiatives of the governments may not have enhanced the timely and efficient provision of the necessary infrastructure for rice innovation system such as parboiling machines, safety containers for storage, equipment and health facilities to take care of the farmers.¹⁴⁶ For instance, in the intervention cost of the integrated rice mill clusters in the three senatorial zones of Ebonyi State, government mapped out funds for these infrastructures such as health centres, police/ security posts, fencing and parboiling units, which were entirely absent at the time of this study.¹⁴⁷

Also, the inability to provide improved technological infrastructures for rice production is believed to have accounted for the poor quality of local rice, which was not competitively marketable with the imported produce.¹⁴⁸ These are the whole lots of constraints and challenges that militated against the production of rice in Abakaliki. What is to be done to ameliorate these menaces are examined in the next chapter of this study.

Notes

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4. Augustine Iteshi, c44 years, public servant/ rice trader, Interviewed at Nwezenyi Izzi, 21st July, 2015.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

A BALANCE SHEET OF THE RICE ECONOMY

This chapter concludes the study with summary, conclusion and recommendations. In summary, the chapter evaluates the rice economy in Abakaliki. To this end, here, the chapter submits, in a nutshell, the relevant findings gathered in the course of the study. The chapter terminates the research with salient recommendations that would be useful in solving the problems constraining rice production in Abakaliki.

Summary

Since the introduction of the Asian varieties of rice in the Abakaliki area of Northeastern Igboland in 1942, the commodity has made some significant impact on the economy of the area.¹ The growth in the demand of the crop consequently increased the space it occupied in the rural and urban economy of the area. This situation further spurred the rice farming revolution especially in the 1970s, which may have successfully taken the place or position of other staple crops in the area. In the 1980s, rice production surpassed or began to move beyond the subsistence, leading to the introduction of a market economy in Abakaliki.² The growth of rice production and the quantity consumed locally also increased between the 1980s and the early 1990s. This expansion led to demand and supply deficits as the population of the people in the area continued to increase.

Micro-economics states that when the demand for a particular commodity in a domestic economy is higher than the supply, the country will import from the world market.³ Thus, to supplement local production of rice in Abakaliki, government, the study notes, had to embark on imports. There were several problems identified as a result of this situation. For instance, there was an indication that the local producers lost the motivation to

produce rice for fetching low prices consequent upon the ineffective competition with the imported produce in the market.⁴ The government, on its part, was believed to have depended on the petroleum revenue since the oil economy in the 1970s.⁵ To this end, the research has pointed out that the oil economy may have adversely affected local production of rice and other agricultural activities in the area. This condition meant a slack in the production of rice in the area that had been identified with about forty per cent potentials in contributing to total rice production in Nigeria.⁶

Notwithstanding the neglect in the production of rice in Abakaliki, the potentials of the economy in the area were believed to be untapped. Besides, it was discovered that the people, although with limited resources for the production of rice, were reported to have made remarkable strides in the growth and development of the commodity. This effort, through the economic and social relations of production, impacted on the Abakaliki area, both positively and adversely.⁷ Thus, there could be a possible reduction of the risks and losses involved in rice production with the emergence of public-private participation.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the history of rice production. It has also examined the activities surrounding rice production in Abakaliki and its impact on the economy of the area. The study unravelled the rate at which public and private policies on rice production affected the industry and other socio-economic and political activities of the people of Abakaliki. It, however considered the limitations and challenges of rice production through the farm-gates, processing and marketing of the produce within and outside Abakaliki. This study recommended among other things, a total ban on the importation of rice in Nigeria to

encourage domestic production, and for the nation to become self-sufficient in the production of rice.

From our study, we have argued that the Abakaliki rice industry has significantly played viable roles in the economy of the area and Nigeria in general. It has empowered the people in various ways. The people are known to have attained certain social, political as well as economic positions following their engagements in the local production of rice. The consumer standard and preferences which were said to have constrained the rice enterprise are known to be factors that count in favour of local production. Based on these findings, it may be safe to state that despite the fact that Abakaliki rice production has not been able to meet up with high consumer requirements, it is still highly demanded due probably to its nutrients, taste, aroma and presentational qualities. To be precise, the elite and the locals in the urban and rural areas are known to have always insisted on local (Abakaliki) rice consumption.

As has been observed, rice consumption rates in Abakaliki continued to increase among the rural and urban population. Consumption rates also necessitated more activities in rice production and other sectors of the economy in the area. This situation has offered Abakaliki an opportunity for capital accumulation, wealth and job creation.⁸

It is for this reason that concerted efforts from three categories of the population in Abakaliki were known to have contributed in strengthening the industry. They were the rice producers and traders – the two which were followed by the government as well as the public.

Recommendations

At this juncture, the study makes certain recommendations against the background of the identified constraints and challenges raised in the research. The constraints and challenges that need attention are outlined as follows: (i) Land Acquisition and Tenure Problems (ii) Farm-gate Production Problems (iii) Economic Constraints (iv) Information/ Technology Adoption Problems (v) Environmental Health Challenges (vi) Policy Inconsistencies and (vii) Infrastructural Challenges. Below are a breakdown of the recommendations which, when applied, will likely enable private and public participations in revamping rice production in the area.

Land Acquisition and Tenure System

Land has been identified as where all activities in rice production take place. Therefore, there is the utmost need to improve on the conditions of land acquisition for agricultural purposes, and rice production in particular. Land problem in Abakaliki has been attributed to population increase in the area. As a result of this, the problem associated with the increase in population should be managed by the lineage system such as kinsmen and clan groups. The various institutions with rights to manage land such as the family, clan, village and community groups are encouraged to devise more peaceful means of land allocation to the emerging rice farmers in the area. The groups are advised to institute Land Management Committee (LMC) to oversee judicious allocation/ appropriation of land to people with proven interests in rice farming. The task of land allocation, alienation, lease or rental should not be left for the elders alone, whose decisions or abilities may be affected by their age or health condition. This situation implies the involvement of the elite, youth, town union and some reasonable members of the family groups. Each of these groups should be

bound by common relations from the same ancestral ties which could spur a uniting force for a unanimous decision on land. The women deserve accommodation in the allocation or acquisition of land, at least for rice farming, because they constituted the major labour force in rice production in Abakaliki.

Although, the customary rules on land continued to exist and guide other land laws in the rural communities of Abakaliki, the Land Use Act of 1978 was reported to have constrained the production of rice. It is hereby suggested that the Act should be amended to take into consideration the interest of rice farmers. To suit the trends of the twenty-first century, two alternative reforms of the land laws are also suggested to replace the Act. First, there is need for an amendment of the Act to provide explicit conditions for the acquisition of rural land, probably for other purposes other than agriculture. This situation should be able to stipulate, in clear terms, conditions and punishments for the acquisition or false acquisition of rural land for other purposes other than agriculture. This is one of the conditions that will promote rice production. The second alternative that may be adopted is an outright exemption of the indigenous rural land tenure from the provisions and operations of the Land Use Act of 1978. This idea would enable the operations of the act and indigenous system to co-exist and survive independently without any interferences of the other. This condition would leave confidence in the large-scale investors in rice production and the rural farmers.

Land is fixed, and as the years come by, the population of the Abakaliki people continues to increase. The people should manage the effects of urbanisation on their land by limiting settlement within their present areas. Further expansion into the hinterlands would likely accelerate land fragmentation. To avoid this, the people should be allowed to design

or allocate areas for residential buildings, industrial layouts and agricultural purposes. In doing this, the rigorous conditions for the acquisition of communal land for mechanised farming would have been reduced. This situation should also entail the reduction and regulation of the costs of land rental for rice production.

Farm-Gate Production

Recommendations for rice production at this stage require some practical scientific approaches in farm management and economics. The Abakaliki soil contains salt, and the salinity could be reduced by some human activities. These activities involve adequate water management. There should be drainages in the farms to avoid over flooding. Over-flooding was identified as a source of soil salinity and consequent increase in toxicity in lowland rice production. Liquid and solid wastes from homes and industrial or agricultural activities in Abakaliki should be well managed. There should be designated dump sites and channels for disposing of wastes. The waste management agency of the Ebonyi State Government should be encouraged to assist the farmers and industries in managing generated wastes. Waste could be re-cycled or pulverised for bio-gas energy production. This situation will reduce the rate of soil acidity. Natural drainages, river estuaries and channels and other water regimes such as erosion that flood the rice farms should be properly checked by planting trees and constructing cross-bars around the rice farms.

In addition, to check drought and encourage all year-round production of rice, irrigation is necessary. The government should, therefore, rehabilitate the various water schemes and irrigation facilities in the rice farming communities. Private individuals and

rice farmers should also establish a community small-scale irrigation scheme. They should not always wait for the government which may not respond immediately in emergency situation. The findings of this study show that there is little or no private sector inputs in large-scale irrigation development in Abakaliki. Therefore, the government should explore avenues of attracting private contributions to irrigation development through public and private partnerships. The government and the community should collaborate and contribute counter-part funds for developing or rehabilitating the existing water schemes in the area.

The natural method of scaring pests such as scarecrows for birds and rodents should also be encouraged. The application of the dry cell-powder should be abandoned because it has some harmful bio-diversity effects such as toxicity and alkalinity on the plants and animals. Instead of the application of such chemical elements, the rice seeds should be nursed and transplanted after the nursery to the farms in file-ridging. This could be better than seed broadcasting. It may also be necessary to fence the rice farms in order to prevent grazing, even though the cost may be much. The government should also make laws that will regulate grazing on the agricultural land in Abakaliki.

For effective temperature for rice growth, the farmers are encouraged to plant rice at the appropriate planting season and time. Meteorological monitoring of the weather suitable for planting within a given period of time is highly required. This is because the rice seeds/plants are mostly affected by temperature below 15⁰C during infancy and puberty. For this to be effective, government and donor agencies should provide the rice farmers with thermometer and other instruments for weather forecast and evaluation. They should also provide chemicals for the control of diseases such as African Rice Gall Midge.

Inorganic fertilizer application such as urea should be encouraged by government through fertilizer subsidy. The high cost of fertilizers is necessary to receive the attention of the federal and state governments. The market should be enlarged for the rural farmers. Access to agricultural inputs should not be influenced politically. Accredited practical rice farmers at the farm gates should be the groups that should be the priority of the government while distributing incentives to the rice farmers. The disbursement or sharing of the incentives could be monitored by career extension agents and officials from the federal and state ministries of agriculture. This strategy shall provide for easy identification of the genuine rice farmers from the political farmers' groups. To ensure that fertilizers get to the farmers at the rural areas, government should establish fertilizer depots at the Abakaliki rice mill complex and at each centre of the three major rice producing clans of Abakaliki. This is with a view to reducing costs and increasing the access to fertilizers. The government should from time-to-time empower the community rice farmers groups with the provision of free fertilizers and other farm inputs such as insecticides.

Also, agricultural practices that would increase the application of organic fertilizers such as plant residue and animal dung should be adopted. The farmers should avoid bush-burning or burning of plants residue after clearing land for the cultivation of rice. Plants and animal residue should be allowed to decompose into the soil. Decomposed residue enhances the yield and growth of rice plants. When (organic) fertilizers are sufficient in the land, it can sustain rice crops for two planting seasons. Plant residue could also be used to mulch the seeds/ plants as a means of water retention or protection on the rice farms. It is, therefore, necessary that the government construct composts for the abundant rice husks where farmers could source organic fertilizers apart from the animal dung which are not enough.

Mechanisation seems almost impossible in Abakaliki due probably to certain limitations for a number of factors. This notwithstanding, the government and large-scale investors in rice production are encouraged to partner in procuring and managing a mechanised rice farming system. Portable equipments such as rice harvesters, threshers and planting machines should be provided to the rural farmers at affordable prices for free, sale and hire. Professional assistance on the maintenance and operations of these equipments should be made available by the government and other development agencies. This will reduce the cost of labour in rice production at the farm-gates.

Farmer-to-farmer training and effective extension services are also necessarily required to increased local rice production in Abakaliki. Challenges existed with regard to knowledge of farm practices and creating rural learning opportunities at national and local levels. Farmer-to-farmer transfer of knowledge from the privileged to the non-privileged ones is known to stimulate or enhance good agricultural practices. Rice farmers are more likely to adopt new technologies passed over to them by their colleagues. Rural learning of rice production practices could be enhanced by the establishment of farmer-to-farmer videos and radio programmes in local languages. A video application could be developed for activities from land preparation to marketing of local rice in Abakaliki. This may be possible through mobile telephones with a common programming language which the farmers could read and operate. Rural farm radio programmes on rice production are necessary to educate the farmers in innovation, technology adoption and provide emergency information such as possible disease invasion.

In addition, the National Cereal Research Institute, International Rice Research Institute and other national seeds regulatory bodies need to be strengthened to meet rice seed

demand for ecological environment of Abakaliki and consumers' preferences. They should ensure efficient varietal release mechanisms that will guarantee quality produce. Small-scale enterprises should be able to seek and access the support of the institutional structures in Abakaliki rice production such as the Agricultural Development Programme, National Fadama Development Programme, Ebonyi Rice Project, among others, to help them create and sustain a viable rice economy. The Ebonyi State Agricultural Development Project has the responsibility of providing information and appropriate education of the farmers through advice and training. The extension agents should, therefore, re-strategise to effectively monitor supply and ensure availability of quality seeds provided by the agencies to the farmers. The government should employ more and competent staff of the Ministry of Agriculture in Ebonyi State for the purpose. They should be deployed to the rural areas of Ikwo, Izzi and Ezza.

Economic Constraints-the Way Forward

The lack of funds is acknowledged to be one of the challenges of rice production in Abakaliki. Public and private entrepreneurs are, therefore, encouraged to provide veritable platforms for financial assistance to the rice farmers and traders. There is, therefore, the need for a streamlined process of loan facilities that would empower the rural farmers. This could be easily achieved through creating a database of verified rice farmers and producers in Ebonyi State particularly at the community level. The database would be a guide to disbursing funds to accredited or certified rice producers who are to be monitored for proper utilisation. The government should subsidise interests in agricultural loans from commercial banks.

It is hereby suggested that the Bank of Agriculture and Industry should float interest-free loans on rice production in Abakaliki. To bring the users of these resources closer to the government or financial institutions, there is need to set up rice farmers/ business training classes, as part of entrepreneurship workshops. This will facilitate regular contacts with the rice producers or loan users for efficient administration of the funds. It will further strengthen the cooperative rice farmers association which could explore more opportunities to access loans for their activities in rice production. It may be necessary at this point to underline that rice production is time-bound, which entails timely administration of the funds to target projects.

Disbursement of loan should have a coordinated arrangement. The rice farmers groups and the federal/ state ministry of finance should be able to sign loan agreement with the bank groups and the Ebonyi State Government. This will be a condition precedent to first loan disbursement. In this regard, there should be annual external audits to provide information against which decisions to continue or suspend disbursement to a particular group will be based.

There is need for urgent government attention to Nigeria's exchange rates medium which has continued to fluctuate against the Naira. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) should be encouraged to collaborate with the Nigerian Customs Service and the Federal Ministry of Finance in liberalising conditions for the importation of agricultural inputs through flexible exchange rates and tariffs. The foreign currency rates against the Naira, the cost of clearing the bill of landing (goods) and tariff charge on agricultural inputs are considered too high. Concessional duties should be granted to the importers of these inputs especially where the country does not enjoy the comparative advantage.

Information/ Technology Adoption

Rice production can liberate the youth in the Nigerian rural communities, especially Abakaliki since it is a task that does not require much formal education. Formal education may not be for all people, and some of these youth who choose not go to school may have another way of being educated. To bridge the gaps between the educated and uneducated rice farmers/ producers, there is need for regular and useful information passages. New knowledge or improved techniques in rice production should be disseminated through photographs, hand-bills, bill-boards, street walk campaign, early evening radio programmes on rice production in local dialects and through the use of traditional communication systems such as metal and wooden gongs and drums.

On the other hand, adaptation to technologies by farmers should also involve a gradual process of demonstration. The farmers and rice producers in general would like to be eye-witnesses to yields in production as a result of a particular technology adaptation. The ADP and other extension agencies should be patient and also exhibit high sense of professionalism while passing information necessary for technology adaptation among the rural rice producers. The exercise should be participatory probably in a sample rice field. Professional assistance and advice for the use of the integrated rice mill machines are necessary. The government should empower a number of rice producers in training abroad, in countries like China and Thailand, where they would practically see their counterparts in the rural rice fields demonstrate certain technology application.

The institutional structures in rice production in Abakaliki have to design a participatory and consultative forum for the producers to adopt modern techniques in the industry. Rice farmers should also participate in the consultative process undertaken by the

Bank Groups, World Bank and Government Officials. This project should involve extensive field visits to consult with potential rice producers, local government and traditional leaders. This approach may likely minimise the distribution of incentives to non-rice farmers in Abakaliki. Government agencies on rice production such as National Fadama Development Programme should conduct monitoring and evaluation visits and report regularly on the implementation progress of various rice activities of the project.

It is worthy of note that successful implementation of an increased rice production strategy in Abakaliki would depend largely on the extent of the collaboration of the local and aligning international agencies on rice production. These organisations may also assist in the expected revolution by providing practical innovations and low cost effective technologies for sustainable rice production in the area.

Environmental Health Approach

Some of the environmental issues have been discussed in the on-farm production recommendations. However, it may be necessary to recommend that governments should intervene with the provision of parboiling machines. For the next ten years starting from the time of this research, for instance, it is envisaged that the rural areas in Abakaliki may be deforested, if governments fail to do something about local rice parboiling with firewood. The moment parboiling machines are available, there will likely be acute reduction in gas emission in the atmosphere. The environmental management agency of the Ebonyi State should therefore frequently evacuate the waste generated from the rice mills. The rice husks dump sites have been death traps, and should be converted to bio-gas (renewable energy) plants that could generate electricity for the rural communities. When these wastes are managed or recycled, the soil toxicity will become manageable by the local rice farmers.

In the interim, the winnowers should be provided with protective materials for the eyes, nose and ears. This incentive could come in the form of donations from millers and industrial associations/ unions. It could also come from the contestants to the office of the chairman of the trade unions. At intervals, government should conduct free medical care and tests especially for the labourers in the rice mills and rural communities.

Policy Approach

The policy approach of the government should be stable especially in the area of foreign trade and exchange rates. Importation of foreign rice should be banned in the country. To this effect, government should make policies that would stimulate local production of rice for self-sufficiency. The rice stake-holders, investors and companies in the rice subsidy scam should be re-visited with the appropriate sections of the law regulating economic and financial crimes in the country.

In addition, government should remove tax on agricultural produce. This will encourage rice producers and participants in the rice sub-sectors such as transporters. An increase in the capital share of budgetary expenditure in agriculture is necessary. This is to enhance the country's comparative advantages in agricultural produce with other imported consumer goods.

The general government policies and rural infrastructure environment need to be improved to help rice farmers. For this to happen, there is need to set up credit guarantee facility within an organised rice market and facilitate private companies to be linked up with rural agro-allied products dealers. This will stimulate effective attention to the farmers needs in a private- public- community partnership.

Infrastructure

The issue of infrastructures is widely acknowledged as a challenge in Abakaliki. Rice production in particular needs the attention of both the government and individuals in rehabilitating or establishing water schemes. It is a known fact that none of the rice mills in the Abakaliki area has a bore-hole. Therefore, there is need for speedy responses with water facilities in the area. Apart from water facilities, there is also the need for the construction of feeder roads to the farms in Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo through the town. This will facilitate the transportation of paddy rice to the mills.

It is further suggested that the Ebonyi State Government should establish more health-care centres and schools around the farms. Majority of the farmers are youth and may entirely resort to farming without making attempts to go to schools. The establishment of the two institutions will make them have a sense of belonging. The rural farmers often see themselves as being marginalised by the government. A concerted effort of public-private partnership in providing necessary amenities will not only enhance rice production but will also increase the synergy between the government and the rural dwellers. Given the fact that agricultural operations are time-bound, there should be prompt and sufficient provisions of inputs and infrastructure such as fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides, improved planting tools, water pumps and tube wells, among others at a subsidised rate. This would help the growers to increase the production of rice in Abakaliki.

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S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Mode of Interview	Assessment	Date	Phone No.	Remarks
1	Abochi Agatha	46	Rice farmer/ trader	Abakaliki town	Direct	Reliable	17/1/15	Nil	
2	Abochi Happiness	36	Rice farmer	Hatchery Road, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17	Nil	
3	Adekunle Johnson	48	Nigeria Customs <i>Officer</i>	Idiroko border	Indirect	Reliable	3/2/17	+234816155 5106	
4	Agasa James	54	Labourer/ firewood trader	Ikwo Rice Mill Ind. Cluster	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17	Nil	
5	Aleke Ezekiel	58	Labourer/ parboiler	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17	Nil	
6	Aligbo Nwhogu	96	Retired rice farmer	Omego, Echara Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	7/12/16	Nil	
7	Alo James	45	Rice parboiler/ dryer	Effium, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17	Nil	
8	Alumona Jonathan	44	Agricultural Officer	IITA Headquarters, Ibadan	Direct	Reliable	18/4/15	Nil	
9	Aniekwe Longinus N.	52	University Lecturer	Department of Crop Science, Ebonyi State University	Direct	Reliable	5/5/16	Nil	
10	Anyanwu Uche Casmir	48	University Lecturer	Senior Staff Quarters UNN, Nsukka	Direct	Reliable	1/4/15	Nil	
11	Ayodele Femi Babatunde	58	Cereal Genetic Coordinator	IITA Gene-bank, Ibadan	Direct	Reliable	10/10/16	Nil	

12	Chiadi Chinyere	36	Food Vendor	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17	Nil	
13	Chukwu Aja	50	Agricultural Officer	EBADEP, Onuebonyi, Ebonyi State	Direct	Reliable	10/11/15	Nil	
14	Chukwu Dan O.	NA	University Lecturer	Department of History/ International Studies, NAU, Awka	Direct	Reliable	7/6/16	Nil	
15	Egwu Gabriel	46	Rice miller	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	23/9/16	Nil	
16	Ekawa Joseph	52	Rice farmer/ trader	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17	Nil	
17	Ekechi Peter	49	Teacher	Community Secondary School, Azuinyaba, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	6/3/17	Nil	
18	Ekunno Okechukwu	41	Civil Servant	Nigeria Immigration Service, Awka	Direct	Reliable	18/1/17	Nil	
19	Ekwo-Irem Nnenna	40	University Lecturer	Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	10/9/16	Nil	
20	Emerenini Chidiebere	36	Public Servant	Ebony Agro-Rice Mill, Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17	Nil	
21	Ewa Ezeogo	78	Traditional Ruler	Ndi Ogbinyanga Ezza South	Direct	Reliable	15/4/16	Nil	
22	Ezaka Marcellus	78	Retired rice farmer/ trader	Onueke Ezza Rice Mill Complex	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17	Nil	
23	Eze Christopher	48	Local rice trader	First-Gate, (Eke) Market, Awka	Direct	Reliable	17/4/16	Nil	
24	Eze Nnonye	45	Civil Servant	Mile-50, Kpirikpiri, Abakaliki town	Direct	Reliable	20/7/15	Nil	
25	Ezeme Festus	54	Civil Servant	Community	Direct	Reliable	5/12/16	Nil	

				Secondary School, Obollo Afor					
26	Ezennia Michael	74	Retired migrant tenant farmer/ rice trader	No. 44 Ogoja Road, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	14/4/16	Nil	
27	Ibe-Enwo Anthonia	49	Civil Servant	Ebonyi State Agricultural Dev. Programme, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	27/7/15	Nil	
28	Ibeme Sunday	55	Retired Motor Body Builder	Motor Body Construction Site, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	25/7/15	Nil	
29	Idenyi Justina A.	48	Rice farmer	Echara Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	17/1/15	Nil	
30	Igwe Ezekiel	20	Student/ Water vendor	Onueke Ezza	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17	Nil	
31	Igwe Fidelis	46	Rice miller/ trader	Rice Mill Complex, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	21/2/17	Nil	
32	Igwe Uche	50	University Lecturer	Department of History/ International Studies, NAU, Awka	Direct	Reliable	15/1/17	Nil	
33	Igwe Moses	47	Production Engineer	Ebonyi Fertilizer and Chemical Company, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17		
34	Illum Clementina	46	Rice trader	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	21/2/17		
35	Iteshi Augustine	44	Public Servant	Nwezenyi Izzi,	Direct	Reliable	21/7/15		

				Abakaliki					
36	Iteshi Raymond	53	Civil Servant	Faculty of Law, EBSU, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	17/2/16		
37	Makpa Ifeanyi	44	Civil Servant/ rice farmer	INEC, Awka Head Office.	Direct	Reliable	19/6/16		
38	Makpa Maduabuchukwu	44	Rice farmer	Onu-nworie, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	18/7/15		
39	Mama Brendan	44	Teacher	Community Secondary School Ezzamgbo	Direct	Reliable	13/4/16		
40	Mgbada Clement O.	51	University Lecturer	Department of History/ International Studies, EBSU, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	9/9/16		
41	Mmegini Maria	45	Rice trader/ farmer	Ikwo Integrated Rice Mill Complex	Direct	Reliable	29/9/16		
42	Njoku Ali	57	Rice Farmer	Idembia, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	27/4/15		
43	Njoku Nweke	86	Retired rice farmer	Okoffia, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	2/12/16		
44	Nkwoga James	56	Civil Servant	Abakaliki Rice Mill Project, State Secretariat	Direct	Reliable	24/2/15		
45	Nkwuda Ifeoma	24	Sales Rep.	Kotech Mechanic Workshop, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17		
46	Nwafor Uche	35	Motor Body Builder	Motor Body Construction Site,	Direct	Reliable	28/7/15		

				Abakaliki					
47	Nwakpu Cletus	50	Fadama Coordinator	NFDP Ebonyi State Office, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	13/4/16		
48	Nwakpu Mercy	38	Cashier/ accountant	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17		
49	Nwali Ede	62	Farmer	Abia-Umuhu, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	24/4/15		
50	Nweke Carolina	69	Retired rice farmer/ trader	Onu-nworie, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	14/4/16		
51	Nweke Donatus	62	Rice farmer, trader/ retired mill operator	Onueke Ezza Rice Mill Complex	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17		
52	Nweke Juliana	68	Winnower	rice husks disposal site, Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	21/2/17		
53	Nweke Nwenenwe	74	Retired Headmaster/ rice farmer	Echara Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	18/4/16		
54	Nweze S. N. O.	57	Renant rice farmer/ miller	5 Ogoja Road, Nwezenyi, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	28/7/15		
55	Nwibo Vincent	50	Former rice trader/ Hon. Member	Legislative Complex, Nkaleke, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	26/2/17		
56	Nwoba Charles	46	Vice Principal	Community Secondary School, Ekawoke, Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	6/3/17		
57	Nwobodo Godwin	70	Rice trader	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17		

58	Nwogbu Chukwuebuka	30	Mill Operator/trader	Abakaliki Rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	21/2/17		
59	Nwoha Ephraim	62	Fadama Rice Farmer	Ayamelum, Anambra State	Direct	Reliable	18/12/15		
60	Nwogwugwu Collins	54	University Lecturer	Department of Economics, NAU, Awka	Direct	Reliable	19/12/16		
61	Nwokwu G. N.	45	University Lecturer/ rice farmer	Department of Crop Production and Landscape Management, EBSU	Direct	Reliable	17/4/16		
62	Nworie Uzoamaka Josephine	64	Firewood trader/ farmer	firewood section, Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	21/2/17		
63	Nwosu Mmaduabuchi	58	Rice importer/trader	Ogoja Road, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	31/7/16		
64	Nworie Joseph	90	Former Town Union President/ farmer	Nkwagu, Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	17/8/16		
65	Nwori Pius	45	Production Engineer	Integrated Rice Mill Complex, Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17		
66	Nwurukwu Lawrence N.	60	Politician/ former Chairman, Ikwo L.G.A.	Echara, Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	18/1/16		
67	Nshi Chris	56	Senator/ former Rice Miller	SSG Office, Government House, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	25/7/15		
68	Nsofor Nwadili	44	tenant rice farmer/ trader	Onitsha (Relief) Market Anambra State	Direct	Reliable	15/4/15		
69	Obasi James	53	Blacksmith/	Onueke Ezza	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17		

			local implement maker	Construction Site					
70	Odi Christopher	82	Retired rice farmer/ trade	Abakaliki town	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17		
71	Odife Ikenna	53	University Lecturer	Department of History/ International Studies, NAU, Awka	Direct	Reliable	25/2/17		
72	Odo Bernard Ifeanyichukwu	47	University Lecturer/ SSG	Office of the SSG, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State	Direct	Reliable	23/3/16		
73	Odo Charles	45	Customs Officer	Seme border	Indirect	Fairly reliable	23/12/16	+2348063663435	
74	Odoake Chinonye	36	Cotonou based - rice trader	Ibenda Obollo, Udenu L.G.A., Enugu State	Direct	Reliable	4/1/17	+22998214355	
75	Odo Nweke	87	Retired Palm wine Tapper	Igboji, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	25/4/15		
76	Ogbalikpa Anthony	48	rice trader	Iboko market square, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17		
77	Oge James Elom	43	Rice by-product trader	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17		
78	Ogbeke Bridget Ogechukwu	41	Rice farmer/ trader	Iboko Market Square, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	14/7/16		
79	Ogbeke Jude	46	Fadama Coordinator	NFDP Office (Radio Nigeria Premises), Enugu	Direct	Reliable	19/4/15		
80	Ogbonna Fidelia	48	Rice trader	Obollo Afor (Grain Wharf) Market.	Direct	Reliable	20/1/17		
81	Ogoenyi Teresa	58	Rice farmer	Okpanko Okpaitumo, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	12/2/16		
82	Ogbuishi Remigius	NA	Traditional Ruler/	Emene Enugu	Direct	Reliable	24/11/16		

			Historian						
83	Okafor Ifeanyi	40	Member, Rice farmer Cooperative/ trader	Total Petrol Station, Vanco Road, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17		
84	Oken Joseph	50	Labourer/ rice parboiler	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	14/4/16		
85	Okerekwu Ezenwa	44	Rice trader	Iboko market square	Direct	Reliable	16/10/16		
86	Okpani Francis	46	Public Servant/ Manager	Oyus Brown Rice Company	Direct	Reliable	17/10/16		
87	Okwor Ugwokeja	89	Retired tenant rice farmer	Adani, Uzo-Uwani LGA Enugu State	Direct	Reliable	4/4/15		
88	Ogwa Eze Iteshi	84	Traditional Ruler	Nwezenyi, Igbeagu, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	29/8/15		
89	Ojiakor Ngozi	NA	University Lecturer	Department of History/ International Studies, NAU, Awka	Direct	Reliable	10/4/16		
90	Ojimba Raphael	48	Rice trader	Kpiri-kpiri Market, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	29/9/16		
91	Olasola Adedeji	51	Civil Servant	State Ministry of Information and Culture, Surulere, Lagos	Indirect	Fairly Reliable	15/2/16		Interaction through a colleague's telephone
92	Olebe Grace	64	Winnowing/ Rice Husks Disposer	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	6/11/15		
93	Onele Linda	45	Teacher	Community Secondary School, Iboko, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	24/2/17		
94	Onugha Joseph	47	Monitoring and	NFDP, Anambra State Office, Kwata	Direct	Reliable	12/6/15		

			Evaluation Officer	Junction, Awka					
95	Onuoha Ikechukwu	41	University Lecturer	Department of History/ International Studies, EBSU	Direct	Reliable	23/2/17		
96	Onwughalu Ibekaku	64	Tenant rice farmer/ trader	Vanco Road, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	12/4/16		
97	Onyeagba Sunday	38	Migrant rice blander/ trader	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	26/9/16		
98	Orji Orji Nkwuda	45	Rice farmer/ trader	Igbeagu Izzi	Direct	Reliable	28/7/15		
99	Oroke Benjamin	44	Rice mill operator	Hatchery Road Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	13/3/17		
100	Orogwu Steve	57	Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ebonyi State	Direct	Reliable	27/7/15		
101	Peter Ikechukwu	48	Rice farmer	Adani	Direct	Reliable	12/5/15		
102	Udeh Gabriel	87	Retired stranger rice farmer/ trader	Nkwagu Ikwo	Direct	Reliable	12/4/16		
103	Ugezu Kenechukwu	75	Tenant rice farmer/ trader	Kpiri-kpiri, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	4/4/16		
104	Ugezu Michael	67	Migrant tenant rice farmer/ trader	Enugwu-ukwu Hall, Abakaliki town	Direct	Reliable	3/7/16		
105	Ugonye Francis	40	Rice farmer	UNIDO Rice Mill Complex Iboko, Izzi	Direct	Reliable	23/7/16		

106	Ugwu Christian Tagbo	50	University Lecturer	Department of Religion and Society, UNN	Direct	Reliable	22/5/16		
107	Ugwudo Onyinye Paschaline	25	Student	Department of Food Science/ Technology, UNN	Direct	Reliable	27/4/16		
108	Ujam Patrick	48	Civil Servant	Federal Medical Centre, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	22/2/16		
109	Ujebe Emmanuel	51	Pastor/ retired rice miller	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17		
110	Ukwa Pius	33	Rice farmer	Abakaliki rice mill complex	Direct	Reliable	22/2/17		
111	Umeh Samuel	54	Public Servant/ rice farmer	Ogoja Road, Abakaliki	Direct	Reliable	13/2/16		
112	Ununu Joseph	42	Public Servant/ rice miller, trader	Chairman's Office, Abakaliki Rice Mill Owners Industrial Limited.	Direct	Reliable	20/2/17		
113	Usulor Elias	86	Village Head	Amuzu, Ezza	Direct	Reliable	27/5/16		

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