

Agricultural Entrepreneurship Literacy as a Strategy for Addressing Nigeria's Economic Challenges

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Abstract

Nigeria, a country heavily reliant on oil and gas for its economic survival, faces significant socio-economic challenges, more importantly, as global oil prices remain volatile, and as income continue to dwindle. This economic vulnerability underscores the urgent need for diversification, with agriculture adjudged as a critical sector capable of driving economic growth and food sustainability. As the world scrambles to achieve food security and end hunger, agricultural entrepreneurship offers an enduring platform for achieving sustainable agricultural practices, food security, employment creation, and improved living standards, hence the need for government to rejig her policies to achieve food sustainability through craft and vocational agricultural literacy programs. This paper, therefore, argues that the introduction of agricultural entrepreneurship as a special and compulsory general course in the Nigerian tertiary institutions will help the youths cultivate the zeal for *agripreneurship*, provide needed skills required for modern agricultural practices, brood innovation, attain food security, and check unemployment. The study adopts a desk review methodology, drawing extensively from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and institutional reports. Empirical evidences mainly from the internet were used to examine the effect of *agripreneurship* on food security, poverty alleviation, and employment generation. Findings reveal that introducing agricultural entrepreneurship as a compulsory general course in the Nigerian tertiary institutions will positively affect overall economic growth and food security. It is recommended that embedding agricultural entrepreneurship study into the broader curriculum will assist tertiary institutions contribute significantly to addressing Nigeria's food and economic challenges.

Keywords: Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Agricultural Literacy, Curriculum Development, Food Security and Tertiary Education Policy

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Introduction

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and one of its leading economies, is currently grappling with significant socio-economic challenges despite its abundant natural resources and human capital. Over the years, oil has remained the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, accounting for 90% of export earnings and 56% of projected revenue in 2025 (Punch Editorial Board, 2025). This heavy reliance persists despite notable growth in crop production, which contributed 23.86% to Nigeria's real GDP in Q4 2023, and substantial potential in key sectors such as trade, real estate, and telecommunications and information services (NBS, 2023). Consequently, the economy remains highly vulnerable to global oil price fluctuations, an imbalanced economic structure, and overdependence on a volatile commodity.

Agriculture, once the nation's pride and economic backbone, is regaining prominence as the largest contributor to real GDP, accounting for 28.65% in Q3 2024. This is followed by crop production, real estate, and telecommunications, which were separated from broader agriculture and information and communication sectors (Egbooh, 2025). To address hunger, unemployment, poverty, youth restiveness, and to create enduring wealth, there is an urgent need for government policies that promote sustainable agricultural productivity through vocational and skill development.

This paper argues that introducing agricultural entrepreneurship as a compulsory general course in all Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education will help mitigate Nigeria's economic

challenges. By equipping students regardless of their academic discipline with *agripreneurship* skills, the initiative can foster self-reliance, enhance food security, reduce poverty, and support sustainable national development.

Statement of Problem

In spite of Nigeria's foreign exchange reserves exceeding \$40 billion and the naira's devaluation aimed at improving the trade balance and shoring up capital inflow into the country by the Tinubu administration which has considerably supported the Nigerian budget the Nigerian economy continues to wallow in distress (Lubin, 2025). The inflation rate as of June 2024 stood at 34.19%, compared with 22.79% in June 2023 (NBS, 2024). The unemployment rate stood at 4.3% in Q2 of 2024, reversing its rising trend since Q2 of 2023, and is more prevalent among youths aged 25–34 (NESG, 2024). Meanwhile, food prices remain over 80% higher than in the pre-election period, and 63% of the population approximately 133 million people are classified as complexly poor (NBS, 2022). Climate change, chronic insecurity, economic instability, inadequate farming activities, among other factors, have made the issue of food security and nutrition in Nigeria deeply concerning (UNICEF, 2023). It is against these odds that this study was undertaken to explore the potentials of agricultural entrepreneurship, which has been strategically positioned worldwide to address various aspects of food security.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the role of agricultural entrepreneurship in addressing Nigeria's current economic challenges, including unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity.
2. To evaluate the impact of making agricultural entrepreneurship as a compulsory general course in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
3. To examine the likelihood that the introduction of agricultural entrepreneurship as a special and compulsory general course in the Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education will cultivate the spirit of self-reliance amongst our teeming youths?
4. To identify anticipated challenges that will hinder the adoption and promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.
5. To propose policy recommendations for effective agricultural entrepreneurship literacy program implementation in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

1. How can agricultural entrepreneurship help in tackling Nigeria's economic challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity?
2. What impact does agricultural entrepreneurship literacy have on students' perception of agriculture as a viable career path and its potential role in addressing Nigeria's unemployment crisis?
3. Is there any likelihood that the introduction of agricultural entrepreneurship as a special and compulsory general course in the Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education will cultivate the spirit of self-reliance amongst our teeming youths?
4. What are the major barriers anticipated in adoption and promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship in the Nigerian educational system?
5. What policy interventions are necessary to ensure successful implementation of agricultural entrepreneurship literacy in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

Literature Review

That entrepreneurship has positioned itself as a driver of innovation, modernization, and economic growth remains incontrovertible. Entrepreneurship is vital for creativity, leadership, skill acquisition,

and solving societal challenges, and its impact extends beyond product creation and growth to include marketing, operations, and financial management, making it essential for sustained agricultural success (Atayi et al., 2021; Kaiyanan, 2024). The concept of agricultural entrepreneurship a union between agriculture and entrepreneurship designed to cultivate *agripreneurial* behavior among farmers and grow agribusiness to a modern commercial level is significantly gaining traction in today's societies. Considering the impact of agriculture on Nigeria's GDP, especially in the area of crop production, achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda 2 aimed at enhancing nutrition, accomplishing food security, ending hunger, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices requires concerted efforts for overall economic development.

According to Eze and Chinedu-Eze (2016), "*agripreneurship* is defined as the integration of entrepreneurial and innovative business ideas and skills into agriculture to produce better results." It is a beneficial combination of agriculture and entrepreneurship that transforms farms into agricultural businesses and involves using creative and business-driven methods to manage and operate agribusinesses (Rayman, 2023). It also entails ingenious ways of conducting farm business from cultivation to the processing of harvested produce, converting them into finished products, and delivering them to the market, possibly with distinctive promotional efforts (Eze & Chinedu-Eze, 2016). The essence of *agripreneurial* efforts is to support farmers by ensuring access to the means of production and increasing market engagement (Olabisi, 2022, cited in Saner, 2023). Becoming a successful agricultural entrepreneur requires competencies such as autonomy/independence, creativity, endurance, flexibility, goal setting, high internal locus of control, leadership, market awareness, opportunity recognition, persistence, power or control, risk-taking propensity, self-efficacy, social networks/connections, and being visionary, among other behaviors and skills (Gurof & Atsan, 2006; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010; Morris et al., 2013, in Mukembo et al., 2020).

Agricultural Literacy and Curriculum Development in Nigeria

Enhancing food production, agribusiness employment, and economic growth in Nigeria requires agricultural literacy programs and a revised, skill-oriented curriculum. Agricultural literacy emphasizes understanding the links between agriculture, society, the environment, and the economy to support informed decision-making (Spielmaker & Leising, 2013; Kovar & Ball, 2013). It involves knowledge of scientific and technological processes in agriculture that influence civic, cultural, and economic activities (Meischen & Trexler, 2003). In tertiary institutions, achieving this demands sensitization and curriculum reform that considers stakeholders' interests in shaping agricultural literacy (Caffarella, 2002, in Ajao et al., 2022). However, Nigeria's current teacher-centered curriculum, largely borrowed from the British system, fails to meet present needs (Faboya & Adamu, 2017; Offorma & Onyia, 2011; Ohiwerei, 2019, in Ajao et al., 2022). A reformed, student-centric curriculum should integrate societal values, students' interests, and agribusiness benefits. Since curriculum development underpins skills acquisition and career readiness (Bilbao et al., 2008; Akanji, 2022), a tailored agricultural curriculum will enhance education, improve food security, and drive socio-economic transformation in Nigeria.

Challenges Affecting Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Many challenges, as acknowledged by numerous studies in the field of agricultural entrepreneurship, bedevil its rapid growth in Nigeria.

1. **Policy Somersault:** Nigeria requires people-oriented agricultural policies that attract youths to agribusiness and foster economic growth amid unemployment and poverty. Secure land tenure laws that decentralize access remain crucial (Business Day Editorial Board, 2025). Despite

- successes, agricultural policies from 1960–2020 were hampered by economic, political, and technical challenges (Abubakar, 2021). Government must integrate know-how into practice, tackle administrative bottlenecks, and promote large-scale farming.
2. **Inadequate Financing:** Although the 2025 budget allocation to agriculture rose by 75.28% to ₦636.08 billion, it represents only 1.4% of the total budget, far below the Maputo Declaration’s 10% target (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022; The Nation Newspaper, 2025). In the past decade, Nigeria has not exceeded 2%, leaving agriculture underfunded.
 3. **Insecurity:** Terrorism, herder–farmer conflicts, and natural disasters have displaced farmers, destroyed farmlands, and deepened food insecurity. About 30.6 million Nigerians face acute hunger (World Food Programme, 2025). Insurgency and kidnappings have forced many to abandon farms, putting over 25 million people at risk (Chima, 2023; Babangida, 2023).
 4. **Poor Basic Amenities:** Inadequate infrastructure undermines agribusiness. Power shortages cost Nigeria \$29 billion annually, with 92 million people lacking electricity (Essiet, 2023). About 80% of roads are in poor condition, causing \$1 billion annual losses (World Bank Group, 2024; Yusuf, 2025). Water pollution, flooding, and urbanization further strain agricultural productivity (Isukuru et al., 2024).
 5. **Lack of Modern Technology:** Limited access to farm machinery hinders productivity. Globally, modern tools like drones and AI boost yields, yet most Nigerian farmers rely on crude implements (Onomu & Aliber, 2024). Studies in Delta and Oyo States show machinery use at only 35% and 27.8% respectively (Yinusa & Bamgboye, 2015; Ajah, 2014). Knowledge-transfer programs are needed for climate-smart innovations (Adeyemo et al., 2025).
 6. **Corruption:** Corruption undermines agricultural growth through diversion of funds, looting, and poor execution of projects (Enwelu, 2015). Issues include misallocation of land, delayed farm inputs, and weak extension services, limiting sectoral progress (Bawa et al., 2009).

Methodology

This paper studied how *agriprenurship* literacy will help address economic challenges within Nigeria. Because this research is a desk review, it sought empirical evidences primarily from existing internet sources to assist the researcher appraise how introducing agricultural entrepreneurship as a compulsory general course in all Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education will assist in addressing Nigeria’s economic challenges and, ultimately, achieve economic growth. Empirical evidences obtained from secondary sources are as shown hereunder:

Empirical Evidences

Research Question 1: How can agricultural entrepreneurship help in tackling Nigeria’s economic challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity?

In response to Research Question 1, and based on the NBS Nigerian GDP Product Report Q4 of 2024, the Nigerian agricultural sector, comprising crop production, fishing, forestry, and livestock, “grew by 6.22% year-on-year in nominal terms in Q4 2024, showing a decrease of 8.72 percentage points from the same quarter of 2023” (NBS, 2024). This corroborates the findings of Okonkwo et al. (2023) that agriculture is a prime mover of economies, creating employment opportunities and serving as an important source of raw materials. Agriculture employs about two-thirds of the Nigerian labor force. Additionally, Atayi et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurship contributes meaningfully to innovation and improved agricultural production in Nigeria, and that entrepreneurship and agricultural exports in Nigeria have a significant relationship.

- a) **Research Question 2:** What impact does agricultural entrepreneurship literacy have on students' perception of agriculture as a viable career path and its potential role in addressing Nigeria's unemployment crisis? In response to Research Question 2, a study by Mukembo et al. (2020), which comparatively examined students' perceptions regarding their likelihood of becoming agripreneurs based on instructional approaches, revealed that "students in the treatment group had higher adjusted marginal mean scores, indicating they were more likely to become agripreneurs than the counterfactual group students." This positive outcome aligns with the findings of Inegbedion and Islam (2021) on students' willingness to pursue careers in agriculture after graduation. The study revealed that while 73% of respondents were willing to pursue a career in agriculture after graduation, almost 23% said they might pursue a career in agriculture, and 3.5% were disinclined without reason. Because the study focused mainly on students' willingness—thereby refraining from considering the pursuit of an agricultural career as a unitary construct—outcomes further reveal that self-employment in agricultural production, irrespective of location, gender, field of study, and previous agricultural experience, is the most preferred, thus challenging the narrative that educated young people are uninterested in farming (Inegbedion & Islam, 2021).
- b) **Research Question 3:** Is there any likelihood that the introduction of agricultural entrepreneurship as a special and compulsory general course in Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education will cultivate the spirit of self-reliance among youths? In response to Research Question 3, a study by Eke et al. (2020), which sought to establish the relationship between agricultural entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and security among youths in Njikoka Local Government Area, revealed a positive relationship among these variables. Agricultural entrepreneurship was found to have a positive effect on self-reliance among youths in Njikoka LGA, with coefficient values of ($\beta = 1.654$, $p = 0.00$). This finding concurs with Kareem et al. (2015), who reported that entrepreneurship education positively impacts self-reliance and could assist graduates in establishing themselves and becoming self-reliant.
- c) **Research Question 4:** What are the major barriers anticipated in the adoption and promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship in the Nigerian educational system? In response to Research Question 4, a study by Emiri and Nlebem (2020) on agricultural education as a tool for entrepreneurship and self-employment revealed that instructors' deficiencies, negative public perception of agriculture, poor interest in agricultural skill acquisition, inadequate training facilities and equipment, political instability, poor orientation and funding of agricultural education, poor welfare packages, government policy gaps, and lack of modern textual and instructional materials constitute major barriers to the adoption and promotion of agripreneurship education in Nigeria. This aligns with the works of Issa (2017) and Ikuemonisan (2024), who identified additional challenges including insufficient capital, poor basic amenities, inadequate technology, ineffective approaches toward agripreneurship schemes by previous administrations, scarcity of trained agricultural extension staff, poor education and information regarding export management and international agribusiness, inadequate access to reliable data for informed agribusiness decisions, and low technology adoption.
- d) **Research Question 5:** What policy interventions are necessary to ensure successful implementation of agricultural entrepreneurship literacy in Nigerian tertiary institutions? In response to Research Question 5, a study by FAO (2014) on youth and agriculture: *Key Challenges and Concrete Solutions* posited that, given the rising world population and declining agricultural productivity, coordinated action is needed to increase youth participation in the agricultural sector,

emphasizing their pivotal role in ensuring food security. FAO recommended the following policy interventions to promote agripreneurship awareness and participation: access to the right information to overcome inexperience among young farmers; integration of training approaches suited to the modern agricultural sector; use of modern ICTs to present opportunities and attract youth to agripreneurship; bringing youths together to harness agripreneurship opportunities; providing agripreneurship sponsorships to facilitate higher agricultural education and skill acquisition, with repayment of grants or loans in installments; and ensuring coherent coordination and cooperation across national government institutions and agencies for effective policy implementation (FAO, 2014). This aligns with Saner and Roberts (2023), who suggested policies should support agripreneurs in moving up the value chain, achieving product diversification, and generating non-farming-based income. These policies should also address literacy and knowledge gaps by embracing advanced farming approaches and providing access to information beyond the farm and social networks.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Although Nigerian youths today are highly enthusiastic about digital innovations, particularly cloud-based Internet of Things (IoT) technologies, this focus has also contributed to societal challenges, including rising rates of hacking and internet scams. There is, therefore, a need for value reorientation to redirect their attention toward meaningful skill acquisition and development programs that promote self-reliance and long-term societal benefit.

The National Policy on Education (1985) in Nigeria views agricultural education as a vocational course that equips students with skills for self-reliance, productivity, survival, and sustainability (Kwajaffa, 2014). By incorporating agripreneurial principles into the curricula of Nigerian tertiary institutions, students can acquire the necessary skills to become effective entrepreneurs, foster innovation, enhance their career prospects, and support personal development. Such an approach can also reduce unemployment, stimulate economic growth, and alleviate hunger.

The following recommendations are proposed:

1. The government should revise vocational education policies to encourage sustainable agricultural productivity through skill and vocation development, addressing unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity.
2. Agricultural entrepreneurship should be introduced as a special and compulsory course in Nigerian tertiary institutions to raise awareness and chart clear career pathways.
3. The government should implement financial support programs to assist students wishing to pursue agribusiness after graduation.
4. Policies should promote cooperative agripreneurship programs among graduates to encourage semi-large-scale farming initiatives.
5. **Entrepreneurship Centers:** Agripreneurship business centers should be established within tertiary institutions' Entrepreneurship Development Centres to showcase agricultural products and foster student interest in farming.

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