

**Opulent Middleman amidst Controversies in Nigeria's Agrifoods
Trade**

85th

Inaugural Lecture

Delivered by

Prof.Kassim Adekunle AKANNI

B.Sc.(Hons),M.Sc.,PhD (Ibadan)

Professor of Agricultural Economics & Farm Management

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OGUN STATE,NIGERIA**

DEDICATION

To the Glory of Almighty God
And Sweet Memory of My Late Wife
Mrs.Zaidat Adebimpe Akanni (RIP)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0: INTRODUCTION

1.1:What Are Agrifoods?

1.2: The Agrifoods Trade: The National Perspective

1.3:Nigeria's Agrifoods and International Market Penetration

2.0:MY RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN AGRIFOODS TRADE

1.0: Marketing Efficiency and Pricing System in Nigeria's Agrifoods Trade

a. Assessment of Pricing Efficiency and levels of Concentration in Cashew nuts Industry in South West Nigeria

b.Estimation of Marketing Margins and Efficiency of Storage Facilities for Yam Tubers in Ibadan North LGA,Oyo State

c.Artisanal Fishing Technologies and Market Supply of Fish in Lagos State,Nigeria

d.Economics of Marketing of Foodgrains in South West Nigeria

e.Agrifoods Adulterants and Implications for the Nigerian Economy

f.Harmful Effects of Agrifoods Adulterants on Human Health

g.Eliminating the Middleman in Agrifoods Trade:Advantages

h.Analysis of Aggregate Output Supply Response of Selected Foodgrains in Nigeria

i.Spatial Integration and Price Communication in Foodgrains in Ogun State,Nigeria

j.Marketing Margins and Risks in Small-Scale Poultry Business in Abeokuta Metropolis:An Empirical Analysis

2.0:Market Access,Small-Scale Enterprise Development and Agricultural Price Policy on Nigeria's Agrifoods Trade

a.Urban Value Chain and Small-Scale Enterprise Development in Abeokuta Metropolis,Ogun State,Nigeria

b. Supply-Demand Disequilibrium and Effects on Market Price of Cocoa in Ijebu-North

Local Government Area, Ogun State

c. Effects of Trade Liberalization Policy on Nigerian Agricultural Exports

3.0: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1: Summary

3.2: Conclusion

3.3: Recommendations

Acknowledgements

References

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Wholesale Prices for Selected agrifoods and Price Variations

Table 2: Major Agrifoods Imports :2010-2016

Table 3: Broad Statistics of Nigeria's Imports:2010-2016

Table 4: Nigeria's Major Agrifoods Export Profile:2010-2016

Table 5: Estimated Gaps Between Major Imported and Exported Agrifoods:2010-2016

Table 6: Comparison of Average Marketing Margins for Retailers Across Markets

Table 7: Comparison of Weekly Marketing Margins of Wholesalers and Retailers

Table 8: Common Agrifoods Adulterants

OPENING

The Vice –Chancellor,

The Deputy Vice- Chancellor,

Members of the University Governing Council (Past & Present),

Other Principal Officers of the University,

Provosts of Colleges & Postgraduate School,

Deans of Faculties,

Heads of Departments,

Other Members of Senate,
Directors of Units and Programmes,
Distinguished Colleagues (Academic & Non-Academic) from OOU,
Distinguished Colleagues and Friends from Sister Universities and other Institutions,
Your Excellencies, Royal Majesties and Highnesses,
My Lord Spiritual and Temporal,
Family Members and Friends,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Great NAASITES,
Great OOUTES!!!

1.0: INTRODUCTION

I count myself extremely privileged to stand here today to give the 85th Inaugural Lecture of Olabisi Onabanjo University. This day, August 14th marks the 7th month after the demise of my spouse, **Adebimpe Akanni** who passed on exactly January 18th, 2018 after a brief illness. Rather than allowing the incidence to weaken my spirit, her death had further strengthened me and our children have provided the needed support and shown understanding all the way. The mourning time is over and we are the winners and are coping very well! Hence, with our belief in God, we know victory is assured and there is a bright light at the end of the tunnel. It's on this note,

therefore, that I join the Vice -Chancellor in welcoming everyone to this Inaugural Lecture titled: “**Opulent Middleman Amidst Controversies in Nigeria’s Agrifoods Trade**”, and I promise you a delightful session. Incidentally, today’s lecture marks the 12th of such lectures from the College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS), 6th from the Faculty of the Agricultural Management & Rural Development (FAMARD), the 4th from the Department of Agricultural Economics & Farm Management (AEM) and 1st in the area of Agricultural Marketing & Price Analysis & International Trade in our University. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, let me start this lecture by sharing with you a little information about my humble beginning.

Back in the early 1970s, my late father, **Mr.L.B.Akanni** introduced me, and my siblings, to the art of tilling the land and tending the crops. He was quite popular in his rural farming community called Apamu village, in the present Ife North East Local Government Area of Osun State. Even though a settler in that farming community, he was able to prove his mettle among his friends and peers. This was measured by his large expanse of farmlands comprising three cocoa/kolanut plantations and four arable farms for maize, cassava, cocoyam and vegetables. Each of these farmlands was on the average of six (6) hectares. As a routine, all of us children were deeply involved in the various agricultural value chain activities on these farms, through processing, transportation and finally to the family table while the excess quantities were sold at the nearby local markets. These markets, which held mostly at regular intervals (usually five days), were patronized by the local residents/ farmers and their household members under the close supervision and monitoring of the market officials/attendants and local authorities in their domains. The closest of these markets to our own village was six kilometers away and the only common means of transportation were by head portage/trekking, lorries, bicycles and pick- up vans that operated intermittently. On personal levels, we, the children, imbibed and embraced small- scale entrepreneurship by gathering and processing moderate quantities of agrifoods such as vegetables -*bitter leaf*, mushroom, fruits (*sweet orange*, wallnut, mango, African Cherry), Kolanut, ,foodgrains (maize and cowpea) and plantain for sale at these local markets.

Our father would always insist that we kept the proceeds from the sales of these produce in the (local) earthen safe (*kolo*) –usually made of clay, and would order that this safe be emptied (or broken) only at the approach of important festivals such as Id-el Kabir (*Ileya*), Id-el Fitri (*Itunu Aawe*) or New year (January 1) for us to spend the money on tangible things. All these

instructions were dished unto us to instill financial discipline and propriety which formed the fulcrum for Agricultural Economics and Farm Management. Thank you Dad! By this exposition on my background, I believe that you will agree with me that my interest in Agricultural Marketing & Price Analysis and International Commodity Trade, which are important components of Agricultural Economics, is not a fluke but rather by pedigree.

Mr.Vice- Chancellor,Sir,it has been strongly established, (Olayide,*et al*,1975;Adegeye and Dittoh,1985),that between 65-70% of the Nigeria's agrifoods production is carried out by the subsistence farmers who make use of simple hoes and cutlasses in their farming activities. This trend persists in the agrifoods production space even up to the present time! Unarguably, one of the most glaring challenges among the local agrifoods farmers is that, despite all their efforts in securing farming inputs, clearing the land, tendering the crops,harvesting,processing and eventually marketing at the local or distant markets, they do not generally receive sufficient compensatory rewards for all these efforts! Hence, an average farmer remains poor, disillusioned, uninspired and hopeless. Above all, he often feels cheated by the market intermediaries (middlemen) who act between him and the final consumers and then take a chunk of the farm profits. This is definitely a huge concern to him, members of his households, professional colleagues (other farmers) and the society. This probably explains why younger generations of trained agriculturists no longer see farming, and indeed,agrifoods production,a promising vocation.Hence,the Nigeria's agrifoods farming population remains dominated by the aged farmers (Olayide,*et al*.1975) while the youths continue to pick up other jobs outside agriculture. This trend portends danger to food security aspiration and Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) of the current and past governments in Nigeria. To further guaranty food security, stabilize food prices, encourage the agrifoods producers and ultimately sustain the tempo of wealth creation among agrifoods producers, there is the need to improve the farmer's share of the farm profit and enhance his social status in the society. These issues have been a source of concern to me as a University scholar over the years. In an attempt to find solution to the identified problems of the agrifoods producers, as identified above, I have always intensified my research curiosity in the agricultural market prices and the returns to the farmers.

1.1: What Are Agrifoods?

Mr.Vice- Chancellor,Sir,before I proceed on this lecture, please permit me to describe what agrifoods are. They could simply be defined as broad group of all kinds of agricultural products (processed and unprocessed) that are produced by the farmers for human consumption. They include food items such as foodgrains (rice, millet, soybean and cowpea),root and tubers (cassava,yam,potato,and cocoyam),fruits (orange,pineapple,banana and apple),vegetables and spices (ginger,onion,chilli pepper, locust bean, and garlic). The demand for and supply of these agrifoods function in a system and the performance of this system determines how accessible (or otherwise) these commodities are to ordinary Nigerian consumers. Agrifoods system can therefore be succinctly described as encompassing the inter-linked set of activities that run from “Seed to Fork”. They include agricultural input production and distribution, farm level production, raw agricultural product assemblage, processing and marketing. These activities also involve the value chains for different agricultural and food products, inputs and their linkages. It must be mentioned here,Mr.Vice- Chancellor,Sir,that more than 80% of my research activities centred on many of the aforementioned agrifoods because of their nutritional importance and relevance on the table of most Nigerians.

1.2:The Agrifoods Trade: The National Perspective

At this point,Mr.Vice -Chancellor,Sir, it is considered highly germane, to mention that Nigeria often witnesses a huge supply deficit of most agrifoods.This is due to poor /inadequate storage facilities, low crop yield, small farm holding capacities of our farmers, use of traditional/crude farm operations, limited access to credit facilities, and unfavourable climatic conditions, among others (Akanni,2016). Thus, there is incessant fluctuation in the market prices of most agrifoods,even within short periods. This is a major finding of my work on: “Fixing Nigeria’s food-supply deficit challenge through private-public sector partnership: Myth or Reality”. According to the study, the wholesale prices for selected agrifoods and price variations are indicated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Wholesale Prices for selected Agrifoods and Price Variations

| S/Number | Item | Average Price /Kg (or Crate) | Weekly % Change |
|----------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Pork | 650 | 0.2 |
| 2 | Beef | 800 | 0.2 |
| 3 | Mutton | 650 | 0.1 |
| 4 | Egg | 750 | 0.0 |
| 5 | Slaughtered Chicken | 1000 | 0.2 |

| | | | |
|----|---------------------------|------|-----|
| 6 | Slaughtered Turkey | 1200 | 0.2 |
| 7 | Vegetable | 600 | 0.1 |
| 8 | Fruits | 650 | 0.1 |
| 9 | Cowpea | 350 | 0.1 |
| 10 | Rice | 300 | 0.2 |
| 11 | Dried Maize | 280 | 0.1 |
| 12 | Millet | 250 | 0.0 |
| 13 | Sorghum | 250 | 0.0 |
| 14 | Spices (e.g.ginger,onion) | 200 | 0.1 |
| 15 | Gari | 300 | 0.1 |

Source:Market Survey by Author,2016

I guess you will agree with me, Mr. Vice- Chancellor Sir,that despite the various attempts by the Nigerian government at all levels, over the time, food accessibility and affordability remains an illusion for many Nigerians. On annual basis, huge budgetary allocations go into the domestic production and importation of agrifoods to ensure that many Nigerians are comfortably fed at least three square meals per day. Unfortunately, this feat has never been attained as we continue to import agrifoods including those commodities which Nigeria has a better comparative advantage in their production. Wheat, fish and milk/dairy products top the list of the imported agrifoods in the past one decade while oil/oil seeds were the least imported (Table 2).

Table 2: Major Agri- Foods Imports,2010-2016*

| Commodity | Total Import (N billion) | Average Import/Yr. (N billion) | Ranking |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Wheat | 865.20 | 173.01 | 1 st |
| Prepared Cereals | 168.00 | 33.52 | 6 th |
| Fish | 596.4328.65 | 119.31 | 2 nd |
| Milk/Dairy | 202.65 | 65.64 | 3 rd |
| Sugar | 284.55 | 40.54 | 5 th |
| Rice | 3.48 | 56.95 | 4 th |
| Cocoa | 3.48 | 0.69 | 10 th |
| Oils | 110.06 | 22.01 | 8 th |
| Oil seeds | 26.79 | 5.36 | 9 th |
| Prepared Vegetables & fruits | 117.58 | 23.52 | 7 th |

*2017 figures were not available at NBS on commodity basis

Source: Calculated from NBS Imports Data

On the aggregate level, a whopping N8,757,287 billion representing 18.81 % of the total annual import was found to have been expended on food imports alone between 2010 and 2016 (NBS,2017).During this period, the annual average food import bill was found to be N398,058.1 million (Table 3) .

Table 3: Broad Statistics of Nigeria's Imports: 2010-2016 (At current Prices)

| Variable | Total | Mean |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Aggregate Import (N billion) | 46,547,407.50 | 2,115,790.60 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Aggregate Import (\$ million) | 459,528.30 | 20,886.8 |
| Total Food Import (N billion) | 8,757,287 | 398,058.1 |
| Total Food Import(\$ million) | 81,935.70 | 3,724.37 |

Source: Calculated from NBS Imports Data

Between 2010 and 2016, the major agrifoods exports are cocoa beans, oil/oil seeds and fish products while prepared cereals, sugar and vegetables were the least exported agrifoods by Nigeria (Table 4). The annual exported cocoa beans was valued at N111.87 billion while only N1.18 billion was realized from the export of vegetables.

Table 4: Nigeria's Major AgriFoods Exports Profile: 2010-2016

| Commodity | Total Export (N billion) | Average Export/Yr. (N billion) | Ranking |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Cocoa | 592.42 | 111.87 | 1 st |
| Fruits | 78.90 | 15.79 | 4 th |
| Fish | 126.26 | 25.26 | 3 rd |
| Oil & Oil seeds | 176.70 | 35.34 | 2 nd |
| Dairy | 9.52 | 1.90 | 6 th |
| Coffee | 14.29 | 2.86 | 5 th |
| Prepared Cereals | 9.31 | 1.86 | 7 th |
| Vegetables | 5.87 | 1.18 | 9 th |
| Sugar | 6.73 | 1.34 | 8 th |

Source: Calculated from NBS Exports Data, Various Editions

Apart from cocoa beans and oils/oil seeds, Nigeria recorded a deficit trading for the major agrifoods with wheat having the highest deficit figure of N181.25 billion (Table 5). The reason for this is that Nigeria, though a big market for wheat does not have a favourable agro-ecology for the production of the commodity except in restricted places such as Mambila Plateau (Taraba State) and Jos Plateau (Plateau State) both in the Guinea Savannah grassland of Nigeria. Hence we need to depend largely on the importation of the commodity to augment local supply.

Table 5: Estimated Gaps between Major Imported and Exported Agri-foods (2010-2016)

| Commodity | Average Import/Year (N billion) | Average Export/Year (N billion) | Difference (N billion) |
|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Wheat | 181.25 | - | (181.25) |
| Prepared Cereals | 35.11 | 1.86 | (33.25) |
| Fish | 124.99 | 25.26 | (99.73) |
| Sugar | 42.47 | 1.34 | (41.13) |
| Dairy | 68.76 | 1.90 | (66.86) |
| Rice | 59.66 | - | (59.66) |
| Cocoa | 0.73 | 111.88 | 111.15 |
| Oils & Oil seeds | 28.67 | 35.34 | 6.67 |

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Vegetables & Fruits | 24.64 | 16.96 | (7.68) |
|---------------------|-------|-------|--------|

*Figures in parentheses represent deficit trading
Source: Calculated from NBS Imports Data

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, despite the low level of export of most agrifoods in Nigeria, it has again been confirmed that most of these export commodities suffer some quality assurance deficit and this often threatens the level acceptance of these commodities in the global market. This position was more critically analyzed in my work on: “Effect of quality Assurance Deficit on Market Competitiveness for Export Commodities and Household Income in Nigeria” In this study,trends in Nigeria’s agricultural export trade between 1980 and 2014 were examined and emphasis was placed on cowpea,dried maize, melon seeds and palm oil. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Primary data were obtained with the aid of structured questionnaire and personal interviews with some randomly selected private exporters of agricultural commodities and officials of relevant government agencies in the agricultural sub-sector. Results of the study indicated that there was an increase in the general price level of the commodities at the international market over time. The aggregate market demand for each of them dropped sharply in the last one decade even when the market price per unit increased steadily (price inelastic).This negatively affected the households’ average income level as returns on sales of export commodities declined. Huge quantities of the commodities were then forced to be sold at the local markets at cheaper prices. This development negatively affects the consumptions patterns of the exporters as they now have reduced disposable income. Appropriate agencies of government need to be awake to their responsibilities of assessing and certifying the quality of the Nigerian agricultural commodities before exporting them abroad. This will help to further boost the level of consumer confidence in these export commodities especially at the international markets.

1.3:Nigeria’s Agrifoods and International Market Penetration

It should be noted here,Mr.Vice- Chancellor, Sir, that entering the international agrifoods market is rather a technical and challenging task, especially when the issues of compliance with the acceptable minimum standards and market competitiveness are considered. This notion prompted me to conduct a study on the effect of quality assurance deficit on market competitiveness for export commodities and household income in Nigeria. It needs to be re-

emphasized here that with the Nigeria's dwindling revenues from the sale of crude oil, especially within the past three (3) years, the diversification of the economy is the way to go. The present government, like others in the past, has realized this fact and is reshaping the economy to reflect this outlook in their various policies and programmes. But, there is the need to properly address the issue of product quality, adulteration, use of storage preservatives, pesticides and measurements. This is a major condition that will make the Nigerian agrifoods accepted in the international markets with the required prestige, glamour and values.

Please recall, Mr. Vice –Chancellor, Sir, that in 2015 and 2016, the European Union suspended some of Nigeria's agrifoods from entering their market because of our inability to comply with the minimum safety regulations on the use of pesticides on the stored agrifoods. Some of the affected agrifoods include beans, sesame seed (beniseed), melon seeds, dried fish and meat, peanut chips and palm oil. This development is no doubt a huge setback for a nation that desperately needs to expand its export base to boost domestic agricultural production, create jobs and earn foreign exchange. According to the European Food Safety Authority, the rejected beans were found to contain between 0.03 mg/kilogramme to 4.6 mg/kg of *dichlorovos* pesticides, when the acceptable maximum residue limit is 0.01mg/kg. The embargo is a reflection of our inability to adhere to global standards. Overcoming the ban requires a firm approach to enforcing standards at all times. It must be mentioned here, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, that no nation is out rightly above board on the need to comply with international food safety and regulation. For instance, in 2014, China, South Korea, Mexico and South Africa battled with the USA on the need to ensure food safety standards on the American poultry and egg imports over the avian influenza that broke out that year. In the same vein, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India ordered Nestle, the Swiss multi-national company, to withdraw its Instant Noodles from their market over safety concerns. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, it has been observed that, the unfriendly (and selfish) activities of the middlemen in agrifoods trade have often made it difficult for the farmers to have compensatory prices while again denying the consumers the opportunity to enjoy fairly stable market prices for the commodities. The middlemen are therefore seen to be largely responsible for the high market margins that exist between the farm gate and the final consumers. All other stakeholders in the agrifoods marketing chains have often shown their displeasure towards this scenario.

But is it possible to completely eliminate (or at least reduce the number of) the middlemen in the agrifoods distribution chains? If this is done, what are the implications on the efficiency of marketing and distribution of agrifoods in this country? And what effects does this step have on the consumer benefits/satisfaction in the agrifoods industry? To find answers to these riddles, I, as an expert in the field of Agricultural Commodity Price Analysis and International Agricultural Trade did some investigations on the subject matter and my major findings indicated that these middlemen, though quite relevant in commodity bulk breaking, are found to constitute huge nuisance in effective and efficient agrifoods trading activities in Nigeria. This opinion has been widely corroborated by several authors (Olukosi and Isitor,1990; Abbott and Makeham ,1979; Adekanye and Olayide ,1988) who argued that the middlemen hold 70-80 % of the farm profits thus, leaving the primary producers (farmers) to wrestle with the balance! This instance explains why most of the farmers remain poor and agribusiness continues to be unattractive even to the trained personnel (professionals) with a couple of degrees in Agriculture! This is not healthy for the actualization of our dream of attaining food security, sustainability and prospect of our profession based-Agriculture and Agribusiness Management in Nigeria.

Mr.Vice- Chancellor, Sir, please permit me to mention here that the farmer-middlemen rivalry is as old as agrifoods trade in Nigeria. But, who are these middlemen (market intermediaries)? For the purpose of this lecture, I want to describe these middlemen as the retailers, auctioners, brokers, assemblers and commission agents, among others, who act between the farmgate and the fork at a fee. The more the number of these intermediaries in the marketing chain, the higher the marketing cost and eventually, the equilibrium (market) price of the commodity. The activities of these actors, even though sometimes inevitable and crucial, may, at other time, just be unnecessary, unsolicited, unsavoury and out rightly exploitative. Examples of unpleasant activities of these middlemen include the use of irregular measuring equipment/apparatus, adulteration of the agrifoods in the open markets and repackaging/tampering with the expiring dates of the processed agrifoods all in their attempt to swindle the unsuspecting consumers.

By their “forced” involvement (oftentimes) in the agrifoods value chain activities, we witness high market margins, low revenues to the primary producers, reduced level of consumer satisfaction/benefits and high health risk level due to food poisoning. These are the major causes of high level of inefficiency in the marketing and distribution of agrifoods across the country.

The immediate implication of this, Mr. Vice- Chancellor, Sir, is the attendant poverty and cheating of the primary producers (farmers) and ultimately robbing the consumers of the market benefits and derivable quantum of utilities. This notion clearly explains why my former teacher and mentor, Prof. Jim A. Akinwumi, while delivering his Inaugural Lecture at the University of Ibadan (2005) on: “Agribusiness: The Gateway to Nigeria’s Economic Development”, revealed that the market intermediaries could sometimes be very excessive in their operations hence he urged that “...these middlemen and women should live and let others live if Agribusiness must witness development in Nigeria”. At other times, the middleman in agrifoods trade had been viewed and commonly described by the other (frustrated) market stakeholders as:

Alagbata t’o nsoja d’owon;

(The greedy intermediary who inflates market prices)

Oyotokoto y’okun, aje l’aju onile, aje j’olohunlo;

(The opulent that cheats with reckless abandon)

Wobia wonbiliki, ajeun titi ti igba onigba fi lu;

(He that exploits until hitherto vibrant business collapses)

A so irun iwaju po mo t’ehin, a ni gbese ko kan mi, sebi ki emi saa ti yo ni!!!

(He who takes delight creating confusion and complexities in trade and celebrating success at the peril of the rightful business owners).

In a similar vein, Clifton (1980) while describing the activities of the middleman in the American agrifoods industry stated that the “middleman” in the food industry historically has been the *bete noire (a person strongly detested)* of many farmers and consumers. He added that this legendary person (i.e middleman), allegedly responsible for the differences between the prices of food products received by the farmers and the prices paid by consumers, is depicted as having sufficient power over prices to simultaneously underpay farmers for their products and overcharge food consumers. This confirms that the influence of the power of the middleman is enormous and is the same everywhere!

Back here in Nigeria, Mr. Vice -Chancellor, Sir, as an evidence of the power of the middleman, empirical research findings on agrifoods have confirmed that a loaf of bread priced at approximately N300.00 contains only N20.00 to N26.00 worth of wheat or that a gallon of palm oil that is estimated to be about N2, 000.00 at the market contains only N80.00 to N120.00 worth

of fresh palm fruits while pack of candies sold for N1200 at the Departmental/Retail shop was prepared with only N28.00-N32.00 worth of cocoa beans! A huge gap you will say! But who benefits from these price gaps? It is of course the middleman.

In the United States of America, Clifton Luttrell (1980) again observed that the farmer's frustration with the apparent power of the middleman in the depression years of the early 1870s led to a rapid expansion of the co-operative movement, by which the farmer was expected to eliminate the middleman and retain the profits. Although farmer-owned co-operatives now operate in almost every stage of farming and food-processing, criticism of the middleman still persists. On the general note, Mr. Vice- Chancellor, Sir, the middleman has often been accused of being responsible for the excessive merchandising costs (of the farm products) in the Nigeria's agrifoods trade. This allegation cuts across all sections/stages of the agricultural commodity trade. But do we have the alternatives to having the middleman in the agrifoods distribution chains? It is in the light of these public perception and disparagement of the middleman, despite his numerous achievements and successes in the agrifoods value chain processes, that this topic of discourse stimulated the research interest of today's speaker.

It is therefore the major objective of this Inaugural Lecture, Mr. Vice- Chancellor, Sir, to clearly x-ray the activities of the market intermediaries in the agrifoods trade in Nigeria. At the end of the lecture we should be able to clearly describe the middleman either as a friend, foe or neutral entity. It is on this note that I welcome everyone to kindly follow my discourse on this topic and I assure you that information shared therefrom will be found highly useful either as individual consumers, researchers, students, food market operators, policy makers or even government representatives, and many others, for a long time to come.

2.0:MY RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN AGRIFOODS TRADE

In my 19 years of professional career in this University, I have singly and jointly planned and executed several research works on commodity prices and major findings of these works have been published in credible local and international journals, presented at scholarly conferences and/or published as proceedings. At this juncture, Mr. Vice –Chancellor, Sir, please permit me to

classify my scholarly research works in the field of Agricultural Marketing & Price Analysis and International Commodity Trade into two broad categories which are:

- Marketing efficiency and Pricing system in Nigeria's Agrifoods Trade
- Market Access, Small-Scale Enterprise Development and Agricultural Price Policies on Nigeria's Agrifoods Trade

Details of my research efforts, either singly or in collaboration with other scholars, on the subject of discourse, are provided below:

1. Marketing efficiency and Pricing System in Nigeria's Agrifoods Trade

a. Assessment of Pricing efficiency and levels of Concentration in Cashew nuts industry in SW Nigeria

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the measurement of pricing efficiency comprises all activities that both on the pricing and sales of agrifoods. It is normally captured by the pricing efficiency model to determine the level of efficiency in the marketing of the agrifoods. It is concerned with how the market price of agrifoods reflects the cost of moving the output through the marketing system. Gini-coefficient estimate, on the other hand, was used to analyze the market concentration for the marketers of commodity. The co-efficient is an increasing function of inequality and it is perfectly equal to Zero (Narayanam, 1999). Cashew nuts markets in South West Nigeria is characterized by price fluctuations through space and time. This could be linked with the large number of market intermediaries who act between the primary producers and the markets. Thus, Akanni and Adams (2011) in their research gathered 250 cashew nuts marketers who were randomly selected from the five south western states of Nigeria: Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun and Ogun state. About 76% of these marketers had up to secondary school education and 86% of them had 15-years of marketing experience and below. Pricing efficiency of the marketers was highest in Ogun State with the average level of 85.1% and least for Oyo State (68.9%). In all, 720 tonnes were transacted in the region with 206 marketers handling maximum of 2kg per month per individual. The Gini-coefficient estimate of 82.3 % implied that there was a concentrated market for the cashew nuts. To further increase the pricing efficiency of the commodity, it is necessary to reduce the costs incurred on the various physical aspects in the marketing system. Corporate organizations, government agencies and co-operative societies should assist the cashew nuts marketers in the provision of credit facilities so as to ensure a higher level of pricing efficiency, stable market prices and reduced level of concentration of the marketers in the region.

b. Estimation of Marketing Margins and Efficiency of Storage Facilities for Yam Tubers in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in a study on the estimation of marketing margins and efficiency of storage facilities for yam tubers in Ibadan North local government area of Oyo State, Akanni and Ajilore (2008) found out that the marketing margin of the retailers (N3111.75) was highest for Oje market and lowest for Orita-merin market (N505.25) while the average market margin was N1968.92 for the three markets (i.e. Oje, Oja-Oba and Orita-merin) put together. See Table 6 below:

Table 6: Comparison of average marketing margins for retailers across markets

| Market | Weekly Average Total Cost (N) | Weekly Average Total Revenue (N) | Weekly Average marketing margin (N):TR-TC |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Oje | 19860.75 | 22972.50 | 3111.75 |
| Orita- Merin | 34432.25 | 34937.50 | 505.25 |
| Oja-Oba | 37735.25 | 40025.00 | 2289.75 |
| All Markets | 30676.08 | 32645 | 1968.92 |

Source: Akanni and Ajilore (2008): Field Survey Data

Similarly, the study showed that the weekly margin for the wholesalers (N86,020.50) was higher than those of the retailers (N1968.92) (Table 7 below);

Table 7: Comparison of weekly marketing margins of wholesalers and retailers

| Middleman | Weekly average total cost (N) | Weekly average total revenue (N) | Weekly average marketing margin (N) |
|------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Wholesaler | 30,6116.75 | 392,137.50 | 86,020.75 |
| Retailer | 30,676.08 | 32,645 | 1,968.92 |

Source : Akanni and Ajilore, 2008: Field Survey Data

On the whole, a reduced marketing margin and higher efficiency levels for the storage facilities are desirable as the consumers will be able to access the yam tubers at more moderate prices and at better qualities. This development will increase the level of consumer satisfaction and farmers' income.

c.Artisanal Fishing Technologies and Market Supply of Fish in Lagos State,Nigeria

Mr.Vice- Chancellor,Sir,while investigating the causes of low-level of market supply of fresh fish despite huge investments in artisanal fishing in Lagos State,Akanni (2010a) identified the use of the traditional fishing techniques as the main determinant factor. In that study, a total of 222 samples comprising 120 operators of the manual propulsion fisheries (MPF) and 102 fishermen operating the motorized fisheries (MF) were analyzed. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Probit model and Stochastic catch frontier measures. The results showed that the average weekly catch level for the MPF operators was 26.1kg, which represents only 41.0% of the 64.1kg that the MF operators caught. The fishermen's level of education, fishing distance, fish catch level, available credit facilities, number of contact with extension agents and gender issues determined the use (or otherwise) of the motorized fisheries technology. However,the technical efficiency of the MF operators can be improved through a better fishing education and timely provision of credit facilities to acquire the needed fishing equipment and materials. If these measures are properly implemented and sustained, then the fish catch level and market supply will increase in the State. This will be a healthy development for the fish consumers and the income of artisanal fishers in the State.

d.Economics of Marketing of Foodgrains in South West Nigeria

Mr.Vice- Chancellor,Sir, while working on the "Economics of Marketing of foodgrains in South West Nigeria",Akanni (2012) discovered that the marketing and distribution of foodgrains are characterized by a low level of efficiency and high marketing margins. This has been noted to have caused high product prices and limited access to the commodities by numerous consumers. The implication therefore is chronic malnutrition in children and various degrees of disease manifestations in nursing mothers and adults. In this study, 250 food grains marketers were sampled in the five states in south west Nigeria, using multi-stage sampling technique. The results indicated that the marketing margin was highest for foodgrains marketers in Osun State with N900.00 per 100kg of maize. The least value of N433.00 per 100kg was however recorded for the marketers in Oyo State. The average marketing margin for foodgrains in the region is N662.60 per 100kg of maize. The average marketing margin for cowpea stood at N1347.00, which is slightly higher than the least value of margin recorded for the marketers in Oyo State. Marketers in Ogun State had the least margin of N300.00 per 50 bag of polished rice. This is

against N550.00 margin recorded by the marketers by in Ekiti State. The average marketing margin for the product in the region is N440.00, which is slightly lower than the marginal values in Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States. The mean marketing efficiency for maize in South Western Nigeria is 0.82. This is slightly lower than the average efficiency level for Oyo State (i.e. 0.90). For cowpea and polished rice, the mean marketing efficiency levels are 0.78 and 0.71, respectively. The levels of market concentration stood at 0.326, 0.369 and 0.494 for the marketers of maize, cowpea and polished rice respectively. The marketers of these commodities should be more evenly distributed over the marketing space, so that the level of marketing efficiency could improve. The bottlenecks created by the activities of middlemen in the distribution network should also be minimized, so that many households in the region can have access to food grains.

At this juncture, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I need to critically describe some of the activities of the middleman in agrifoods trade. Besides making the product available to the customer, he also takes the responsibility for the payment from the buyer to the seller. He again provides information about the market to the manufacturer. Developments like changes in customer demography, psychology, media habits and the entry of a new competitor or a new brand and changes in customer preferences are some kind of information that all manufacturers want. Since the middleman is close to the customer and present in the market place he can provide this information at no additional cost. Again, the middleman maintains price stability in the market. Many a time, he absorbs an increase in the price of the products and continues to charge the same old price to the customer. This is because of the intra middlemen competition. The middleman also maintains price stability by keeping his overheads low. Promotion of the products in his territory is another function that the middleman performs. Many of them design their own sales incentive programs aimed at building customer traffic at their outlets. In addition, the middleman finances manufacturers' operations by providing the necessary working capital in the form of advance payments for goods and services. Finally, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, most middlemen take title to the goods and services and trade in their own name. This helps in diffusing the risks between the manufacturer and middlemen. This also enables middlemen to be in physical possession of the goods, which enables them to meet customer demand at the very moment it arises.

But despite these roles by the middlemen in agrifoods trade, their activities may sometimes be regarded as unsolicited, unnecessary and therefore they may be viewed as nuisance in the food distribution chain by the farmers, and consumers. For instance, middlemen have been severally accused of adulterating agrifoods at various levels and forms thereby reducing consumer benefits and accruable agribusiness profits. They will tamper with the measuring scales for agrifoods to ensure consumers (buyers) are short-changed and often deliberately batter the food measuring equipment such as *Kongo, tiyya* or *mudu* all in an attempt to reduce the volume and therefore unscrupulously gain some little quantities that are due to the unsuspecting buyers. Probably even more risky is the way the middlemen tamper with the expiring dates of some processed agrifoods and repackage them for sale to the unsuspecting consumers. This is more common with the imported agrifoods such as canned tomato, fruit juice, poultry products like turkey, chicken, beef meals and seafoods which are imported through the seas. Mr. Vice –Chancellor, Sir, we may just imagine the health implications of these unscrupulous acts by the middlemen on the consuming public.

Similarly, baskets of fruits such as sweet oranges, mangoes, grapes and lime are always laced (padded) with stones (pebbles) and rough papers up to 10-15 percent capacities while the fruits are bogusly (spuriously) arranged to attract and deceive the members of the buying public. Another mischief, you will say! As a case study, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, about two decades ago, the government of Oyo State introduced a uniform measuring apparatus (*Kongo*) for foodgrains such as *garri*, rice, cowpea, sorghum and the likes so as to put an end to the controversies over “acceptable measuring equipment” in the markets. At inception, the foodgrains retailers (middlemen) through their Associations rejected the government initiatives. But after a lot of persuasions, jingles and enlightenments, these traders agreed that they would adopt the new *Kongo* for measuring purposes in their various markets. The foodgrains buyers were glad at this resolution. But what we later discovered was that the *Kongo* again got adulterated when the traders (middlemen) decided to soak/dip them inside hot water and trimmed the top ends with hot knives and even laced the bottom of the *kongo* with hot candle wax so as to reduce the volume and by so doing cheating the unsuspecting members of the buying public once again! So a full measure of adulterated *kongo* of rice (for instance) was giving 700-800 grammes as against the normal average of 1.00 kg of rice grains! Another middlemen’s mischief you will say!

Just recently, Mr. Vice –Chancellor, Sir, the middlemen (dealers) were again fingered in the adulteration and sales of seeds to the farmers for planting. Rather than selling high-quality seeds that have the potentials of giving good quality yield, what these middlemen offered were mere (sub-standard) grains with little or no germination potentials. In fact, the list of such nefarious activities of the middlemen is endless! But, without attempting to usurp the powers of the clerics, Mr.Vice- Chancellor, Sir, kindly permit me to provide clarifications on the position of religion on measurement, weight and adulteration. Different sections of the scriptures strongly condemn fraudulent practices in business transactions. Please refer to The Holy Quran (Surah *Hud* 11:85); (Surah *Al-Isra* 17:35);(Surah *Al-Mutaffifin* 83:1-6). In the same vein, several verses of the Holy Bible re-affirmed the earlier positions expressed in the Holy Quran.For instance, the Book of Proverbs11:1; 20:10 and The Book of Leviticus 19 : 35.

Again,a popular Yoruba adage states that: *Eniti o ba ta oja erupe,yoo gba owo okuta*

(If you engage in any business fraud, be sure that the repercussion is awaiting you)

This is literarily warning all market operators to be fair in their business transactions and that the effect of any business misdeeds has a way of reverberating someday. Which other confirmations do we need to convince the middlemen against indulging in sharp practices? It is obvious that God and our ancestors seriously frown at deceit in business transactions and other dealings with fellow human beings. We only hope that our middlemen will be guided by this at all times.

Mr.Vice -Chancellor, Sir, please permit me to mention here that each time we are at the market place, we may see the middlemen acting between the seller and the prospective buyer(s). Some of them will even claim the ownership of the commodity even when they are not officially recognized in that capacity. These might just be other ploys to deceive and cheat the intending/prospective buyer(s) in the course of market transaction. To reduce the risk level, therefore, every member of the buying public should;

- ❖ Avoid panic buying.
- ❖ Be adequately informed about the market and the commodity you want to buy

- ❖ Understand the language spoken at the market or at least get a trusted interpreter if you must buy from a particular market where you are constrained by language.
- ❖ Select appropriate and sizeable/allowable time for marketing.
- ❖ Avoid extreme higgling and haggling tendencies or “am smarter than you” syndrome.

e. Agrifoods Adulterants and Implications for the Nigeria’s Economy

Mr. Vice- Chancellor, Sir, agrifoods adulterants could simply be described as the way of changing the composition of any agrifoods such that they lose their nutritional content and value. Akanni (2016) noted that the major food adulterants include extraneous matters ,such as dirt,dust,stones,lumps of earth,insect damaged matter among others. It was however added that the maximum permissible limits for the extraneous matters is 2% and organic matter (such as foreign edible seeds,stems,stalks,straw,leaf matters and other foodgrains) is 3% (NFTS,2016).Table 8 below shows some common agrifoods adulterants in the Nigeria’s marketing scene:

Table 8: Common Agrifoods Adulterants

| S/N | Agrifoods | Adulterants |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Foodgrains | Marble pieces,sand particles,clay gilts,soap stone pieces |
| 2 | Pulses | Colours |
| 3 | Wheat flour | Powdered Lime-Talcum Powder |
| 4 | Tumeric Powder | Metanil Yellow |
| 5 | Black Pepper seeds | Dry papaya seeds |
| 6 | Chilli Pepper (Powder) | Coloured saw dust; Brick Powder |
| 7 | Honey (Jaggary) | Molasses Sugar |
| 8 | Tea | Coloured tea leaves after removing the essence |
| 9 | Palm Oil | Colours |
| 10 | Blended Melon | Maize bran |
| 11 | Cocoa beans | Animal wastes; High moisture content;dirts |
| 12 | Palm Kernels | Animal wastes; High moisture contents;dirts |
| 13 | Milk | Water |
| 14 | Ice Cream | Washing Powder |
| 15 | Sugar | Chalk Powder |
| 16 | All foodgrains | High level of pesticides such as <i>dichlorovos</i> |

Source:Nigeria’s Food Trade Statistics (2016)

f. Harmful Effects of Agrifoods Adulterants on Human Health

Mr. Vice -Chancellor, Sir, it has been observed (Akanni, 2016; Attrey, 2017) that inclusion of adulterants has serious health implications on the consumers. The following are the most likely health issues caused the consumers either in the short or long term;

- i. They are causes of Chronic Health Problems
- ii. They increase the impurity in the agrifoods
- iii. They cause a decline in nutritional value

g. Eliminating The Middleman in Agrifoods Trade: Advantages

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, even though the middleman has been found highly resourceful in the agrifoods distribution chain, his elimination could be necessary to save the cost of marketing by sometime selling directly to the consumers (usually through internet expansion). This position has been well established through many of my research findings on agricultural commodity marketing (Akanni and Akinleye, 2004; Akanni and Ajilore, 2008). His elimination could also increase the marketing efficiency by skipping steps in the distribution channel thereby reducing the amount of logistics and transportation required in the movement of goods from manufacturer to consumer. This increases customer satisfaction and revenue. Again, the elimination of the middleman could add better value to the agrifoods by creating a win-win for the seller and buyer from a money perspective. Each step in a traditional distribution process involves a trade buyer adding a markup to his costs. This ultimately makes the final customer's price higher because he is paying for the original product costs, the costs of each buyer's acquisition as well as the profit expected by the retailer. By getting rid of the middleman's markups, you can offer the customer a lower price while getting higher gross profits for yourself. Finally, eliminating the middleman in agrifoods trade ensures a better environmental preservation. By minimizing the number of trucks and travel time moving products from one step to the next, you reduce the pollutants in the air. Additionally, local farmers have taken opportunities to market fresh produce to local buyers to improve freshness and minimize waste from delays in moving perishable foods.

h. Analysis of Aggregate output supply Response of Selected Foodgrains in Nigeria

Mr. Vice -Chancellor, Sir, the food supply response in Nigeria has been limited by structural and institutional constraints that have persisted despite market reforms. Off-price factors can have a more profound impact than prices on aggregate agricultural output. These factors include the

condition of infrastructure (such as roads, irrigation schemes and communication networks), the availability of marketing services, modern inputs and credit (especially in rural areas) and government support in the form of research and extension services, human capital development and commitment to reform. One of the major disturbing phenomena in Nigeria today is the shortage of food grains with the attendant result of soaring prices and rising importation of these commodities. Thus, Akanni and Okeowo (2011), in their study on the “Analysis of aggregate output supply response of selected food grains in Nigeria”, examined the various determinants of the quantities of cereals (rice, maize, millet and sorghum) that are supplied into the Nigerian economy. Statistical information on the domestic and imported quantities of these grains was obtained for 37 years (1970-2007). Some economic models, including the equilibrium output supply function and co-integration models were used. An all-time maximum output of 8,090,000 tonnes was recorded for rice, followed by millet with 7,100,000 tonnes with the mean values of 4,228,900.47, 4,477,026.31, 3,596,894.73 and 2,034,719.0 for maize, rice, millet and sorghum respectively. Rainfall was consistent for all the four crops with an all-time maximum of 136.41 mm rainfall and mean value of 37.93mm. Producer price of rice was positively and statistically significant at 1% level. The output response of rice to hectareage was not statistically significant but was positive. Rice importation showed a negative sign and was statistically insignificant in Nigeria. There is the tendency for the price of agricultural products to drop, which may consequently reduce the level of domestic production and discourage commercial production. Maize output, hectareage, producer price and import quantities were non-stationary series. Thus, they cannot be included in their levels in the least square regression models. The insignificant impact of prices on millet output could have arisen from the fact that lagged prices are better considered by the farmers.

i. Spatial Integration and price Communication in foodgrains Markets in Ogun State, Nigeria

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in a study on “Spatial Integration and price Communication in foodgrains Markets in Ogun State, Nigeria”, Akanni (2013), noted that grains are important food items amongst many households because of their nutritional values. It was observed that quite often, there were distinct disparities between the wholesale and retail prices of these commodities and across markets. This study therefore investigated the degree of integration and price communications in foodgrains markets. In the study, data were collected from 240 foodgrains marketers who were randomly selected from the 4 divisions in Ogun State. Multiple

regression model, supply elasticities and price correlation co-efficient estimates were done. For rice markets in Egba division, there were strong inter-relationships between the retail and wholesale prices of the commodity. Similarly, for cowpea, the values of the regression co-efficients are generally high. Mamu market, Ijebu division, recorded the highest regression co-efficient value of 96% while Kuto market in Egba division recorded the least value of 56%. For maize, the regression results indicated low R^2 values ranging between 43% in Lafenwa (Egba division) and 16% in Makun (Remo Division). On the average, cowpea has the highest elasticities followed by rice, while maize has the lowest. Thus a 1% increase in the wholesale price of foodgrains resulted in 76.15%, 75.77% and 59.49% increase for cowpea, rice and maize respectively. Generally, high price correlation co-efficient values were obtained for the pairs of retail prices of rice and cowpea. It was therefore recommended that there should be stable agricultural policy that will ensure moderate wholesale prices, and by extension, retail prices of food grains so that the average household consumption level of the commodities could be sustained at high levels.

j. Marketing margins and risks in small-scale poultry business in Abeokuta metropolis: An Empirical Analysis

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, while investigating the marketing margins and risks in small-scale poultry business in Abeokuta metropolis, Akanni and Akinleye (2004) noted that poultry unit operators face a variety of price, management and resource risks, which make their incomes unstable from year to year. In that study, thirty poultry units were randomly selected from each of Abeokuta South and Abeokuta North LGAs. Data were obtained on the market prices of eggs and chickens. Budgetary, linear programming and target-MOTAD models were used to analyze the collected data. The gross margins for egg marketing and chicken marketing enterprises were N6,360 and N27,200 respectively. The optimum marketing mix favoured the marketing of chicken than it did egg marketing. An extra unit of battery cage (X_2) and sales volume (X_8) was capable of fetching a poultry unit operator N2,008.41 and N151,43 respectively. Along the risk efficiency frontier, the marketing of chicken was found to be at a higher risk level of 0.5567 as against 0.3039 for egg marketing. This may be due to a high incidence of theft of poultry birds and increasing mortality rate among the chicken.

2. Market Access, Small -scale Enterprise Development and Agricultural Price Policy on Nigeria's Agrifoods Trade

a. Urban value chain and small-scale enterprise development in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, while working on "Urban value chain and small-scale enterprise development in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria", Akanni (2010b) observed that small scale enterprises (SSEs) play pivotal roles in the Nigerian economic development and that limited access to credit facilities has hindered the spread and quantum of value addition of the SSEs to the economy of the major urban centres in this country. The study therefore investigated the various sources, level of supply of funds and empowerment scheme for small scale entrepreneurs in Abeokuta metropolis. Primary data, comprising 150 small-scale entrepreneurs were collected (using a random sampling technique), through a set of well-structured questionnaire. The analytical techniques included the use of descriptive statistics and regression models. The results indicated that 44.0% of the entrepreneurs were less than 30 years and 30% were between 41 and 60 years of age. Male operators were 58.5% while 4% were single. About 40% of the operators had secondary education while 34% attended tertiary institutions. Personal savings constituted about 54% of the sources of credit facilities for enterprise take-off while friends, relatives, banks and co-operative societies also provided good funding sources. Expected return on investment, initial capital requirement and ease of entry were the significant determinants of the level of investment in SSEs. Despite the huge contributions of the SSEs in the value chain of the economy of the Abeokuta metropolis, many operators still needed further empowerment packages to strive better. With increased access to credit facilities and relaxation of the attached condition for obtaining loans from formal sources, more SSEs will spring up in the study area. If sustained over a period of time, the general price level of many household goods will be stable and the income levels improved.

b. Supply-Demand Disequilibrium and Effects on Market Price of Cocoa in Ijebu-North local government Area, Ogun State

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in my research work on "Supply-demand disequilibrium and effects on market price of cocoa in Ijebu-North Local government area, Ogun State", Akanni (2002), investigated the effects of the determinants of the market price of cocoa in Ijebu North LGA. Such determinant factors included the quality rating of the cocoa beans, the domestic price of cocoa, the value of hired and family labour, processing and marketing costs. Others include the

cost of chemical fertilizer/fungicides and processing technique and season of cocoa sales variables. In this study, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 80 cocoa farmers in Ijebu-North LGA. These farmers comprised 10 each from Awa, Ilaporu, Oru, Mamu, Bajowa, Egundugbo, Ago-Iwoye and Ijebu-Igbo. Descriptive and multiple regression models were used for the analysis. The results indicated that socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the cocoa farmers were found to be positively correlated to improved cocoa production, processing and marketing. About 73 percent of the supply-demand imbalance in the quantities of cocoa was significantly explained by the variations in price. The double-log functional form showed that the determinants of price of cocoa explained about 85 percent of the variation in the price of the produce. Increasing and stabilizing the domestic price of cocoa, reducing the processing cost and increasing the quality of the processed cocoa beans may be good strategies for ensuring a better income for cocoa farmers in Ijebu North LGA of Ogun State.

c. Effects of Trade Liberalization Policy on Nigerian Agricultural Exports

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in their study on the “effects of trade liberalization policy on Nigerian Agricultural Exports”, Akanni *et al* (2004) noted that the trade liberalization policy had tremendous effects on the level and value of exports in the agricultural sub-sector. A regression analysis relating the total value of agricultural produce and the aggregated domestic prices and other relevant parameters of four selected export commodities indicated that these four commodities (cocoa, palm kernel, palm oil and groundnut) accounted for between 65-87% of the variability in income from the foreign sector of Nigeria’s agricultural commodity trade between 1990 and 1998. High value of co-efficient of elasticity further confirmed that export trade in these four commodities would dominate the Nigerian agricultural export trade for years to come. To measure the gross earnings from the agricultural export trade, therefore, it becomes necessary for the policy makers to formulate policies that will eventually enhance investment in cocoa, groundnut and palm produce as this will lead to increased output levels and better farm returns to the farmers in this country if well implemented.

3.0: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1: SUMMARY

Mr. Vice -Chancellor,Sir,in this lecture, I have been able to explain that the middleman plays an important role, especially in bulk breaking of the agrifoods produced by the farmers, going through market chains to the final consumer. The relevance of this legendary actor becomes more pronounced as we move away from subsistence to highly urbanized commercial (market-oriented) agriculture. He provides information on the market, maintains price stability, promotes the sales levels, finances the market and often time, takes the title for goods and services. But despite these roles, the middleman has often been fingered in several dirty market deals such as excessive exploitation of the farmers and the consumers, adulteration of the agrifoods, use of inappropriate measuring equipment/apparatus, tampering with the expiring dates and hoarding of agrifoods all in an attempt to cheat the market. To protect the interest of the market (especially the farmers) therefore, it may be necessary to eliminate the middleman who lives fat on the sweat of other market actors.

3.2: CONCLUSION

Mr.Vice- Chancellor,Sir,for several decades, the middlemen have been important actors in the Nigeria's agrifoods marketing space. Despite their several important roles, the middlemen are often accused of gross exploitation of the agrifoods market, inclusion of various adulterants in the agrifoods and tampering with measuring equipment and apparatus and even the expiring dates of some manufactured agrifoods especially those imported from overseas. Hence, there are several calls for their elimination from the marketing chain.

But, because of the need to protect the interest of the farmer who invests all his resources: land,labour,capital and entrepreneurship to produce farm produce, using his own equity and others' resources, his welfare should be of immense concern to all. Based on these considerations, it is only fair that the farmer is given some priority concerns especially when considering the returns from the sales of agrifoods. Farmers should have access to the lion share of the farm profit (at least 60-70 percent) as against the peanut (20-35 percent) they presently receive. If this is done, there will be a higher impetus for them to go back to the land and do more and the market supply of agrifoods will increase. With this, the market price for the commodities will crash and the consumers (you and I) will be better for it.As the farmer is increasing his market supply, he needs to again be reminded that he should be conscious of the

importance of food hygiene, imitators and adulterators as his products move down the marketing chain to reach the final consumer. This is important because the quality of the agrifoods needs to be maintained if they must be acceptable and remain competitive in the domestic and international markets. Mr. Vice- Chancellor, Sir, it is obvious that my argument all along, and more so in the concluding part of this lecture, is a bit bias in favour of the farmer (primary producer) and his welfare. Please do not blame me. After all, I am a farm boy!

3.3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Vice- Chancellor, Sir, based on the findings of some of my research activities in the field of Agricultural Marketing & Price Analysis and International Trade within the past 19 years, I hereby recommend as follows:

- i. There is the need for the total enforcement of the use of government-approved standard measuring scales (and equipment) among traders in the agrifoods markets.
- ii. The Nigerian agrifoods exporters, in conjunction with the Nigeria's Export Promotion Council, Standards Organization of Nigeria and National Food Safety Management Committee, should ensure they export high quality (certified) agrifoods that have international appeal and market competitiveness to other countries. This is the only condition for Nigeria to buoy her favourable balance of trade relations. This will also enhance the level of market penetration for Nigeria's agrifoods and ensure compensatory returns to the agrifoods exporters.
- iii. The Nigerian agrifoods exporters need to adhere to the minimum global standards on the use of pesticides for the storage of exportable agrifoods. Appropriate government agencies need to wake up to their responsibilities so that incessant national embarrassment (through product rejection) caused this nation at the international market for agrifoods is checked.
- iv. Counselling and moral suasion should be employed through regular workshops/conferences organized for the market operators (especially the middlemen) on the use of appropriate and the approved measuring equipment for the consumers. This is the only condition for the consumers to derive increased level of satisfaction and benefits/utility. Ministries of Information, Commerce and Trade and Co-operatives need to step up on their information dissemination and awareness campaign programmes.

v.The number of market intermediaries/middlemen should be reduced in the marketing chains for agrifoods. This could be achieved by encouraging the manufacturers to sell directly to the consumers especially through internet expansion.

vi.Co-operative societies should be more encouraged to participate in the marketing and distribution of agrifoods from the farmgate to the final consumers. This will reduce the excesses of the individual middlemen who are often self-seeking in their approach to marketing of the agrifoods.

vii.All market operators (especially the middlemen) should be properly educated on the need to change their mindset and attitude toward product quality, market acceptability and penetration.

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My brother,**Rasaq Akanni** and family, my sisters,**Muinat,Ganiyat,.Mufuliat** and **Saudat** and their spouses are all well recognized and appreciated. I also recall and appreciate the supports and mentorship provided by **Mr.David Akanni** and family,**Mr.Rotimi Akanni** and family especially during my formative years in the elementary school and the College. Again, **Mr.Samson Akanni & family,Mr.Remilekun Akanni** and family,**Mr.Waheed Akanni** and Family and other members of the Akanni family,dead and living; you are all remembered and warmly appreciated.

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At this point, I appreciate my current Dean, Faculty of Agricultural Management & Rural Development (FAMARD),Prof.O.O.Olubanjo,for giving me the opportunity to present this Inaugural Lecture.The staff of the Dean's office, my immediate past Dean who is also the current Provost,Prof.J.O.Y.Aihonsu, the College Secretary,Mr.Ayo Ayodele and all the staff of the

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At this juncture, Mr. Vice –Chancellor, Sir, please permit me to acknowledge the members of my immediate family, starting from my late wife, **Mrs. Zaidat Adebimpe Akanni**, who left us without saying “goodbye” on January 18, 2018. Adebimpe was to me a rare gem, strong pillar of support, a woman with an uncommon commitment to family values and ethics, a loyal friend, a good team player, a responsible mother and above all, a true friend of God. These features were well expressed in the positive ways/orientations and good upbringing she gave to our children. Although we had a very short time together but am convinced that she succeeded in making a positive and lasting impression on our entire household – family members and all others that knew her. Please continue to rest in the bosom of your Creator. You will forever be remembered for the precious values you added unto the Akanni family. To live in the heart of those one leaves behind is not to die. Continue to live on my Dear.

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In Conclusion, Mr. Vice -Chancellor, Sir, please permit me to take a note from Nayak (2014) who observed that the rising cost of food that has hurt the consumers' pockets and politicians' electoral prospects in many developing economies is often blamed on a multi-layered system of middlemen who are involved in the distribution of produce from farm to fork.

At this point, I want to bring this lecture to an end by quoting from the assertion of Kishore Narne,an Associate Director at Motilal Oswal Commodity Broker Limited, India, who, in 2016, said and I quote:

“A crop cultivated by a farmer in a far-flung village goes through as many as four intermediaries before reaching the local vegetable market in a semi-urban or urban area. Many of these intermediaries provide money in advance to the farmers to cover cultivation costs and recall their loan in the form of produce after the harvesting. Unless the big conglomerates decide to take the same approach and provide advances in terms of credits, equipment and seeds to the farmer, the dominance of the middlemen will continue in agrifoods trade”.

This is a challenge to the Nigerian government, marketing co-operative societies and other stakeholders in the agrifoods marketing chain. More specifically, marketing co-operative societies have often been seen by many economists as alternatives towards eliminating the middlemen-dominated market places. This position is again supported by R.B. Sigh,(2014) former President of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India who stated that “.... In a co-operative model, farmers get at least 70% of the market price of their produce.” This is compared to the one quarter of the production cost that farmers get when they sell through the middlemen.

In Nigeria, the erstwhile Commodity Board could be rejuvenated and empowered by the Federal Government, giving it a new orientation and direction to meeting the all-important mandate of ensuring a stable and accessible market price for agrifoods, reducing the marketing margins and availing farmers their deserved compensations in the agrifoods distribution chain.

The Anchor Borrower's Scheme which was launched on November 17, 2015 by the Federal Government of Nigeria is a good initiative towards addressing the excesses of the middleman in

agrifoods trade. This scheme was put in place to create the linkage between the small-holder farmers and the Anchor Companies that are involved in the processing of the required agricultural commodities. The overall expectation is that the farmer will have a compensatory and inspiring reward for his efforts in agribusiness activities rather than continuing being cheated by the middleman. It thus shows that if everyone plays his roles in providing the necessary supports to the farmers, the effect of the tenacious grip of the middleman on his (farmer's) throat will be reduced and possibly removed.

The Vice -Chancellor, Sir, I thank you for listening to my lecture and I wish everyone journey mercies back home.

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