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EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SWEETPOTATO VALUE CHAIN IN DIVERSIFYING THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of AgriCommerce

at

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is the second largest producer of sweetpotato in the world and the largest producer in Africa. However, the total average yields of sweetpotato in Nigeria is comparatively low (2.6 tons per hectare) when compared to the rest of Africa (9.6 tons per hectare) and the world (16 tons per hectare). Furthermore, Nigeria is not ranked among the top 150 global exporters of sweetpotato, and the unavailability of markets has been reported to as one of the primary constraints to sweetpotato production in Nigeria. The aim of this study is therefore to explore the opportunities in the sweetpotato value chain that can contribute to the development of the Nigerian economy.

A structured questionnaire survey was used to obtain information from 115 farmers who were selected through non-probability convenience sampling. The findings from the structured questionnaire were complemented by an open-ended face-to-face interview. The analysis of the findings involved descriptive and inferential statistics. With the aid of the descriptive statistics, the contributing factors to the low yield of sweetpotato were identified along with the constraints to market access and market opportunities for sweetpotato nationally and internationally. The inferential analysis using the binary logistic model was used to determine the factors that had a significant influence on the yield of sweetpotato. The constraints identified that limit the production and yield of sweetpotato farmers included: inadequate market outlets to sell increased quantity of sweetpotato; high incidence of pest and diseases; scarcity of vines for planting; lack of knowledge on pest and disease management; lack of access to financial capital to buy farm inputs and carry out necessary farm activities; early spoilage of sweetpotato roots after harvest; lack of storage facilities to increase the shelf life of harvested sweetpotato; inadequate rainfall; grazing of cattle by herdsmen on sweetpotato farms; difficulty in getting farm labourers and inadequate access to farm machinery. The empirical results of the binary logistic regression indicated that farmers age, level of formal education, gender, cultivated land area, access to extension services access to market information and membership of a farmers group all had significant positive effect on the yield of sweetpotato farmers except farmers age which had a significant negative impact on the yield of farmers. Addressing the constraint to sweetpotato production and market access had the potential to increase farmers’ productivity, annual income and access to the high-value market, alleviate poverty and contribute to the economic development of Nigeria.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to God Almighty. His words and promises kept me going and sustained me throughout my study. To Him, be all the glory.
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“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29.11 TLB)”. My journey to New Zealand to study for the degree of Master of AgriCommerce would not be possible if not for God, the way maker, the promise keeper, the one who knows the end from the beginning. I give thanks to God who ordered my steps to New Zealand.

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