

Modelling Farmer's Perception and Intention to Join Cashew Marketing Cooperatives: An Expanded Version of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

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Abstract : The "Agricultural Promotion Policy (2016-2020)" represents a strategic initiative by the Nigerian government to address domestic food shortages and the challenges in exporting products at the required quality standards. Hindered by an inefficient system for setting and enforcing food quality standards, coupled with a lack of market knowledge, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) aims to enhance support for the production and activities of key crops like cashew. By collaborating with farmers, processors, investors, and stakeholders in the cashew sector, the policy seeks to define and uphold high-quality standards across the cashew value chain. Given the challenges and opportunities faced by Nigerian cashew farmers, active participation in cashew marketing groups becomes imperative. These groups serve as essential platforms for farmers to collectively navigate market intricacies, access resources, share knowledge, improve output quality, and bolster their overall bargaining power. Through engagement in these cooperative initiatives, farmers not only boost their economic prospects but can also contribute significantly to the sustainable growth of the cashew industry, fostering resilience and community development. This study explores the perceptions and intentions of farmers regarding their involvement in cashew marketing cooperatives, utilizing an expanded version of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Drawing insights from a diverse sample of 321 cashew farmers in Southwest Nigeria, the research sheds light on the factors influencing decision-making in cooperative participation. The demographic analysis reveals a diverse landscape, with a substantial presence of middle-aged individuals contributing significantly to the agricultural sector and cashew-related activities emerging as a primary income source for a substantial proportion (23.99%). Employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimation in R, the research elucidates the associations among latent variables. Despite the model's complexity, the goodness-of-fit indices attest to the validity of the structural model, explaining approximately 40% of the variance in the intention to join cooperatives. Moral norms emerge as a pivotal construct, highlighting the profound influence of ethical considerations in decision-making processes, while perceived behavioural control presents potential challenges in active participation. Attitudes toward joining cooperatives reveal nuanced perspectives, with strong beliefs in enhanced connections with other farmers but varying perceptions on improved access to essential information. The SEM analysis establishes positive and significant effects of moral norms, perceived behavioural control, subjective norms, and attitudes on farmers' intention to join cooperatives. The knowledge construct positively affects key factors influencing intention, emphasizing the importance of informed decision-making. A supplementary analysis using partial least squares (PLS) SEM corroborates the robustness of our findings, aligning with covariance-based SEM results. This research unveils the determinants of cooperative participation and provides valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to empower and support this vital demographic in the cashew industry.

Keywords : marketing cooperatives, theory of planned behaviour, structural equation modelling, cashew farmers

Conference Title : ICAEER 2024 : International Conference on Agricultural Economics and Environmental Research

Conference Location : Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Dates : February 05-06, 2024