

## **Agricultural Cooperative Model: A Panacea for Economic Development of Small Scale Business Farmers in Ilesha, Osun State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract :** Owolowo ile - ege garri processing industry which is a small scale cassava processing industry, located in Ilesha, Osun State was purposively selected as a case study because it is a cooperative business. This industry was established in 1991 by eight men (8) who were mostly retirees. A researcher made questionnaire was used to collect information from thirty (30) respondents: the manager, four official staffs and 25 randomly selected processors in the industry. The study found that within twelve years of the utilization of their self raised initial capital of N240, 000 naira (Two hundred and forty thousand naira) this cassava - based industry had impacted on and attracted the involvement of many more people because within the period of the study (i.e. 2007-2011) the processors had quadrupled in number (e.g. 8 to 30), the facilities (equipment) in use had increased from one machine and a frying pot to many, this translated into being able to produce large quantities of fried garri, fufu and also starch for marketing to the people in Ilesha and neighbouring cities like Ibadan, Lagos, etc. This is indicative of economic growth. The industry also became a source of employment for community members in the sense that, as at the time of study four staffs were employed to work and coordinate the industry. It was observed that despite all odds of small-scale industry and the problem of people migrating from rural to urban area, this agro-based industry still existed successfully in the community, and many of such industry can be replicated by such agricultural cooperative groups nationwide so as to further boost the productivity as well as the economy of the area and nation at large. However, government and individual still have major roles to play in ensuring the growth and development of the nation in this respect. The local agricultural cooperative groups should form regional cooperative consortium with more networking for the farmers, in order to create more jobs for the young ones and to increase agricultural productivity in the country thus resulting in a better and more sustainable economy.

**Keywords :** agricultural cooperative, cassava processing industry, model, small scale enterprise

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