

Decline in Melon Yield and Its Contribution to Young Farmers' Diversification into Watermelon Farming in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract : Melon is a popular economic cucurbit in Southwest, Nigeria. In recent time, many young farmers are shifting from melon to watermelon farming due to poor yield and low monetary returns. Hence, this study was carried out to assess the decline in melon yield and its contribution to young farmers' diversification into watermelon farming in Oyo state, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 75 respondents from five villages in Ibarapa block of the Oyo State Agricultural Development Project (ADP). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Results show that majority of the respondents (77.3%) were between 31-40 years of age and 46.70% had secondary school education. Most of the respondents (80%) cultivated more than 3 ha of land for watermelon. Majority of the respondents (74.7%) intercropped melon with other crops while watermelon was cultivated as a sole crop. None of the respondents either grew improved melon seeds (certified seeds) or applied fertilizers but all respondents cultivated treated watermelon seeds, applied fertilizers, and agro-chemicals. The average yields of melon fell from 376.53kg/ha in 2009 to 280.70kg/ha in 2011. However, the respondents were shifting into watermelon production because of available quality seeds and its early maturity, easy harvest, and high sales. There was a significant relationship between melon output and young farmers' diversification to watermelon in the study area at $p < 0.05$. The study concluded that decline in the melon yield discouraged youth to continue melon farming in the study area. It is hereby recommended that certified melon seeds should be made available while extension service providers should provide training support for the young farmers in order to reposition and boost melon production in the study area.

Keywords : decline, melon yield, contribution, watermelon, diversification, young farmers

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