



**CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE GROWTH ENHANCEMENT SUPPORT SCHEME (GESS):  
EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM FARMERS' PERCEPTION IN OSUN AND ONDO STATES,  
NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study was carried out to investigate corrupt practices perceived by farmers in the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) in Osun and Ondo states. A structured interview schedule was designed to elicit information from 187 farmers that were selected through a multistage sampling procedure. Results show that all (100%) the farmers interviewed were aware of the GES scheme. More than half of the farmers benefitted from improved seeds (67.3%) and bags of fertiliser (52.9%). Majority of the farmers (71.7%) agreed to the statement that 'there is diversion of inputs to retailers who in turn sell the commodity to farmers at the prevailing market price'. Sixty-two percent of the farmers agreed to the statements on 'disappearance of input dealers/officials at redemption centres' and that of 'repeatedly requesting farmers to come to the redemption centres to redeem their inputs without receiving the inputs'. Other corrupt practices perceived by farmers included distant redemption centres (54.5%), non-appearance of farmers' name in the redemption list (65.2%) and use of delay tactics by officials at the redemption centres denying farmers of their inputs (45.5%). More than half (52.9%) of the farmers had positive perception of corrupt practices among officers involved in the implementation of the scheme. Years of schooling was found to be positive and significantly correlated with perception of corrupt practices ( $r=0.166$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ). The study recommended the need for increase in the number of the redemption centres, timely input supply, proper monitoring of the officials involved in the distribution of the inputs and reduction of needless bureaucratic regulations.*

**Keywords:** Corrupt practices, Growth Enhancement Support Scheme, farmers' perception, farmers.

**INTRODUCTION**

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of Nigeria contributing about 40.0% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012) and also employs 70% of the active population (FGN, 2008). It is an important sector of the economy with high potentials for employment generation, food security and poverty reduction. Attempts have been made in past years to boost farmers' productivity through supply of farm inputs such as improved seeds and seedlings, agrochemicals and fertilisers at subsidised rates. However, corruption, dishonesty and political interruption in the distributing channels have been major challenges as a large proportion of these inputs could not reach farmers. Most of the inputs were diverted by political elites for personal gains (Adesina, 2013). The bid to do things differently and surmount the difficulties encountered in the distribution of fertiliser by past government led to the introduction of the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) under the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) which was designed for smallholder farmers. It was designed for the specific purpose of providing affordable agricultural inputs (fertilisers and hybrid seeds) to farmers in order to increase their yields per hectare, make it comparable to world standard and ultimately achieving food security in Nigeria and lift five (5) million resource-poor farmers annually out of subsistence farming to commercial agriculture within three (3) years (Adesina, 2013). The major stakeholders include the Federal Government of Nigeria, State Government in all

the 36 States of Federation, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Input Suppliers, Agro-dealers, farmers groups and individual farmers (Natsa, 2013).

Corruption is a social-human factor that entails abuse of public office for gains. It encompasses unilateral abuses by government officials such as embezzlement and nepotism as well as abuses linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling and fraud (Centre for Democracy and Governance, 1999). It is a serious challenge to agriculture and has hindered agricultural productivity and subsequent food security in the country. The Corruption Perception Index ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be.

Nigeria was ranked 144th in the Transparency International's 'Corruption Perception Index in 2013 and 136<sup>th</sup> in 2014 out of 175 countries/territories surveyed. However, the report released by the Germany-based non-governmental organisation in 2015 showed that the country is the 39th most corrupt nation among the 175 countries on the index (This day, 2015). Meanwhile, Nigeria shared same position in the index with Cameroun, Iran, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

According to Johnson and Sharma (2004), corruption is more than bribery. Various forms of corruption exist in the society. It includes bribery and grafting (extortion and kickbacks), kleptocracy (stealing and privatizing public funds), misappropriation (forgery, embezzlement, misuse of public funds/goods and illegal appropriation of public funds/goods for private use), non-



performance of duties and unfairly giving best jobs to friends while in position of authority (cronyism/nepotism), influence peddling (favour-brokering and conflict of interest), acceptance of improper gifts (speed money), protecting maladministration (cover-ups, perjury) and abuse of power (intimidation and torture). Others include manipulations of regulations (bias and rigging), electoral malpractice (vote buying and election rigging), rent seeking (public officials who illegally charge for services after creating artificial shortage), illegal campaign contributions (giving unregulated gifts to influence policies and regulations), clientelism and patronage (politicians giving material favours in exchange for citizen support) (Bawa *et al.*, 2010). With the introduction of the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS), which seeks to bypass fraudulent middlemen in distributing subsidised fertiliser to farmers, it is expected to eliminate the brazen fraud of the past but has however created new forms of corruption. This includes systemic challenges and lapses, introduction of illegal fees and politicizing of the fertiliser subsidy.

It is against this background that the study investigated corrupt practices perceived by farmers in the GESS in Osun and Ondo states. The specific objectives of the study were to describe the personal and socioeconomic characteristics of the farmers in the study area, determine farmers' awareness and sources of information regarding GESS, examine benefits derived from the GESS by the farmers and find out farmers' perception of corrupt practices in the scheme. The study also hypothesised that there is no significant relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of farmers and their perception of corrupt practices in the GES scheme.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in two states of Southwest Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to sample farmers in each of the state. The first stage involved the selection of two out of the six states that make up the southwest Nigeria using simple random sampling technique. Ondo and Osun states were thus selected for the study. The second stage involved the selection of two agricultural zones from each state. At the third stage, two extension blocks were randomly selected in each of the zones making a total of eight blocks. At the fourth stage, three cells/communities were randomly selected from each block and from these; ten farmers were selected using random sampling technique. A total of 240 farmers were interviewed, however, 187 copies of the completed interview guides were retrieved for data analysis. Data for the study were collected using a structured interview schedule.

Perception of corrupt practices by farmers in the GESS was measured by generating a list of 12 perception statements (6 positive and 6 negative) which were responded to on a 5-point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 were awarded to positive statements and the reverse for negative statements, respectively. Respondents with scores of mean and above were regarded as having positive perception while respondents with scores below mean were categorized as having negative perception. Data collected for the study were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### *Socio-economic characteristics of farmers -*

The data in Table 1 show that the mean age of farmers was 49 years which is an indication that most of the farmers were in the middle age category and active. However, only 17.1% of the farmers were within the age of 60 and above. Seventy-one percent of the farmers were male while 28.9% were female. Fifty-four percent of the farmers spent more than 6 years in school; an indication that they were educated. The mean number of years spent in school was 10.6 years. Only 17.1% of the farmers had no formal education. This implies that majority of the farmers can read and write and keep abreast of current happening in the society. Household size of farmers varied from 1 to 9 with a mean of 6.8 persons. Half of the farmers had household size of between 4 and 6 people. Also, a little above half (51.3%) of the farmers had farm size of between 1 and 4 acres and majority were into arable crop production such as cassava (96.7%), maize (98.3%), vegetable (65.7%) and rice production (52.4%). Forty-four percent of the farmers had more than 20years of farming experience while more than half (65.2%) were members of social organisations such as cassava growers association and maize growers association among others. Almost half (49.7%) of the farmers indicated their access to extension agents more than once a month in the last 6 months of the study.

Table 1: Distribution of farmers by socioeconomic characteristics (n=187)

Socioeconomic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
<b>Age</b>			
Below 30	05	2.7	49
30-39	28	15.0	
40-50	66	35.3	
50-59	56	29.9	
60 and above	32	17.1	
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	133	71.1	



Socioeconomic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Female	54	28.9	
<b>Years of Schooling</b>			
None	32	17.1	
1-6	52	28.9	10.6
7-12	44	26.2	
13-18	32	25.7	
>18	04	2.1	
<b>Household size</b>			
1-3	10	5.3	6.89
4-6	94	50.3	
7-9	49	26.2	
>9	34	18.2	
<b>Farm size (acre)</b>			
<1	15	8.0	
1-2	55	29.4	
3-4	41	21.9	3
4-5	42	22.4	
>5	34	18.1	
<b>Crop Enterprise Engaged by</b>	184	98.3	
farmers	179	96.7	
Maize	123	65.7	
Cassava	98	52.4	
Vegetables	79	42.2	
Rice	74	39.5	
Yam	69	38.8	
Plantain			
Tree crops			
<b>Year of farming experience</b>			
1-5	24	12.8	21.7
6-10	27	14.4	
11-15	22	11.8	
16-20	32	17.1	
>20	82	43.9	
<b>Membership of Social organisation</b>			
Yes	122	65.2	
No	65	34.8	
<b>Number of contact with Extension agent in 6 months</b>			
None	24	12.8	
1-3	26	13.9	
4-6	44	23.5	9
7-9	20	10.7	
>9	73	39.0	

\*Multiple responses were provided by respondents  
Source: Field Survey, 2014

**Awareness, Registration and Information sources** - All (100%) the farmers were aware of the GESS and had registered for the programme one time or the other. Sources of information varied

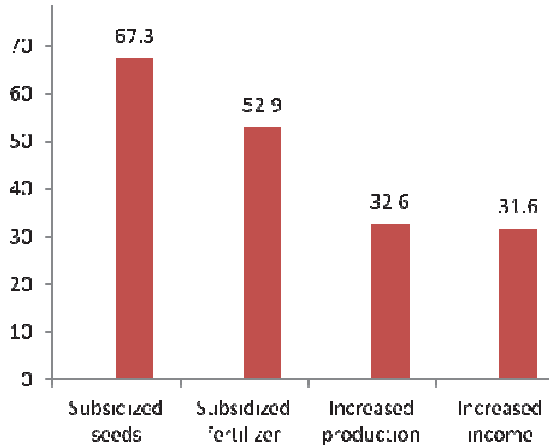
among farmers. Majority (73.7%) of the farmers obtained information on GESS from the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) staff. However, 64.1% and 58.9% of the farmers obtained their information from farmers groups and mass media, respectively. This also shows the mass awareness campaign of the government during registration. Only 26.7% of the farmers obtained information from the local government staff which is an indication that local government staff are not close to farmers at the grass roots (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of farmers by awareness, registration and information sources on GESS

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Awareness</b>		
Aware	187	100.00
Not aware	00	00.00
<b>Registration of name</b>		
Yes	187	100.0
No	00	0.0
<b>Information sources</b>		
ADP staff	138*	73.7
Farmers' Association	120	64.1
Friends and Neighbours	105	56.1
Ministry of Agriculture	25	13.4
Local Government officials	50	26.7
Research Institutes	41	21.9
Mass Media	110	58.9

\*Multiple responses were provided by respondents  
Source: Field Survey, 2014

**Benefits derived from GESS** - Benefits derived from the GESS included access to subsidised seeds (67.3%), access to subsidised fertilisers (52.9%), increased production as a result of subsidised inputs (32.6%) and increased income (31.6%) (Figure 1). Forty percent (40.1%) of the farmers however, indicated that their crop yield was relatively constant while 27.3% indicated a decrease in crop yield. Only 32.6% of the farmers had their crop yield increased. This implies that the benefits of the scheme have not been able to translate into increased productivity and income for most of the farmers.



**Figure 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by benefits derived from GESS**

Source: Field Survey, 2014

**Perception of corrupt practices by farmers -**

The data in Table 3 show the distribution of farmers based on their responses to perception statements on corrupt practices in the GESS. The data show that “diversion of input to retailers who in turn sell the commodities to farmers at prevailing market price was agreed to by 71.1% of the farmers (mean=3.88). This is related to influence peddling and misappropriation forms of corruption. Also, 62.6% and 17.1% of the farmers agreed and strongly agreed to the statement on ‘disappearance of input and government officials at the redeeming centres’ (mean=3.86). Requesting farmers to come to the redeeming centres repeatedly to redeem inputs without giving them the inputs was agreed to by 62.6% and 20.9% of farmers (mean=3.85). Forty-three percent and 13.9% of the farmers agreed and strongly agreed to the statement on the existence of redeeming centres in their communities. Thirty-seven percent of farmers agreed to the statement on non-appearance of their names in the redemption list (mean=3.44) despite the fact that they registered their names with the

government officials. Thirty-two percent of farmers also agreed that input and government officials at the redeeming centres use delay tactics so that farmers can get frustrated and leave the centre without collecting inputs. About thirty-four percent of the farmers strongly disagreed that input officials did not request for gratification for services rendered to farmers. They believed some of them paid more than the pegged price for inputs. Thirty-two percent and 6.4% of the farmers agreed and strongly agreed to the statement that input officials never requested for gratification for services rendered. However, 33.7% of farmers strongly disagreed with the statement.

The bureaucracy in the distribution of inputs at the redeeming centres is a factor that could lead or promote corruption as many farmers may lose interest or get fed up with the situation thereby giving chances to non-farmers or impostors to take advantage of the situation. Forty-three percent of the farmers disagree with the statement on denial of impostors by input dealers. It is evident from the foregoing that various forms of corruption paraded itself in the distribution of inputs to farmers which range from abuse of office, influence peddling, bribery (extortion and kickbacks), nepotism, speed money and manipulations of regulations (Johnson and Sharma, 2004; Fadairo and Ladele, 2014). The data in Table 4 revealed that more than half (52.9%) of the farmers had positive perception of corruption in the GESS while 47.1% had negative perception. This is an indication that corrupt practices exists in the agricultural sector especially in the implementation of the scheme. This corroborates the findings of Nyankakyi (2002), Fadairo and Oladele (2014). It is also an indication that corrupt practices is not only common to the political class, officials in rural development also have tendency of indulging in such when they have the opportunity to do.

**Table 3: Distribution of farmers by responses to statements on perception of corrupt practices in the operation of GESS**

Perception statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Mean	Std .Dev	Rank
Diversion of inputs to retailers who in turn sell the commodities to farmers at the prevailing market practice.	24 (12.8)	133 (71.1)	17 (9.1)	10 (5.3)	3 (1.6)	3.88	0.75	1
Disappearance of input dealer’s officials at the redeeming centres	32 (17.1)	117 (62.6)	22 (11.8)	11 (5.9)	5 (2.7)	3.86	0.85	2
Requesting farmers to come to the redemption centres repeatedly to	39 (20.9)	117 (62.6)	5 (2.7)	15 (8.0)	11(5.9)	3.85	1.03	3



Perception statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Mean	Std .Dev	Rank
redeem their inputs without receiving inputs								
Non-appearance of farmers' names in the redemption list	53 (28.3)	69 (36.9)	5 (2.7)	28(15.0)	32(17.1)	3.44	1.46	4
Redemption centres available in most communities	21 (11.2)	81 (43.3)	9(4.8)	51(27.3)	25(13.4)	3.12	1.27	5
Use of delay tactics at redemption centres so as to frustrate farmers	26 (13.9)	59(31.6)	21 (11.2)	62(33.2)	19(10.2)	3.06	1.27	6
Input officials never requested for gratification for services rendered	12 (6.4)	62 (33.2)	38 (20.3)	63(33.7)	12 (6.4)	2.99	1.09	7
Strong denial of impostors by government officials and agro-dealers but ensured farmers have access to inputs	21 (11.2)	51 (27.3)	9 (4.8)	15(13.4)	81(43.3)	2.88	1.29	8
Verification of GES cards/text messages of farmers by government officials at redeeming centres without man-know-man	9 (4.8)	67(35.8)	19 (10.2)	69 (36.9)	23 (12.3)	2.84	1.18	9
Farmers received not more than the amount of inputs they are entitled to	22 (11.8)	38(20.3)	14 (7.5)	85(45.5)	28 (15.0)	2.69	1.09	10
Farmers received no alert messages regarding input collection or alert came late	25 (13.4)	34(18.2)	5(2.7)	86 (46)	37 (19.8)	2.51	1.29	11
Only registered farmers obtained inputs at the redemption centres	9 (4.8)	21 (11.2)	3 (1.6)	95 (50.8)	59 (31.6)	2.08	1.10	12

Figures in parentheses are percentages  
Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on categories of perception of corruption (n=187)

Categories of Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Positive (37-48)	99	52.9
Negative (24-36)	88	47.1
Total	187	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

**Relationship between selected farmers' socioeconomic characteristics variables and perception of corrupt practices**

The results on the relationship between farmers' socioeconomic characteristics and their perception of corrupt practices (Table 5) show that only years of schooling of farmers ( $r=0.166$ ) had a positive and significant relationship with farmers'

perception of corrupt practices at  $p \leq 0.05$  level of significance. This implies that as farmers' years of education increases, there is also increase in the tendency of the farmers to be able to perceive corrupt practices better in a given situation. Educated farmers are likely to have adequate information on the prevailing situations in their environment. This is in support of Truex (2011) who found education as a consistently strongest determinant of corruption acceptance in Nepal. He established that education plays a significant role in determining attitudes towards corruption. More educated individuals were consistently more critical of corruption. Education is likely to be "the key driver of social norms" (Heyneman, 2003; Heyneman, 2004) and therefore will be a key element in turning people's perception from corruption acceptance to corruption rejection.



Table 5: Correlation analysis showing relationship between farmers' socioeconomic characteristics and their perception of corrupt practices

Farmers' characteristics	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Decision
Age	0.050	0.497	NS
Number of years spent in school	0.166*	0.039	S
Farm size	0.005	0.948	NS
Household size	-0.035	0.640	NS
Years in Agricultural business	-0.059	0.439	NS
Number of contact with extension agent in the past 6 months	0.101	0.216	NS

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study led to the following conclusions:

Farmers in the study area had awareness and registered for GES scheme. Majority of the farmers obtained information on GESS from the Agricultural Development Programme staff (ADP), farmers group and mass media indicating high awareness campaign of the programme. Benefits derived from the GESS by farmers include access to subsidised seeds, access to subsidised fertilisers, increased production and increased income. Farmers were able to identify and perceive corrupt practices in the scheme. The corrupt practices prevalent among the officers of the scheme ranged from bribery, extortion and kickbacks, influence peddling, abuse of power, nepotism and non-performance of duties. More than half of the farmers had positive perception of corruption in the GES scheme which implies some forms of sharp practices in the implementation of the scheme. Farmers' years of schooling positively influenced their perception of corrupt practices in the study area.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

- (1) There is need to increase the number of redemption centres in each communities so as to reduce the inefficiency in the number of redemption centres in the communities. While government appears willing to commit billions of funds to subsidise inputs for farmers, significant resources should also be committed

to monitor the scheme effectively to prevent fraud and corruption in all its forms so that smallholders can gain better access to subsidised inputs. In the same vein, many needless bureaucratic red tape and regulations in public offices must be eliminated. This is because too much bureaucracy drives people to bribe to get through the red tape.

- (2) Corruption inhibits social and economic development, impacting negatively on attempts to fight hunger and famine coherently and systematically, hence there is need for systematic and political will on the part of the government through massive enlightenment campaigns and ensuring that deterrents are punished severely. Policy makers should take the advantage of the unique opportunity provided by corrupt cases in GESS to push reforms of poorly designed subsidy schemes.
- (3) Education has been found to play a significant role in corruption perception. Hence, there is need to invest in the education of the citizenry by the government. This will promote social cohesion (which is the acceptance of and support for social norms and behaviour), ensure social contract and the willingness to act responsibly, or be good citizens and shun corrupt practices.

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