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Youths' perception on cashew production towards poverty reduction. Percepción de los jóvenes sobre la producción de marañón para la reducción de la pobreza

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed youth perception on cashew production towards reducing poverty in Osun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are; to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the youths involved in cashew production, identify the factors that encourage the involvement of youths in cashew production and examine the perception of youth about cashew production in Osun State. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted to select 96 respondents and structural interview scheduled was used to collect data from the selected respondents. The data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis such as frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation and inferential analysis such as chi-square analysis to test for the hypothesis. Results show that the majority (83.3%) of the youths that involved in cashew production are male, with mean age of 30.94 ± 2.4 years, an average farm size of 2.19 ± 0.45 hectares and average annual income of ₦164,844 00K ± ₦41,965.40K ($457.9 ± $116.6). About 53.1 percent of the respondents practice cashew farming mainly to earn a living. Findings from the study show those factors such as unemployment in non-agricultural sectors; favourable environment for cashew production including marketing availability and provide employment opportunity among others are motivational factors that enhances their involvement. Furthermore, source of information (χ^2=32.331, p ≤0.01)), sex (χ^2=7.513, p ≤0.05), marital status (χ^2= 10.603, p ≤0.05) and reason for practicing cashew farming (χ^2=29.766, p ≤0.05) had a positive and significant association with perception of youths towards cashew production. The study concluded that youths had a positive perception of cashew production and recommended among others that trainings in cashew value chain activities should be organized by agricultural development stakeholders to promote youth involvement in cashew value chain activities.

Keywords: Youth, Perception on Cashew Production, Cashew Industry, Poverty reduction

RESUMEN

El estudio evaluó la percepción de los jóvenes sobre la producción de marañón para reducir la pobreza en el estado de Osun, Nigeria. Los objetivos específicos son; describir las características socioeconómicas de los jóvenes involucrados en la producción de marañón, identificar los factores que fomentan la participación de los

jóvenes en la producción de marañón y examinar la percepción de los jóvenes sobre la producción de marañón en el estado de Osun. Se adoptó un procedimiento de muestreo de etapas múltiples para seleccionar a 96 encuestados y se utilizó una entrevista estructural programada para recopilar datos de los encuestados seleccionados. Los datos recopilados se sometieron a análisis descriptivos, como recuentos de frecuencia, porcentaje, media, desviación estándar y análisis inferencial, como el análisis de chi-cuadrado para probar la hipótesis. Los resultados muestran que la mayoría (83,3%) de los jóvenes que participan en la producción de marañón son hombres, con una edad media de 30,94 ± 2,4 años, un tamaño de finca promedio de 2,19 ± 0,45 hectáreas y un ingreso anual promedio de ₦164.844 00K ± ₦41.965,40K ($457.9 ± $116.6). Alrededor del 53,1 por ciento de los encuestados practican el cultivo de marañón principalmente para ganarse la vida. Los hallazgos del estudio muestran factores como el desempleo en sectores no agrícolas; el entorno favorable para la producción de anacardos, incluida la disponibilidad de comercialización y la oportunidad de empleo, entre otros, son factores de motivación que mejoran su participación. Además, fuente de información ($\chi2=32.331$, $p \leq 0.01$)), sexo ($\chi2=7.513$, $p \leq 0.05$), estado civil ($\chi2= 10.603$, $p \leq 0.05$) y motivo para practicar el cultivo del marañón ($\chi2=29.766$, $p \leq 0.05$) tuvo una asociación positiva y significativa con la percepción de los jóvenes hacia la producción de marañón. El estudio concluyó que los jóvenes tenían una percepción positiva de la producción de marañón y recomendó, entre otras cosas, que las partes interesadas en el desarrollo agrícola deberían organizar capacitaciones en las actividades de la cadena de valor del anacardo para promover la participación de los jóvenes en las actividades de la cadena de valor del marañón.

Palabras clave: Juventud, Percepción sobre la producción de marañón, Industria del marañón, Reducción de la pobreza.

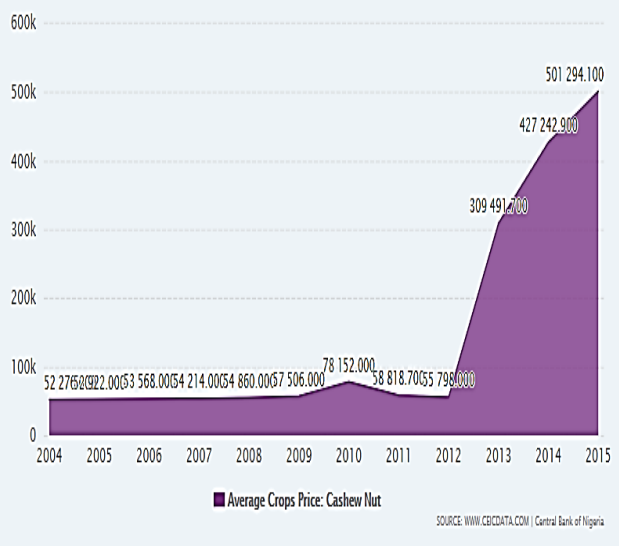
INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector has remained the bedrock of development in Nigeria, especially the cash crops. It contributes immensely to the economy of the nation through the provision of raw materials for the industries, provision of employment, as well as being a source of revenue and foreign exchange earnings (Adikwu, 2016). It provides raw materials for domestic industries and generates income for those that are involved in the profession and provision of market for industrial goods. Nigeria is endowed with abundant arable land and a population which is primarily agrarian. She therefore has a relative advantage in cash crop production industry in comparison with other countries. These cash crops include cocoa, coffee, rubber, cashew etc.

Agricultural development organizations and cashew experts have framed cashew production as an effective way of reducing poverty (Lisa, 2016). This is because cashew production requires relatively little effort and fewer technicalities when compared with other cash crops. Fatunji (2017) stated that Nigeria is the fourth largest producer of cashew in Africa and the sixth in the world with an output of 160,000 metric tons per year and

its production which is expected to reach 500,000 metric tons by 2020. The main export destinations for the crop are Europe, India and the United States. The importance of this crop as a source of foreign exchange cannot be overemphasized (Ejike, 2018). According to the National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN), Nigeria earned $402 million from export of raw cashew in 2017 by exporting 220,000 metric tonnes (MT); up from the 175,000 MT exported in 2016 and projected a 10% increase in 2018. In 2017, farm gate prices started at $1,527/MT on average and gradually increased to $1,700 - $1,800/MT on average before the end of the season in May. By 2018, farm gate prices started at $1,944/MT.

The data in Figure 1 shows Nigeria's average price of cashew nut as reported by Central Bank of Nigeria (Census and Economic Information Center – CEIC, 2018) to have risen from as low as ₦33,180.00 in 1998 to ₦550,000/Tonne in 2017.



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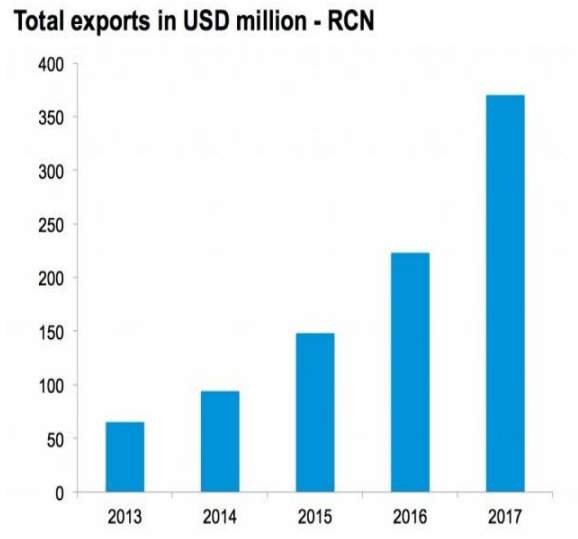

https://nepc.gov.ng/importer/nigeria-product/cashew/

Cashew has also become a trending cash crop among many Nigerian smallholders. A high value export tree crop, cashew grows very well in high salt-content grounds like the Sahel (Dendena and Corsi 2014). It has swept across the rural regions of Nigeria, while the economic integration and ecological impact was more successful in some regions than in others. Cashew is currently being produced in 27 states, which covers a total land area of 320,000 hectares (FAO, 2007) and cuts across the seven agro-ecological zones in Nigeria. Osun State is a good example of the middle ground, where cashew production has intensified over the past 20 years, especially in regions like Ejigbo, Ede North and South, Iwo, Ifelodun and Osogbo Local Government Areas (LGAs), and the State has now gained a reputation for producing high quality cashew (OSSADEP, 2004).

A significant increase in cashew nut has been due mainly to the involvement of private entrepreneurs, State and Federal Governments, Cooperative societies and affluent farmers in cashew cultivation (Aliyu and Hammed, 2008). The introduction of Brazilian cashew biotype with improved and desirable nut and kernel quality characteristics by the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) has further increased the crop's spread and popularity in Nigeria (Hammed, Anikwe and Adedeji, 2008). But it is important that innovative and vibrant youths are needed as entrepreneurs to enable the cashew industry attain its full potentials.

It is a known fact that youths are very important resources for every nation especially for sustaining agricultural productivity which is an important factor for economic development in a nation. The Children and Youth-in-Agriculture Programme (CYIAP-Network, 2006) took cognizance of the circumstances of poverty, unemployment and deprivations that are prevalent in Nigeria and some other developing countries which make some people to still depend on others for survival, protection and development up to the age of 40 years to define youth as people from ages 19 to 40 years. In addition, individuals between the age bracket of 18 and 40 years were considered as youth in line with the proposition of Otumara (2000). This reality is without prejudice to the definition by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations for statistical purposes as young men and women between the ages of 15 and 25 years (FAO, 2000).

However, the definition of youth, according to age category may not satisfy the universal interest due to the variations in law, customs, and constitutions but by implication, youth in Nigeria may be categorized as young men and women between the ages of 13 and 30 years. This is based on the fact that in Nigeria, the expected age of entry into secondary education or vocation apprenticeship training is 13 years, that is, the age of entry into the youth, while someone above the age of 30 years is not expected to serve in the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C.), that is, programme for the graduates from either Universities or Polytechnics (Torimiro, 1999). Also National Youth Entrepreneurship Summit (NAYES, 2008) defines the youth from the age of 14 to 30 with an extension of up to 35 years.

Youths have been noted to play a vital role in agricultural production, cashew inclusive, in developing countries. It is especially so in Nigeria, where their contribution is paramount. Studies have shown that children and youths contribute significantly in agricultural activities (Ugwoke *et al.,* 2005). However, because of Western education that our youths acquire every day, there has been a depletion of this youthful labour force in agriculture. The unemployment rate of this group globally ranked 12.6% compared with 4.8% as the rate of the adults in 2010 according to United Nation (2011) and this has the potential of tempting most youth to embark on migration especially to urban centres and beyond since this act creates room for accessing job opportunities.

There is insufficient youth participation in Nigerian cashew production and in the agricultural sector in general (Mangal, 2009) even though this class of people is the most productive of any society as it contains people in the

prime of their lives physically and mentally. In the most adverse and risky situations, young people have an extraordinary resilience and ability to cope, according to UNFPA (2006).

Cashew production, which is key to the Nigerian agricultural sector, can only function as such if this insufficient youth participation is reversed. In other words, improving youth capacity in cashew production and educating them on value addition is imperative for development of cashew industry, eradication of poverty and job creation.

The debate on youth involvement in cashew production is an inference of the general view on agriculture in developing countries. For as long as one can remember, agriculture has been considered a backward sector. Hence, it was never viewed as attractive alternative to other work sectors such as manufacturing, private, and public sector employment. Few young people see a future for themselves in agriculture or rural areas. There is mass rural urban migration of youth people who mostly have no vocational or technical skills looking for scarce white collar jobs (NEEDS, 2006). This migration leads to increased level of the unemployment in urban areas, social ills and vices among others.

The poor state of youth participation in agriculture activities has been a subject matter of great concern in Nigeria (Adewoyin et al., 2018). For a country to attain stability the agricultural sector must be very active and youths should be encouraged to practice agriculture. The poor state of agricultural productivity and low esteem for agriculture as seen in youths' low interest in farming, migration of able-bodied men and women has led to worsening Nigeria agriculture (Olarewaju et al., 2018).

Perception has been said to have an effect that is systematic on the control of actions. According to Hommel, Brown and Nattkemper (2016), the evidences that are available are of the opinion that perception and action are more interdependent and intertwined than commonly believed. Currently, the perception of youths for agriculture varies from place to place. Magagula and Tsvakirai (2018) submitted that the economic perception of youths about agricultural sector was positive in South Africa while Njeru and Karega (2017) revealed that youth's had a negative perception of agriculture and did not participate in the sector. The study also showed that there was a relationship between youth's perception on agriculture and their participation in agriculture. It is therefore necessary to study youth's perception of cashew production. Hence, this study therefore intended to specifically find out youth's perception of cashew production and what factors encouraged youths' involvement in cashew production. The Specific objectives of this study are to determine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; identify the factors that encourage the involvement of youth in cashew production; determine the factors limiting their involvement and proffer possible solutions to the problems limiting their involvement.

The following hypothesis was tested:

H_{01}: There is no significant association between the socio-economic characteristics of the youths and their perception on cashew production towards ensuring poverty reduction.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study area was Osun State, Nigeria with its capital in Osogbo. It covers an area of approximately 14,875 square kilometers and it is bounded in the South by Ogun State, in the North by Kwara State, in the East by Ondo and Ekiti States and West by Oyo State. It lies between the longitude 6°51'N and 8°'N on the North-South pole, and latitude 4°05'E and 5°02'E on the East-West pole. According to analytical report of the National Population Commission (NPC) (2006), Osun state has 3,423,535 people with (30) Local Government Areas and one area office.

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. At the first stage, Osun State was purposively selected for the study because of its involvement in cashew production. At the second stage, eight regions recognized for cashew production from the two (Iwo and Osogbo) out of six Agricultural zones namely: Ila, Ikirun, Ilesa, Ife, Iwo and Osogbo prominent for cashew production in Osun State were selected, namely; Ejigbo, Iwo, Wassimi, Ile-Ogbo, Ede North, Ede South, Ifelodun, and Osogbo regions. Of the eight regions, four are in Osogbo zone (Ede North, Ede South, Ifelodun, and Osogbo) and the other four in Iwo zone (Ejigbo, Iwo, Wassimi, Ile-Ogbo). Thirdly, Snowball sampling technique was used to select 10 respondents for study in each community in Osogbo zone and 14 in each of the four communities in Iwo zone because of the communities' recognition for cashew production. In all, 96 respondents were selected for the study. Primary data were collected through interview schedule and data collected were summarized and subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The dependent variable for the study was the perception of youth about cashew production in Osun State. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to 9 perceptional statements. These was measured using Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2), Strongly Disagreed (1), The minimum a respondent can score is 9 and maximum is 36. However, their perception was categorised into three levels using their mean scores and standard deviation; based on the assumption that the level of involvement scores assumed a normal distribution. This was operationalised as follows: High level was perceived by individual with mean perception score plus one standard deviation and above. Low level was perceived by individual with perception score below mean perception score minus one standard deviation scores. Medium perception was perceived by individual with mean scores in between the high and low perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results in Table 1 show that the mean age of the respondents was 30.94 ± 2.4 years. The majority (83.3%) are male which might be due to the fact that males are often more energetic and could readily be available for energy demanding jobs like cashew farming. About 64.6 percent were single and majority (97.9%) had primary to tertiary education. This implies that majority of the respondents were single. The religion affiliations of the respondents are Islam (68.8%) and Christianity (31.2%). This shows that study area was dominated by Islamic faithful with high literacy level which may be important to access and make use of the agricultural information

disseminated to them during extension programmes. There is therefore a surety for the benefits of education in the study area as found by Nwachukwu, (2008), Mangal, (2009) and Ayoade, (2013), who posited that education offers the opportunities to earn better and could impact significant variation in skills acquisition and adoption of new ideas. In line with the findings of Ogunremi *et al.* (2012) that a high percentage of rural youth are single and young, and they have latent energy in them to go into farming having gained access to land from household heads or owned through inheritance.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their personal and social characteristics (N=96)

Variables	Freq	%	Mean ± S.D
Age(years)			30.94 ± 2.4 years
20-24	1	1.0	
25-29	34	35.4	
30-34	48	50.0	
35 and above	13	13.6	
Sex			
Male	80	83.3	
Female	16	16.7	
Marital status			
Single	62	64.6	
Married	32	33.3	
Divorced	2	2.1	
Religion			
Christianity	30	31.3	
Islam	66	68.8	
Ethnic group			
Yoruba	87	90.6	
Hausa	3	3.1	
Others	6	6.3	
Level of formal education			
Primary	22	22.9	
Secondary	56	59.3	
Tertiary	16	16.7	
No response	2	2.1	

Source: Field survey, 2018

The results in Table 2 show that the mean year of cashew farming experince of the respondents was 10.8 ± 3.236 years. This finding reveals that the youth with cashew farming experience of 11-15 years dominated the

respondents' in the area. This could however be due to the nature of cashew farming, which likes other tree crops, opens an opportunity for people to start practicing from a relatively young age. It is also evident from the Table that the average farm size of the respondents was 2.19 ± 0.45 hectares. This finding is in support with the finding of Koledoye and Olagunju (2018) that majority of the people in Southwestern Nigeria have relatively small land area for tree crops. The mean annual income of the respondents was ₦164,844 ± ₦41,965.4K ($457.9 ± $116.6). This implies that majority of the respondents earned less than the Federal Government minimum monthly wage of ₦18,000 before it reviewed in 2019. The low average annual income can be attributed to the fact that cashew farming is the major occupation of only 53.1% of the respondents, 39.6% practice cashew farming to earn extra income, while 7.3% of the respondents are engaged in cashew production for family consumption or other reasons including medicine purposes.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their economic characteristics (N=96)

Variables	Freq	%	Mean ± SD
Years of cashew farming experience			10.8 ± 3.236 years
Less than 6	4	4.2	
6-10	37	38.5	
11-15	40	41.7	
16-20	14	14.6	
Above 20	1	1.0	
Farm size in hectares			2.19 ± 0.45 hectares
<1	34	35.4	
Above 1-3	61	63.5	
No response	1	1.1	
Capital expenses			₦46698 ± ₦59366.5K
Less than ₦80,000	74	77.0	
₦80,000- 100,000	11	11.5	
Above ₦100,000	9	9.4	
No response	2	2.1	
Income per year			₦164844 ± ₦141965.4K ($457.9 ± $116.6)
Less than ₦150,000	30	31.3	
₦150,000-164,000	12	12.5	
₦165,000-179,000	1	1.0	
₦180,000 and above	50	52.1	
No response	3	3.1	
Reason for practicing cashew farming			
To earn extra income	38	39.6	
Majorly to earn a living	51	53.1	
For family consumption	5	5.2	
Others	2	2.1	

Source: Field survey, 2018

Perception of youth about cashew production in Osun State: Table 3 show results of youth perception about the cashew farming in Osun State. Figures in parentheses represent percentage. The results of the analysis show that majority (89.6%) agreed that cashew production can help reduce poverty in Osun State ; 68.7 percent

agreed that the output presently produced by cashew farmers are enough to ensure poverty reduction while 62.5 percent disagreed that there are enough facilities and inputs for high cashew yield in the state among other perceptional statements. The results in figure 2 show that the majority (70%) of the youths had a positive perception of cashew industry which implies that youths have a positive perception of cashew farming and hence, agriculture. This is likely to have a positive effect on the participation of youths in cashew production and hence in agriculture.

Table 3: Mean perceptional score about cashew production among respondents in the study area (N=96)

Perceptional Statements	SA Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	D Freq (%)	SD %	R
Cashew production can help reduce poverty in Osun State	17 (17.7)	69 (71.9)	10 (10.4)	-	Agree
Output presently produced by farmers are enough to ensure poverty reduction	8 (8.3)	58 (60.4)	12 (12.5)	18 (18.8)	Agree
There are enough facilities and inputs for high cashew yield	-	36 (37.5)	59 (61.4)	1 (1.1)	Disagree
There are enough information needed for cashew production	-	37 (38.5)	56 (58.3)	3 (3.1)	Disagree
Skills and necessary knowledge needed for optimum cashew yield are enough	7 (7.3)	64 (66.7)	25 (26.0)	-	Agree
Cashew products enterprises are of great benefit to cashew farmers	48 (50.0)	37 (38.5)	11 (11.5)	-	Agree
Cashew production can help reduce unemployment in the State	57 (59.4)	37 (38.5)	2 (2.1)	-	Agree
Cashew production contributes positively to economic status of its farmers	38 (39.6)	55 (57.3)	3 (3.1)	-	Agree
The government has been helpful to farmers with its policies and development efforts	-	38 (39.6)	53 (55.2)	5 (5.2)	Disagree

SA – Strongly Agreed
A – Agreed
D – Disagreed
SD – Strongly Disagreed
R – Remarks

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Factors encouraging involvement of youth in cashew production: These are factors that can encourage youths' involvement in cashew production. The results in Table 4 show some of the factors influencing youth involvement in cashew production. Youth unemployment and availability of favourable environment for cashew production including marketing ranked first (92%). From the findings, it can be deduced that the respondents agreed that unemployment in non-agricultural sectors, favourable environment for cashew production including marketing availability, encouragement from friends and family, and youth interest in cashew production are the

major factors encouraging youth involvement in cashew production as over 50 percent of the respondents reacted positively to those factors. These factors could be explored in motivating youth towards getting more involved in cashew production.

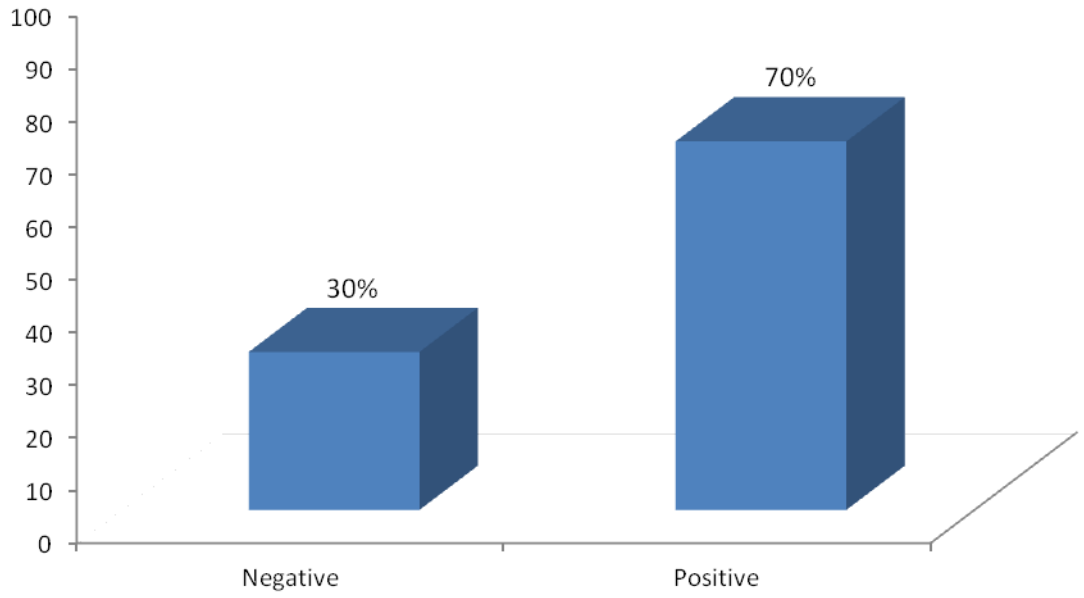

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents based on their perception about cashew production.
Source: Field survey (2018)

Table 4: Rank-order of factors encouraging youth involvement in cashew production in Osun State (N=96)

Statements	Freq	%	Rank
Unemployment in non-agricultural sectors and market availability for cashew production	89	92.7	1st
Encouragement from friends and family	73	76.0	3rd
Youth interest in cashew production	62	64.6	4th
Level of information available to the youth about cashew product	43	44.8	5th
Government provide adequate credit facilities for cashewmers	3	35.4	6th
The incentives made available to cashew farmers	22	22.9	7th
There is availabilitycapital and input	15	15.6	8th

Source: Field survey, 2018.

Hypothesis Testing: There is no significant association between some socio-economic characteristics of the youth and their perception about cashew production in the study area.

Results in Table 5 show that at 0.01 significance level (P≤0.01), source of information (χ^2=32.331) had a positive and significant association with perception of youths on cashew production. Also, sex (χ^2=7.513), marital status (χ^2= 10.603) and reason for practicing cashew farming (χ^2=29.766) had positive and significant association with the perception of youths on cashew production at 0.05 significance level (P≤0.05). This implies that there were significant associations between some socio-economic characteristics and youths' perception of the cashew industry.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis showing association between selected personal and socio-economic characteristics and their perception about the cashew industry (N = 96)

Variables	χ^2	Df	P-value	Decision
Sex	7.513	2	0.023*	S
Marital status	10.603	4	0.031*	S
Religion	2.529	2	0.282	NS
Ethnic group	3.886	4	0.422	NS
Source of information	32.331	16	0.009**	S
Reason for cashew farming	29.766	16	0.019*	S

χ^2 = Chi-square coefficient
Df = Degree of Freedom
**Chi square significant at P ≤ 0.01 level of significance
*Chi square significant at P ≤ 0.05 level of significance
Source: Field survey, 2018

As conclusion, from the results of this study, it could be concluded that youths have a positive perception of cashew production. Unemployment in non-agricultural sectors, favourable environment for cashew production including marketing availability, encouragement from friends and family, and youth interest in cashew production were the among factors that encouraged youths' involvement in cashew production. Also, sex, marital status, source of information and reason for practicing cashew farming were associated with youths' perception of cashew production. The study recommended among others that trainings in cashew value chain activities should be organized by agricultural development stakeholders to promote youth involvement in cashew value chain activities.

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