

Systems approaches for understanding agri-food entrepreneurship in Oyo State Nigeria, with a focus on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Master-Thesis at the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering

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Abstract

Existing literature on rural entrepreneurship often takes a reductionist approach by focusing on one aspect such as motivations or challenges encountered. As part of the transdisciplinary project UPGRADE PLUS, this study was carried to employ a systems approach in understanding rural entrepreneurship and in the design of the PM&E system.

The study was conducted with two women's groups and 9 individual agri-entrepreneurs. The two women's groups processed cocoyam flour and potato chips as group business activities. The data collection period lasted from January to March 2020. The data consisted of 26 interviews, 11 group sessions, and 4 informal discussions which were audio -recorded and later transcribed and supported by pictures and field notes.

Employing a systems approach reveals that rural entrepreneurs are mainly need-based entrepreneurs although this motivation often interacts with opportunity discovery, family, and peer influence. Rural entrepreneurs encounter challenges and generate knowledge by learning from experiences and sharing ideas although in some instances they refuse to share information to protect their specialised knowledge. They enhance rural development by creating employment opportunities and making use of their local physical and natural resources.

PM&E enabled the Osanetu women's group to identify factors affecting the profitability of their group business. It served as a knowledge analysis tool that enabled them to consider various options of strengthening not only the profitability of their group business but also the quality of their product.

Motivation is an important building block for the sustainability of a business, whether group or individual. As realised in this research, the motivation of the members of the two women's groups in this study was a major distinction in their group functionality and engagement.