



# Senior secondary school students' career choices in Agribusiness in Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State: An Exploratory Study

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## Abstract

*In Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State, senior secondary school students' career options in agribusiness were investigated in this study. One (1) public and one (1) private secondary school in the Ikole-Local Government of Ekiti State, Nigeria, made up the study's population. A random selection approach was used to choose a sample size of one hundred (100) senior secondary school students. For this study, a questionnaire was utilized to collect data, which were then evaluated using the mean, standard deviation, frequency count, and percentage. The majority of respondents (59.0%) expressed a strong desire to pursue a profession in agriculture or farming. The level of secondary students' attitude toward career choice in agribusiness revealed that respondents are always eager to learn more about agriculture, they feel it is important to learn about agriculture and invest in agribusiness in the future as well as pursuing a career in Agriculture by owning farmland. The findings also revealed the constraints to Secondary School students taking up future careers in Agribusiness which indicated that agriculture is used as a means of punishment in secondary school thereby making students dislike agriculture and agriculture is also perceived by students as boring. Others are attitudinal problems/psychology of being called a farmer, knowledge of one's personal abilities, and attitudes, peer group constraints, lack of a school counselor, and the parental factor.*

**Keywords:** Agribusiness, Career choice, Ikole Ekiti, Secondary school students, Attitude

## Introduction

The primary economic activity in Nigeria's rural areas, agriculture, has shown a consistent decrease in productivity over time. Changes in the federation's economic structure brought about by the enormous profits from crude oil exports have caused it to be neglected due to demographic shifts<sup>1</sup>. Value-added per capita in agriculture has increased over the last 20 years, but Nigeria has lost out on USD 10 billion in potential yearly export revenue from particular cash crops<sup>2</sup>. Youth movement from rural to urban areas is on the rise, and the country's farmer population is aging, both of which contribute significantly to this decline<sup>1</sup>. Many young people leave rural areas in search of white-collar jobs in cities, and those who are already there follow suit, pursuing careers in ICT, law, medicine, and other non-agricultural fields that they perceive to be less physically demanding and more stable. This leaves the agricultural sector in the hands of elderly peasant farmers who are obstinate in their ways and resistant to learning new techniques for running their farms.

Enrollment in studies connected to agriculture is among the lowest, despite the vast opportunities that the country's agriculture vocation offers. Pay and benefits at work have been found to be important factors in determining career choice and job satisfaction, particularly for young people<sup>3</sup>.

This situation affects agriculture more severely as it is rife with myths as a result of a lack of knowledge and awareness, and interest in agriculture as a career choice is rapidly dropping even among secondary school students<sup>4</sup>. Olatunji et al.<sup>4</sup> attributed the low number of students choosing agriculture as a career route to a lack of knowledge about the field. In order to prevent agriculture from going extinct, one of the goals of the Agricultural Development Program (ADP) in Nigeria is to teach and prepare the next generation of farmers. Nonetheless, the agricultural industry is presently confronting a scenario where the majority of students would rather work in white-collar industries and are unwilling to engage with the antiquated methods of farming. The term "agribusiness" refers to a broad range of agricultural activities beyond just growing crops and raising livestock. However, young people are more interested in easier alternatives like internet businesses, motorcycle transportation, or "okada-riding" businesses, and other low-class jobs that lack the prestige of agribusiness.

Many studies have come to the conclusion that educating our young people is essential to changing their perspective on agriculture and eventually inspiring them to seek jobs in or make investments in the agricultural sector<sup>5,6</sup>. Agribusiness is the business sector that includes agricultural and commercial operations associated to farming. It is a combination of agriculture and business.

It includes the production, processing, and distribution processes necessary to get an agricultural product to market. In nations with fertile land, this industry plays a significant role in the economy since agricultural goods may be exported. The various facets of producing agricultural goods are handled as an integrated system in agribusiness. With the use of advanced harvesting methods, such as the use of GPS to guide operations, farmers grow animals and gather fruits and vegetables. Manufacturers are creating self-driving devices that are ever more efficient. Processing facilities choose the most efficient methods for cleaning and packing animals for transport. Although none of the industry's segments are likely to deal directly with customers, they are all concentrated on running their businesses profitably in order to maintain fair rates. One of the many crucial decisions students make while making plans is their career. This choice will affect them for the rest of their lives because the student's identity is centered around their goals for their lifetime careers. By the time they graduate from secondary school, pupils are expected to have completed the culturally formative process of choosing their first job selection. A secondary school student's selection of topics for the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) is influenced by the expectation that they have an idea of their future plans. Allowing students to make this crucial decision about their future is necessary because it will help them become more conscious of the difficulties that lie ahead. The next generation represents any society's future.

Consequently, their job decisions ought to support them in acquiring the information, abilities, and mindset required to effectively assess their life while investigating and weighing a variety of professional alternatives in order to achieve their long-term objectives. Wever and Obiyai, however, note that in order to prevent errors, a person has to take good care of themselves and receive the support they need<sup>7</sup>. Secondary school students base their job decisions on a variety of elements, including their passion, family, friends, relatives, instructors, printed materials, income, and prior experiences. There are several job options in agriculture for students to consider. Agriculture offers a wealth of career placement and progression options. Students can pick from a wide variety of jobs in agriculture, according to Johnson et al.<sup>8</sup>.

Extension services, crop production services, animal production, soil science, agricultural business, and agricultural engineering are all part of a profession in agriculture. After completing secondary school, pupils with an interest in agriculture used to return home to work on the family farm. Before starting a job, Nigerian students may not have access to sufficient vocational information. There are instances where students prioritize reading other courses rather than considering how employable and marketable the graduates of those courses will be. Making a professional decision is a gradual process. It's an ongoing process. A career is a sequence of positions held in certain fields of expertise, typically with increasing responsibility over time<sup>9</sup>.

Career growth and choice should be communicated from nursery school through primary, secondary, and university education, according to Alutu<sup>10</sup>. Secondary school students now find it difficult to make the right profession decisions; as a result, vocational advising has been included to the guidance and counseling curriculum in order to assist in addressing this issue. Youth job decision is influenced by certain elements. One of the cultural and social elements influencing the choice of a vocation, according to Ferry, is education<sup>11</sup>. In many third-world nations, farming is seen as the default occupation for peasants with little to no formal education. Youths living in rural regions with limited access to higher education, even in industrialized nations, may decide to inherit the family farm and go on with the tasks of caring for the corn harvests, managing chicken coops, and raising cattle<sup>12</sup>.

The availability of resources, particularly land and financial facilities, can have an impact on a person's decision to pursue a career in agriculture. When selecting a professional job, peer pressure is another crucial consideration<sup>13</sup>. Like any other state in Nigeria, Ekiti State has a high percentage of underemployment and unemployment among its secondary school dropout population, which is reason for serious worry. It is believed that making insufficient or unwise job choices while in school may be a major contributing cause to unemployment, especially among Nigerians who drop out of secondary school. Secondary school students frequently do not have access to pertinent professional or occupational information that would help them transition from education to a suitable occupation after graduation. In a similar vein, many graduates lack the knowledge necessary to make wise decisions about their futures and employment. Every person, especially those who are young, must make a lifelong decision about their vocation or employment. There might be dire repercussions if such sensible judgments are not made.

One of the most important decisions in a person's life is choosing a job. There are a lot of issues that students run with while choosing a career. Making the wrong job choice might have long-term effects. A person who performs below par becomes an inefficient source for the economy overall as well as for them and their business. Nonetheless, career counseling plays a critical role in reshaping and reducing the likelihood that high school students would make poor career decisions. One of the most significant decisions students will make while making plans is their career; this choice will affect them for the rest of their lives. Students currently have access to a wide range of employment opportunities, including agriculture.

Food security, which ensures human security and nourishment, is closely related to agriculture. In light of this, Olatunji et al. contended that it is impossible to overstate the need for better agricultural techniques and the growing number of practitioners and specialists in this field in order to oversee agricultural sectors and guarantee food security in Nigeria<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, in order to safeguard students' future livelihood and promote sustainable food security and human development, efforts must be focused on investigating employment alternatives and prospects in agriculture. In light of this, the study's objective is to evaluate the agribusiness career choices of secondary school students in Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

## Methodology

**Research Design:** The exploratory design was chosen as the research methodology for this investigation. The solely descriptive study is based on the researcher's ability to get firsthand data about secondary school students' choice of career in agribusiness in Ikole, Ekiti.

**Area of the Study:** The Ikole Local Government is the research area. The South West Zone of Nigeria's Yoruba-speaking population meticulously populates the Local Government, which is primarily homogeneous. The majority of the population practices Christianity and Islam, although a small portion also practices traditional religions. The local government's booming industries include pharmacies like Chuks Pharmacy and Okoli Pharmacy, both in Ikole, and timber/saw mills like Eleyero Sawmill, Ilamo, Olo Sawmill, Okejebu, and Ara Sawmill, Ara. The Itapaji Water Dam in Itapaji, Ekiti, is the location inside the Ikole Local Government that draws tourists from all over the world. Ikole Local Government is located entirely in the tropical region. It is situated between latitudes 7°, 8°, and 15° North of the Equator and longitude 45° East of Greenwich. Its neighbors include Gboyin Local Government in the south, Oye Local Government in the west, Kogi State to the northeast, Ekiti East to the east, and Kwara State to the north. The distance between Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State, and Ikole Ekiti, the local government headquarters, is around 22.5 kilometers. Situated around 250 meters above sea level, the upland zone is home to the majority of the local government. The local government covers an area of around 374,940 km<sup>2</sup>. As of the 2006 National Population Census, there were 168,436 people living there, of whom 87,976 were males and 80,460 were women.

The Itapaji Water Dam in Itapaji, Ekiti, is the location inside the Ikole Local Government that draws tourists from all over the world. In addition, Ikole is home to a number of educational establishments, including as the Federal Government College and the Oye campus of the Federal University Oye Ekiti.

**Population of the Study:** One (1) public and one (1) private secondary school in Ikole, the local government of Ekiti State, Nigeria, made up the study's population.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques:** Fifty (50) students from each secondary school made up the sample size for this study, which resulted in one hundred (100) senior secondary school students offering agricultural science. Random sampling was used to choose the sample size.

Using a random sampling approach, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample, and responders are picked solely by chance.

**Source of Data Collection:** Primary sources of information were used in this study to address the main problems related to the subject. By using carefully designed surveys with both closed- and open-ended questions, primary data was obtained. This was done in order to get respondents' thoughts on the circumstances surrounding the research variables.

**Data Analysis:** Both descriptive was applied to the data analysis process. The variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean count, standard deviation, frequency counts, and straightforward percentages.

## Results and Discussion

According to Table-1 results, 41.0% of respondents said they would not want to be farmers, while 59.0% said they would love to be one. This suggests that only around 50% of the participants genuinely desired to become farmers. The results also showed that, of the 41 respondents, 29.0% stated that farming is stressful, 3.0% claimed that farming is unclean, and 9.0% said that farming is not lucrative as to why they would not want to be farmers. This suggests that secondary school pupils' perception of agriculture as stressful is the main reason they would not want to work in it. Additionally, the results showed that 42.0% of respondents were against agriculture as a potential career path, while 58.0% of respondents supported it. This suggests that barely half of the respondents thought a career in agribusiness would be interesting. Additionally, the results showed that 84.0% of respondents had engaged in farming in the past, compared to 16.0% who had not. This suggests that most of the respondents had engaged in farming in the past, either on the school farm or at home. The results also showed that all respondents—100% of them—had school farms in their establishments. This suggests that every respondent has had some experience with farming because they all work on school farms.

**Level of secondary students' attitude toward career choice in agribusiness:** Table-2 provides information on how secondary pupils feel about choosing an agriculture profession. The aforementioned table utilized a mean score cut-off mark of 3.00, which was determined by averaging the scoring system. Items with mean scores higher than the 3.00 cut-off were accepted, whereas things with mean scores lower than that were not. The Table-2 also showed that every item was approved, suggesting that respondents are constantly keen to learn more about agriculture and that they believe it is crucial to do so in order to pursue a career in the field by owning farmland, as well as to learn about and invest in agribusiness in the future. The responses, however, have the appropriate perspective on agriculture.

The outcome is consistent with a research by Osuntade et al. that revealed students' favorable perceptions of a career in agribusiness<sup>14</sup>.

As attitudes tend to follow behavior and influence most human behaviors, secondary school students who participated in this research have a very high chance of pursuing a career in agriculture in the near future, assuming all other factors remain the same.

**Table-1:** Respondents preference for Farming.

Respondents		%
Love to be a farmer ?	Yes	59.0
	No	41.0
Reasons not to love farming	Agriculture is being abused by teachers	0.0
	Agriculture is Stressful	29.0
	Agriculture is Dirty	3.0
	Agriculture is not profitable	9.0
Agribusiness as a future career	Yes	58.0
	No	42.0
Previous participation in farming	Yes	84.0
	No	16.0
Availability of school farm	Yes	100.0
	No	0.0

**Student perception towards a career in Agribusiness:** Table-3 offers information on how students feel about a career in agribusiness. The aforementioned Table-3 utilized a mean score cut-off mark of 3.00, which was determined by averaging the scoring system. Things with mean scores higher than the 3.00 cut-off were accepted, whereas things with mean scores lower than that were not. The Table-3 showed that while item 7 was rejected, items 1 through 6 were approved as the student perspectives of agribusiness. As a result, the respondents said that engaging in agriculture is a fantastic way of life since it offers job stability, chances for professional advancement, and space for personal growth. The respondents also concurred that agriculture offers employment stability, despite the fact that they believe it to provide poor pay. The survey revealed a favorable opinion of agribusiness, however this is at odds with Adebo's findings, which showed that the majority of his participants had an unfavorable perception of the agricultural industry<sup>1</sup>. This can be because most of the respondents in the current study are from rural communities.

**Table-2:** Distribution of Level of Secondary Students' Attitude toward Career Choice in Agribusiness.

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
I would like to learn more about agriculture	3.88	1.19	Accepted
I feel that it is important to learn about agriculture	3.90	1.24	Accepted
I would like to invest in agribusiness in the future	3.31	1.27	Accepted
I would like a career in agribusiness	3.31	1.39	Accepted
I would like to own a farm in the future	3.58	1.06	Accepted
I have the right attitude towards agriculture	3.49	1.27	Accepted

**Table-3:** Distribution of Respondents Perception towards Career in Agribusiness.

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
Practicing agribusiness is a great way of life,	3.80	1.30	Accepted
Agribusiness provides employment security	4.07	0.92	Accepted
Agribusiness provides opportunity for career development	4.02	1.00	Accepted
It gives room for self-employment	3.92	0.92	Accepted
The job security of a career in Agribusiness determines my choice of career	3.72	1.16	Accepted
Perception of low income from agribusiness	3.43	0.86	Accepted
Perception of agribusiness as a dirty work that involves manual	2.07	1.00	Rejected

**Constraints to Secondary School students taking up a future career in Agribusiness:** Table-4 provides information on the barriers that prevent secondary school students from pursuing professions in agribusiness. The aforementioned table utilized a mean score cut-off mark of 3.00, which was determined by averaging the scoring system. Items with mean scores higher than the 3.00 cut-off point were accepted, while those with mean scores lower than that were not. The chart showed which issues were acknowledged as limitations on secondary school pupils pursuing agribusiness occupations in the future. According to the restrictions mentioned by the respondents, school students despise agriculture because it is employed as a form of punishment, and they also think it is uninteresting.

Other factors include social pressure, the absence of a school counselor, the psychology of being called a farmer, attitude issues, and awareness of one's own talents and attitudes. Regarding the parental aspect, the result concurs with a study by Nwoka et al. that found that family values had a significant impact on secondary school students' profession choice<sup>16</sup>.

**Table-4:** Distribution of Constraints to Respondents Taking up Future Careers in Agribusiness.

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
Agriculture is used as a means of punishment in secondary school	3.93	1.22	Accepted
Agriculture is perceived boring by students	3.37	1.41	Accepted
Attitudinal problem/psychology of being called a farmer	3.50	1.12	Accepted
Knowledge of one's personal abilities, attitudes	3.90	0.76	Accepted
Peer group constraints	4.01	1.13	Accepted
Lack of school counselor	3.45	1.26	Accepted
Parental factor	3.58	1.37	Accepted

**Future Career Choice of Students:** Table-5 provides insight into students' true preferences for their future careers, it was found that 26.0% of respondents desired to work in the medical field (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc).

**Table-5:** Distribution of Respondents Future Career Choice.

Future Career Choice	Percentage (%)
Medical Line	26.0
Law	12.0
Engineering	26.0
Banking	3.0
Teaching/Lecturing	2.0
Business/Entrepreneur	23.0
Agribusiness	8.0
Total	100.0

Of the respondents, 12.0% chose law, 26.0% chose engineering, 3.0% chose banking, 2.0% chose teaching/lecturing, 23.0% chose entrepreneurship/ business, and the remaining 8.0% chose agribusiness. This suggests that most respondents choose to ignore farming in favor of perceived glamorous jobs such as those in medicine, law, engineering, and business tycoonship.

### Conclusion

The research looked at the agribusiness careers chosen by senior high school students in Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Thus, the study came to the conclusion that Ikole-Ekiti senior high school pupils had a great attitude about agriculture and would adore working in it in the future. The survey also found that students had a correct understanding of agriculture, believing that it offers a secure job and opportunities for self-employment. If students had a large range of options, they would, however, choose to pick the supposedly posh professions, such as those in medicine, law, engineering, and business tycoonship, disregarding or using agriculture as a backup plan. The study's conclusions led to the following recommendations being made:

It is impossible to overstate the importance of agriculture to Nigeria's continued existence. Therefore, in order to ensure the country's future, it is imperative that career counselors encourage young people to pursue careers in agriculture; that agriculture be made mandatory in elementary and secondary education to instill in children the value of the industry and the spirit of farming; and that scholarships be given to students who express interest in pursuing careers in agriculture in postsecondary education. Young Farmers Association formation and active participation in different farming enterprise activities should be promoted for students; Students should be encouraged to visit commercial farms on field trips, since this will motivate them and alter their perspective on agribusiness; School activities should be geared toward commercial agriculture; Guidance counselors should make an effort to properly instruct students on career selection, particularly in agribusiness; schools should host parent seminars to ensure parents are well-informed about agribusiness career options and familiar with the business side of agriculture.

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