

# ASSESSMENT OF THE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING AGRO-TOURISM IN SELECTED FARMING COHORTS IN KAIAMA L.G.A OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

By

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## ABSTRACT

Agro-tourism is a combination of agriculture and tourism; two large sectors and there is a lot of potential from it. Therefore, this study sought to assess the strategies engaged by those who carry out agro-tourism in improving this vital sector. This study was carried out in rural farm settlements in Kaiama Local Government Area and applied the use of an in-depth interview based on the set objectives of this study. A total of thirty-six (36) farmers drawn from 3 wards in Kaiama Local Government Area form the study population; in this case interviewee. It was ascertained that 5 wards were involved in agro-tourism but due to convenience, easy accessibility and security reasons., the 3 wards were selected. The wards selected include Gwanabe ward 1, Gwanabe ward 2 and Kaiama ward 2. Subsequently, six (6) communities heavily involved in agro-tourism were selected randomly from the three (3) wards. These communities are Woro, Maje and Vera under Gwanabe ward 1, Aboki and Gurya under Gwanabe ward 2 and finally Kuligizin under Kaiama ward 2. The purposive sampling method was used to select six (6) respondents each from the selected communities. Data for this study was analysed through content analysis where the responses of the respondents were interpreted,

transcribed with necessary quotations to support the issues been discussed. The results show that some ethnic groups involved in agro-tourism in the area include: Fulani, Yoruba, Kambari, Igbo, Bussa, Tiv, Igala, Zabarma and some immigrants from West African countries of Ghana (Ghanaians), Togo (Togolese) and Benin Republic (Beninese). The activities are carried out in clusters and they include crop farming, hunting, livestock farming and marketing. The strategies applied in improving agro-tourism include obtaining financial aid from politicians and their cluster associations, hiring of man power, creation of awareness by agro-extension workers and formation of association amongst the various clusters. The study therefore concluded that the strategies employed in the study area are impactful and could increase the potentials of agro-tourism.

***Keywords: Agro-Tourism; Cohorts; Farming; Strategies***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is the world's most important and largest industry which is regarded as one of the key sectors of national economies. It generates a major part of the national income as an important source of foreign currencies, necessary for local development. Tourism is also a major job generating industry characterized by its multiple effects on a number of other industries such as traditional and food industries, building infrastructure services such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, roads, airports and ports as well as other basic elements of tourism infrastructure (Haitm, 2009).

Agriculture is, and has always been, the most vital sector for human sustenance as well as for communities (Ibeagha-Awemu *et al.*, 2019). The diversification of agriculture activities aims not only at ensuring the survival of farmers, more so, small-scale farmers, but also creating alternative means of generating income, and concurrently, to enhance and promote economic development in rural regions (Sgroi *et al.*, 2018). Urbanisation of the population and industrialisation has led to reduced economic opportunities in rural areas, as explained by Romanenko *et al.* (2020).

Agro-tourism is a hybrid type of agricultural system that merges elements of farming and tourism to create markets for farm products and services and provide travel experiences for tourists (Choenkwan *et al.*, 2016). Agricultural Tourism or agro-tourism is any commercial enterprise that combines agriculture and tourism on a working farm, ranch, or other agribusiness operation (Khidir, 2020). (Kukorelli, 2011) opined that agricultural tourism is a rapidly emerging form of tourism in Europe and America due to the urgency of preventing the risk of low agricultural participation which could affect the economy of concerned countries. Thus, promotion of agricultural activities through tourism is becoming a strong medium of encouraging participation in agriculture globally. Tourism is used as a recreational means of orienting and educating the public about the various aspects of agricultural activities. Unfortunately, in Nigeria not much has been done in this area to attract the huge number of the teeming unemployed youth to agriculture. The

Nigeria's economy is majorly based crude oil. It accounts for 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (Uwakonye *et al.*, 2006). The development of agro-tourism that brings together the agrarian and tourism sphere, can contribute to the socio-economic development of rural regions and enhance the well-being of rural populations (Choo, 2012).

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Study Area**

Kaiama is in Kwara State. Kaiama is a town in North-Western Kwara State, Southwest Nigeria. It is the headquarter of Kaiama Local Government Area. Kaiama LGA has an area of 6,971 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 124,164 at the 2006 census. The postal code of the area is 242.

The Local Government Area is divided into ten political wards as follows: Kaiama ward 1, Kaiama ward 2, Kaiama ward 3, Kemanji ward, Wojibe ward, Gwanabe ward 1, Gwanabe ward 2, Gwaria ward, Adena ward and Bani ward. The headquarters of the local government area is about 150 kilometres away from Ilorin, the Kwara State capital. The traditional head of Kaiama town is His Royal Highness, Alhaji Omar ShehuMuazu, Kiyaru IV

Bokobaru is the major language spoken across the local government area. Except for Adena and Bani wards, the natural language of the people of the local government area is Bokobaru. The major language spoken in Bani ward is Fulani while in Adena ward, Yoruba and Hausa languages are the dominant languages. The people of the Bokobaru speaking towns and villages are called Bokobaru. Kaiama is popular for its "Gani", an annual festival for initiating and baptising children of royal families. Kaiama Local Government Area is one of the food baskets of Nigeria, producing agricultural products like yams and their processed form called yam flour, guinea corn, soya beans, cassava, and beans in commercial quantities.

### **Study Population**

A total of thirty-six (36) farmers drawn from 3 wards in Kaiama Local Government Area form the study population. The study applied the use of in-depth interview based on the set objectives of this study and it covered six (6) farmers each selected from six (6) communities across the three (3) wards. These farmers served as the interviewee to this study.

### **Sampling Techniques**

Kaiama Local Government Area is made up of ten (10) political wards as earlier stated. From preliminary findings, the researcher discovered that five (5) out of the ten (10) wards has communities involved in agro-tourism. However, due to convenience, easy accessibility and for security reasons, three (3) wards out of the five (5) wards involved in agro-tourism were selected. This implies that the convenience sampling technique was

applied here, as recommended by (Uford & Etim, 2018). The wards selected include Gwanabe ward 1, Gwanabe ward 2 and Kaiama ward 2. Subsequently, six (6) communities heavily involved in agro-tourism were selected randomly from the three (3) wards. These communities are Woro, Maje and Vera under Gwanabe ward 1, Aboki and Gurya under Gwanabe ward 2 and finally Kuligizin under Kaiama ward 2. Thence, the purposive sampling method was used to select six (6) respondents each from the selected communities that cut across the three agro-tourism dominated areas for in-depth interview. This brings the total of respondents to thirty-six (36) for the study. An interpreter was employed in cases where there is a breach of communication between the researcher and the respondent (interviewee).

### Method of Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this study collected through in-depth interview was analysed through content analysis where the responses of the respondents were interpreted, transcribed with necessary quotations to support the issues been discussed.

### RESULTS and Discussion

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	36	100
	Female	0	0
		<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	29-35	18	50
	36-42	12	33.3
	43-49	6	16.7
	50 and above	0	0
			<b>36</b>
Educational status	Primary	15	41.7
	Secondary	0	0
	Tertiary	0	0
	No education	21	58.3
		<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital status	Single	5	13.9
	Married	31	86.1
	Divorced	0	0
		<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>
Farming experience	Less than one year	0	0
	1-10 years	0	0
	11-20 years	2	5.6
	21-30 years	29	80.6
	More than 30 years	5	13.9
		<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>
Ethnic groups involved in agro-tourism	Togolese	1	2.78
	Beninese	2	5.56

Fulani	3	8.33
Yoruba	4	11.1
Kambari	8	22.2
Igbo	3	8.33
Bussa	2	5.56
Baruba	4	11.1
Nupe	2	5.56
Tiv	3	8.33
Igala	1	2.78
Zabarma	1	2.78
Ghanaians	2	5.56
	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 1 reflects the various ethnic groups and their demographic status. The table shows that all the respondents are males (100%) with an age range between 29-49. They do not all have any form of education as only 41.7% have primary school education and the remaining 58.3% have no form of formal education. In terms of farming experience, most of them (80.6%) have been farming for a period ranging from 21-30 years while 13.9% have been farming for more than 30 years. 86.1% are also married while 13.9% are single.

The ethnic groups who were found to be involved in agro-tourism in the area include: Togolese, Beninese, Fulani, Yoruba, Kambari, Igbo, Bussa, Baruba, Nupe, Tiv, Igala, Zabarma and Ghanaians. Among this list are immigrants from West African countries of Ghana (Ghanaians), Togo (Togolese) and Benin Republic (Beninese).

**Table 2: Agro-tourism activities practiced in the study area**

Agro-tourism activities by cluster groups	Sub-activities
Crop farming	Cassava
	Maize
	Sesame
	Rice
	Melon seed
	Sweet potatoes
	Wheat
	Yam
	Beans
	Sorghum
	Groundnut
	Millet
	Cashew
	Tomatoes
	Hunting
Bush rat/rabbit	
Antelope	
Monkey	

Livestock farming	Cattle (ranches) Goat Sheep
Marketing	Indigenous chicken Crop products Matured livestock Plant leftovers (hay, stover, etc)

Source, Field survey, 2023

Table 2 is a reflection of the various farming activities the respondents engage in as a form of agro-tourism in the study area. These respondents reside in cluster as each activity has its own area or cluster where they reside and do not have to encroach on the activity of the other clusters. The activities include crop farming, hunting, livestock farming and marketing. The crops produced in the study area include Cassava, Maize, Sesame, Rice, Melon seed, Sweet potatoes, Wheat, Yam, Beans, Sorghum, Groundnut, Millet, Cashew and Tomatoes. The game caught during hunting include Grass cutter, Bush rat/rabbit, Antelope and Monkeys. Also, the livestock animals raised in the study area are cattle (in ranches), Goats, Sheep and Indigenous chicken (also called local chicken). The marketers are also involved as they engage in selling crop products harvested from the farm, matured livestock put up for sale and plant left overs used to feed livestock animals such as hay, etc.

**Table 3: Strategies employed in improving agro-tourism**

Strategies	Description	Interview excerpts
Financial support (from politicians and associations)	Interviewees stated that the government comes to their farming settlements especially during periods leading to elections. During these times, government officials come around with huge sums of money trying to woo them for votes and this helps them generate enough funds for their farming; equally they have farming associations through which they save money and after sales of farm produce. Over time, their savings accumulate and eventually they have access to the same funds during the onset of the farming season.	<p>—During election time, different politicians will keep coming to our area with plenty money and promises. We know that after the elections they will abandon us. So the only thing we have to gain is the money they give us. Sometimes after the elections each household can have at least #200,000 that they get from politicians"</p> <p>—We have a group of farmers that agree to put money together. We have been in this area for many years and we have trusted ourselves not to cheat each other. What we do is to contribute an agreed amount of money every week as we sell our farm produce and when it is time for another farming season, we agree on what to do. Sometimes we agree on collecting the money, sometimes we buy chemicals and other farming tools in bulk and share equally. Sometimes we look for lands outside here to buy or rent to expand our farms".</p> <p>"I feed my cattle and goats with the leftover of what farmers have harvested. Most times after they have cleared their farms, we negotiate with them to come and feed our animal on what is left over. But during the dry season, I used to borrow money from the crop farmers' group to buy feed during the dry season. Then when I sell my cattle, I return the money to them.</p>

Hiring and retention of man power within/without the communities

Respondents claim that from the inception of the farming season till harvest, they engage the services of young able bodied boys/men to assist them in the farm work.

—*For me, it is not easy to go and farm every day. I have up to 7 different lands where I farm sweet potatoes, beans, corn and rice. These crops need constant weeding and I can't do it alone. So I you need to hire people for weeding because it is not every crop you can apply chemical. Again during harvest, it is not easy to harvest all the crops. I use to harvest rice and corn at the same time and I have to hire people to help me. I give them money or I pay them with a part of the crop I feel is worth their work. Then they can sell it themselves"*.

—*Here, we use to hire workers. They use to come from their place when the farming season is about to start. Sometimes, it is cheaper to allow them weed because they come in numbers and they can finish the job quickly but if you have to spray chemicals, you will take days before you cover all your farms"*.

—*My brother's children use to assist me when they are not doing anything in their own farm. They also help me to harvest because I have a portion I give to them which they sell and buy what they need"*.

Formation of associations for each set of agro-tourism unit

The livestock farmers, marketers, hunters and crop farmers each have individual associations formed for improving their selected activity.

—*We formed a group so that anytime we go hunting, we go in groups. You know there is insecurity in the area. When we go into the bush, sometimes we meet criminals who would even kill you if you don't give them money. So we formed the group so that we would agree when to go to hunt and when not to go. Anyone amongst us with information of the criminals used to inform us and tell us not to go. We know how we help ourselves when it is only few people that has caught something in the bush"*

—*We have to form a group of cattle sellers so that we can gather our livestock together and sell at an agreed price. We also have a way of meeting the people who sell crops to buy feed for our cattle. Also because we don't want our animals to stray into farms, we decided to buy a large piece of land and plant varieties of crops so that after we harvest, our animals can graze in it. We are very few cattle rearers so we know how we shared the land"*

—*Nobody can do anything alone. So you must belong to one group. We go to the market together, we have meetings, we share information about bandits and criminals, and sometimes we have people who represent us to go to the government and help us talk to them about our condition"*.

—*When vigilante comes here, they ask of our leader because they use to hear that bandit lives among us. So we decided to form our own crop farmers group so that we*

*can identify ourselves when such issue arise”*

*“Kaiama market is two days in the week and Woro market too is a big market. So we use to buy crop produce from farmers and sell to the people in the market. We come together as group of sellers to negotiate with the crop farmers how much we can by their produce, and we also talk of how much we can sell the farm produce to market people. We like the way we operate because there is cooperation and we use to have witness to everything that is bought or sold”*  
*“We have people who say they are from the government that comes to tell us about diseases that affects animals but we*

Creation of Agricultural extension workers

awareness by agro-extension workers of the state come to the study area to see what they are doing and advise them accordingly based on their farming activities.

*told them that there is a doctor that used to come and check our animals. Anytime we have issues, we call the doctor”.*

*“I have never experienced the kind of harvest I got until when some people came from the government and said they can help us to get tractor to till the farm for us. We thought they will not come back but they came with tractor and cleared our farms with it. They even showed brought planters for us and it made planting very easy. The harvest that year was plenty. Since then we have adopted that method of planting. The only thing is that we don’t always have access to tractors everytime we need it.*

*“Sometimes the government people do come to tell us where to sell our crops. They say the government is willing to support us so that we can improve on our farming. They also say government will like to buy our product directly but we prefer to sell to the market women because they will give us cash immediately. We don’t normally sell to government directly.*

*“The people coming from government used to show us how to increase our farming method. They advise us to use tractors and new planting tools. Some of us are already using their method and it is improving our farms. they also use to bring plenty people to come and see what we are doing, even white people. See we have people who are not from Nigeria here too and they are enjoying our farming system here.*

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 3 shows the various strategies employed for agro-tourism and the strategies include financial aid from politicians and their association, hiring of man power, creation of awareness by agro-extension workers and formation of association amongst the various clusters such as the Hunters association, Livestock farmers group, etc.



## Discussion

The various activities engaged by farmers in agro-tourism within the area. Crop farming, hunting and livestock farming as well as marketing of the products are the activities engaged by farmers in the area. Khidir (2020) reported that Afe Babalola University farm located in Ado Ekiti operates an integrated farming system with such practices as aquaculture, crop farming and animal husbandry. According to the findings of this study, the crops grown are Cassava, Maize, Sesame, Rice, Melon seed, Sweet potatoes, Wheat, Yam, Beans, Sorghum, Groundnut, Millet, Cashew and Tomatoes. A close look at these crops show that Yam, Beans, Sesame, Groundnut, Cashew, Rice and Tomatoes are cash crops as these are produced in large commercial quantities and sold to different parts of the country. This would help generate income as well as create sustenance for the family. These crops will equally serve as an attraction for tourists to visit the area because of the kind of crops grown there. In the same vein, cattle (in ranches), Goats, Sheep and Indigenous chicken are raised in the study area. These livestock animals are consumed by almost every household both in rural and urban areas and serves as a potential point of visit for tourists. Hunting of game is another potential attraction for tourists as wild meat is not always readily available. Hence, those in need of it always desire to come to the study area to view and purchase bush meat from the hunters. Marketing is another activity which could also draw potential tourist to agriculture. In fact most of the marketers came as tourists to see the farm and purchase things for themselves and thence chose to venture into marketing activities. The strategies involved in building and sustaining ago-tourism in the study area. The respondents suggested that they take advantage of the electioneering period (when politicians come to woo them for votes) to obtain money in huge sums from them knowing that the promises they make are fake. One of the excerpts from the interview is thus:

*—During election time, different politicians will keep coming to our area with plenty money and promises. We know that after the elections they will abandon us. So the only thing we have to gain is the money they give us. Sometimes after the elections each household can have at least #200,000 that they get from politicians*

According to Litheko, (2022), in response to the discussion point on how government can provide business support to small-scale farmers to enable for participation in the agro-tourism sector, the following response was obtained: Financial assistance – necessary to purchase agricultural working tools, construction of tourism infrastructure, funding of pesticides, training of employees on aspects of tourism and hospitality and many others. Therefore, there is need for the government to get involved in agro-tourism in the rural areas and develop it to international standard. In the same light, they have formed associations where they make weekly contributions to a particular person (their treasurer). This helps them save enough for the rainy day. In a nut shell, it shows that the government has abandoned its duties of providing support to develop agriculture even at the rural and grass root level. One of the interviewee stated that:

*“We have a group of farmers that agree to put money together. We have been in this area for many years and we have trusted ourselves not to cheat each other. What we do is to*

*contribute an agreed amount of money every week as we sell our farm produce and when it is time for another farming season, we agree on what to do. Sometimes we agree on collecting the money, sometimes we buy chemicals and other farming tools in bulk and share equally. Sometimes we look for lands outside here to buy or rent to expand our farms".*

Nnabuike-Eneh (2021) opined that farmers see agro-tourism as a venture that encourages government to develop business enterprises in rural areas.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study concludes that there are various strategies use to improve agro-tourism in the study area and these strategies have had impact on agro-tourism such that it has increased the marketing tendency of the farm products, created social cohesion, reduced rural-urban migration, provided access to enough funds and equally made communication of issues and ideas easy. This implies that the strategies employed in the study area are very impactful and could increase the potentials of agro-tourism in the study area and beyond.

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