



## Perception of Agribusiness as a Career among Undergraduates in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study examined the perception of agribusiness and areas of interest among agriculture undergraduates in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo, to better understand their attitudes and preferences toward agribusiness as a career. Data were collected from 120 students using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results revealed that most respondents were aged 21–30 years (82.50%), with a slight majority being female (55.00%), and the highest departmental representation was from Agricultural Economics and Extension (16.66%). Students perceived agribusiness as a financially lucrative career (mean = 1.00) and recognized its entrepreneurial potential (mean = 0.98), although many believed it requires expert assistance to initiate (mean = 0.84). Preferred areas of agribusiness interest included Livestock Production (16.7%), Marketing/Sales of Agricultural Products (16.4%), and Crop Production (13.9%), while niche fields like Agricultural Tourism (8.1%) and Academia (0.6%) garnered less interest. The study concluded that while students recognized agribusiness's financial and entrepreneurial potential, gaps in alignment with personal skills and access to resources hinder its full adoption. It was therefore recommended that universities enhance agribusiness training by integrating practical, hands-on entrepreneurial skills into the curriculum to better prepare students for the sector.

**Keywords:** Agribusiness Perception, Undergraduate Interests, Entrepreneurial Opportunities Agriculture Education

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### Introduction

Agribusiness, a critical subset of the agricultural sector, integrates agricultural production with business principles to create economic value across the value chain. Its importance in driving sustainable economic growth and addressing food security challenges has been widely acknowledged (Adeyanju *et al.*, 2023; Mukaila *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[3, 11]</sup>. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, agribusiness serves as a vital tool for youth empowerment, offering opportunities to bridge unemployment gaps and promote entrepreneurial initiatives (Ikueomonisan *et al.*, 2021; Yami *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[7, 18]</sup>.

Perception towards agribusiness among young individuals plays a significant role in shaping their willingness to engage with the sector. Positive perceptions have been linked to higher motivation and participation in agricultural careers, while negative perceptions often deter youth from exploring agribusiness as a viable livelihood option (Roy, 2023; Mulema *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[17, 12]</sup>. These perceptions are influenced by factors such as societal attitudes, policy interventions, exposure to agricultural education, and practical experiences (Boye *et al.*, 2024; Inegbedion & Islam, 2021) <sup>[6, 10]</sup>.

Moreover, the areas of interest within agribusiness are diverse, ranging from production and marketing to technology-driven solutions such as digital agriculture and agrifinance (Fadipe *et al.*, 2014; Girdziute *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[8, 9]</sup>. Understanding these preferences is crucial to tailoring policies, training, and interventions that align with students' aspirations, ultimately fostering a sustainable agricultural workforce (Ikueomonisan *et al.*, 2022; Pervez *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[7, 14]</sup>. While global research highlights the role of tailored agribusiness initiatives, contextualized studies specific to regions, institutions, and cultural dynamics remain limited. In the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo, students are exposed to a range of theoretical and practical experiences intended

to prepare them for diverse roles within the agricultural sector. Despite these efforts, anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations suggest a significant gap between academic exposure and students' enthusiasm for agribusiness as a career. Many students reportedly view agribusiness as a secondary career choice, often influenced by societal perceptions, lack of entrepreneurial confidence, and inadequate institutional support for agribusiness initiatives. Existing studies, such as those by Mukaila *et al.* (2024) <sup>[11]</sup> and Adeyanju *et al.* (2023) <sup>[3]</sup>, underscore the potential of agribusiness to transform youth livelihoods, yet they highlight persistent barriers such as skill gaps, limited access to resources, and socio-economic constraints. Research by Mulema *et al.* (2021) <sup>[12]</sup> and Boye *et al.* (2024) <sup>[6]</sup> further identifies a mismatch between training programs and the practical needs of agribusiness sectors. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often focus on broad contexts and fail to address institution-specific challenges that could offer actionable insights for improving student engagement. The absence of focused research on students' perceptions and areas of interest within the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo, represents a critical gap. Understanding these perceptions and preferences could help align educational programs with students' aspirations, thereby enhancing their willingness to pursue agribusiness as a career. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the perception of agribusiness and identifying specific areas of interest among agriculture undergraduates in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The Faculty, located on the university's main campus in Nwaniba, is renowned for offering undergraduate programs across eight (8) Departments that cover diverse fields of agriculture. The institution provides an ideal setting for investigating the perception of agribusiness and areas of interest among agriculture undergraduates. The study population consisted of students from the 2017–2021 academic year across all eight departments within the faculty.

A proportional sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of 120 respondents, ensuring that students from all departments were included in the study. The distribution of the sample was proportional to the number of students in each department, considering that the total population of students in the faculty varied across departments. This approach ensured that the findings would reflect the diversity of opinions and interests present within the entire faculty.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to elicit information aligned with the study's specific objectives. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: personal characteristics of the respondents, their perception of agribusiness as a career, and their areas of interest within agribusiness. The instrument was validated by experts in agricultural extension and agribusiness studies to ensure content validity. A pre-test was conducted to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, and necessary adjustments were made before the final data collection.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire specifically designed to align with the study's

objectives. The questionnaire's validity was ensured through expert reviews for content and face validity, while reliability was assessed using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and means were used to analyze the data.

### Result and Discussion

#### Personal characteristics of students in the Faculty of Agriculture

The study revealed notable trends in the personal characteristics of agriculture undergraduates in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo, as shown in Table 1. Regarding age distribution, the majority (82.50%) were within the 21–30 years age bracket, while the smallest proportion (3.33%) was aged 31 years and above. This implies that most students are in their prime productive years, a demographic that aligns with findings from Mulema *et al.* (2021) <sup>[12]</sup>, who emphasized that younger age groups are more adaptable and innovative in agribusiness.

In terms of gender, a slightly higher percentage of females (55.00%) than males (45.00%) were enrolled, indicating a narrowing gender gap in agricultural education, which Boye *et al.* (2024) <sup>[6]</sup> associated with broader inclusion policies in tertiary institutions. Across academic levels, students were fairly evenly distributed, with the highest representation in the 500-level (32.50%) and the lowest in the 100-level (12.50%), reflecting typical enrollment progression patterns. When categorized by departments, Agricultural Economics and Extension had the highest enrollment (16.66%), while Home Economics had the least (7.50%). The preference for certain fields may relate to perceived career opportunities, as noted by Abdullahi (2024), who linked departmental choices to market-driven motivations. Similarly, single students dominated marital status demographics (93.33%), supporting findings by Mukaila *et al.* (2024) <sup>[11]</sup> that marital obligations may deter young people from prolonged academic pursuits. State of origin data revealed Akwa Ibom as the predominant source (66.67%), with minimal representation from states like Bayelsa and Edo (1.67% each). This reflects a strong local enrollment, potentially driven by proximity and affordability, a pattern corroborated by Ikuemonisan *et al.* (2021) <sup>[7]</sup>. Sponsorship was primarily from parents or guardians (72.50%), with only 1.67% relying on spousal support, suggesting limited financial independence among students.

Income data indicated that most students (39.17%) earned less than ₦10,000 monthly, consistent with findings by Adeyanju *et al.* (2023) <sup>[3]</sup> that limited financial resources restrict students' ability to invest in entrepreneurial ventures. Regarding residence, off-campus accommodation was more common (71.67%), potentially offering students greater exposure to real-world agribusiness activities, as discussed by Edamisan *et al.* (2022).

These findings highlight key factors shaping students' perception of agribusiness and areas of interest. They underscore the importance of addressing demographic-specific challenges, such as financial constraints and academic preferences, to promote agribusiness engagement. Interventions such as targeted agribusiness training and mentorship, as proposed by Adeyanju *et al.* (2021) <sup>[2]</sup>, could enhance students' readiness for agribusiness careers and foster sustainable agricultural development.

**Table 1:** Personal characteristics of students in the Faculty of

## Agriculture

| Personal characteristics | Frequency | Percentages (%) | Mean      |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Age                      |           |                 |           |
| ≤ 20yrs                  | 17        | 14.17           | 26 years  |
| 21- 30yrs                | 99        | 82.50           |           |
| ≥ 31yr                   | 4         | 3.33            |           |
| Sex                      |           |                 |           |
| Male                     | 54        | 45.00           |           |
| Female                   | 66        | 55.00           |           |
| Level                    |           |                 |           |
| 100                      | 15        | 12.50           |           |
| 200                      | 17        | 14.17           |           |
| 300                      | 15        | 12.50           |           |
| 400                      | 34        | 28.33           |           |
| 500                      | 39        | 32.50           |           |
| Department               |           |                 |           |
| Agric. Econs & Ext       | 20        | 16.66           |           |
| Animal Science           | 17        | 14.17           |           |
| Crop Science             | 15        | 12.50           |           |
| Fisheries                | 13        | 10.83           |           |
| Forestry                 | 12        | 10.00           |           |
| Food Sci & Tech          | 17        | 14.17           |           |
| Home Econs               | 9         | 7.50            |           |
| Soil Science             | 17        | 14.17           |           |
| Marital Status           |           |                 |           |
| Single                   | 112       | 93.33           |           |
| Married                  | 8         | 6.67            |           |
| State of origin          |           |                 |           |
| Akwa Ibom                | 80        | 66.67           |           |
| Imo                      | 4         | 3.33            |           |
| Cross River              | 7         | 5.83            |           |
| Rivers                   | 7         | 5.83            |           |
| Delta                    | 5         | 4.17            |           |
| Anambra                  | 4         | 3.33            |           |
| Abia                     | 3         | 2.50            |           |
| Ebonyi                   | 3         | 2.50            |           |
| Edo                      | 2         | 1.67            |           |
| Enugu                    | 3         | 2.50            |           |
| Bayelsa                  | 2         | 1.67            |           |
| Sponsorship              |           |                 |           |
| Parent/Guardian          | 87        | 72.50           |           |
| Self-Sponsored           | 31        | 25.83           |           |
| Spouse                   | 2         | 1.67            |           |
| Monthly Income(N)        |           |                 |           |
| ≤ 10,000                 | 47        | 39.17           | 19,564.23 |
| 10,001 - 20,000          | 24        | 20.00           |           |
| 21,001 - 30,000          | 24        | 20.00           |           |
| ≥ 30,001                 | 25        | 20.83           |           |
| Residence                |           |                 |           |
| Off Campus               | 86        | 71.67           |           |
| On Campus                | 34        | 28.33           |           |

Source: Field survey, 2024

## A Career

The results show that students in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Uyo have varied perceptions of agribusiness as a career. The top three statements with the highest mean scores reflect the most strongly held positive perceptions: agribusiness is perceived as a financially lucrative career/venture (mean = 1.00), the use of modern technology in agribusiness can enhance productivity (mean = 0.99), and agribusiness offers potentials for entrepreneurship and self-employment (mean = 0.98). These findings align with studies such as Yami *et al.* (2019) <sup>[18]</sup>, which highlight the profitability and entrepreneurial opportunities in agribusiness, emphasizing its capacity to improve rural livelihoods and youth engagement. Similarly, the role of modern technology in increasing productivity is consistent with Boye *et al.* (2024) <sup>[6]</sup>, who noted the transformative impact of technological interventions in agribusiness sectors across Africa.

Conversely, the three statements with the lowest mean scores reveal less prominent perceptions: agribusiness offers promising career opportunities that align with students' interests and skills (mean = 0.83), starting up an agribusiness enterprise requires expert assistance (mean = 0.84), and graduates being better equipped to manage agribusiness outfits post-study (mean = 0.84). These lower scores suggest a perceived gap between agribusiness career opportunities and the personal interests or skills of students. This aligns with Mukaila *et al.* (2024) <sup>[11]</sup>, who reported that despite agribusiness's potential, barriers such as a lack of alignment with personal aspirations often deter youth from pursuing it as a career. Furthermore, the need for expert assistance echoes the findings of Mulema *et al.* (2021) <sup>[12]</sup>, which emphasized the challenges of accessing knowledge and technical expertise as a hindrance to starting agribusiness ventures.

The results also imply a significant recognition of agribusiness's entrepreneurial potential and technological adaptability, which may encourage students to view it as a viable career option. However, the lower perception scores concerning alignment with personal interests and the need for expert guidance indicate areas where institutional support, such as tailored training programs and mentorship opportunities, could enhance students' preparedness for agribusiness careers. This perspective is supported by Adeyanju *et al.* (2021) <sup>[2]</sup>, who found that targeted agricultural training significantly improves youth confidence and alignment with agribusiness opportunities. Additionally, Abdullahi (2024) noted that effective capacity-building interventions are essential to bridging the gap between academic training and entrepreneurial readiness in agribusiness.

## Perception of Students towards Choice of Agribusiness as

Table 2: Perception of Students towards Choice of Agribusiness as A Career

| Statements                                                                                 | Strongly Agree | Agree       | Disagree    | Strongly Disagree | Mean |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|------|
| Agribusiness is financially lucrative career/venture.                                      | 80*(66.7)**    | 40*(33.3)** | -           | -                 | 1    |
| Agribusiness requires specialized knowledge and skill to practice.                         | 37*(30.8)**    | 65*(54.2)** | 15*(12.5)** | 3*(2.5)**         | 0.85 |
| Agribusiness provides a good work-life balance.                                            | 46*(38.3)**    | 64*(53.3)** | 8*(6.7)**   | 2*(1.7)**         | 0.92 |
| Starting up an agribusiness enterprise requires an experts assistance/inputs.              | 47*(39.2)**    | 54*(45.0)** | 15*(12.5)** | 4*(3.3)**         | 0.84 |
| Agribusiness offers promising career opportunities that aligns with my interest and skill. | 39*(32.5)**    | 60*(50.0)** | 21*(17.5)** | -                 | 0.83 |
| Agribusiness offers potentials for entrepreneurship and self-employment.                   | 61*(50.8)**    | 57*(47.5)** | 2*(1.7)**   | -                 | 0.98 |

|                                                                                                            |             |             |             |           |      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------|
| As a graduate from the faculty, I will be better equipped to manage any Agribusiness outfit I find myself. | 45*(37.5)** | 56*(46.7)** | 18*(15.0)** | 1*(0.8)** | 0.84 |
| Agribusiness is a professional course/career in Nigeria.                                                   | 47*(39.2)** | 61*(50.8)** | 11*(9.2)**  | 1*(0.8)** | 0.90 |
| Use of modern technology in Agribusiness can enhance the productivity of the sector.                       | 83*(69.2)** | 36*(30.0)** | 1*(0.8)**   | -         | 0.99 |
| Start-up capital a major barrier in starting an Agribusiness enterprise?                                   | 71*(59.2)** | 40*(33.3)** | 6*(5.0)**   | 3*(2.5)** | 0.93 |

**Note:** \* and \*\* are frequency and percentage respectively.

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

### Students' Area of Agribusiness Interest

The results from Table 3 highlight the areas of agribusiness interest among agriculture undergraduates in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo. The top three areas of interest were Livestock Production (16.7%), Marketing/Sales of Agricultural Products (16.4%), and Crop Production (13.9%). Conversely, the least preferred areas were Academia (0.6%), Other areas such as Agroforestry, Aquaculture, and Horticulture (0.8%), and Agricultural Tourism (8.1%).

The high preference for Livestock Production, Marketing/Sales, and Crop Production aligns with findings from Mukaila *et al.* (2024) <sup>[11]</sup>, who noted that agribusiness areas with immediate income-generating potential tend to attract more interest among agricultural students in Nigeria. These areas provide tangible economic benefits and align with students' aspirations for entrepreneurship, as supported by Abdullahi (2024), who found similar trends in Northwestern Nigeria. This preference for practical and income-generating agribusiness domains may also reflect the perception of better job prospects and market opportunities within these sectors.

On the other hand, the low interest in Academia and specialized fields like Agricultural Tourism correlates with observations by Mulema *et al.* (2021) <sup>[12]</sup>, who found that youth in Zambia and Vietnam perceive academic and niche agribusiness fields as less lucrative or demanding extended educational commitments. Similarly, Ikuemonisan *et al.* (2021) <sup>[7]</sup> identified limited career prospects and economic incentives as key factors influencing the lack of interest in certain agribusiness domains.

The findings also align with insights from Prasetyaningrum *et al.* (2022), who noted that students' preferences for agribusiness careers are shaped by their exposure to entrepreneurial training and awareness of market dynamics. However, the limited interest in academia and niche areas could be addressed through tailored interventions, such as targeted mentorship programs and promotional campaigns, as suggested by Adeyanju *et al.* (2023) <sup>[3]</sup>.

**Table 3:** Students' Area of Agribusiness Interest

| Areas of Agribusiness Interest                   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Marketing/Sales of Agric product                 | 59        | 16.4           |
| Crop Production                                  | 50        | 13.9           |
| Livestock Production                             | 60        | 16.7           |
| Value Addition/processing                        | 50        | 13.9           |
| Agric research/Development                       | 36        | 10             |
| Agric Tourism                                    | 29        | 8.1            |
| Agric Consulting/Advisory                        | 38        | 10.6           |
| Agric Finance/Insurance                          | 33        | 9.2            |
| Academia                                         | 2         | 0.6            |
| Other (Agroforestry, Aquaculture, , Horticulture | 3         | 0.8            |
| Total                                            | 360*      | 100            |

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

### Conclusion

This study examined the perception of agribusiness and areas of interest among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Uyo. The findings revealed that while students generally perceive agribusiness as a financially lucrative career with significant entrepreneurial potential and technological adaptability, there are notable gaps in alignment with their personal interests, skills, and preparedness to venture into agribusiness independently. The perception that starting an agribusiness requires expert assistance underscores the need for institutional support through mentorship and skill-building initiatives.

The study also identified students' preferred areas of agribusiness, with Livestock Production, Marketing/Sales of Agricultural Products, and Crop Production emerging as the most popular. These preferences highlight a strong inclination towards agribusiness domains with immediate economic benefits. Conversely, areas such as Academia, Agricultural Tourism, and niche fields like Agroforestry and Horticulture garnered limited interest, likely due to perceived lower financial rewards or longer pathways to career establishment.

These findings suggest that while the entrepreneurial and financial opportunities in agribusiness are recognized, targeted interventions are required to address existing gaps. Practical training, capacity-building programs, and awareness campaigns focusing on less popular but equally viable agribusiness domains could foster a more comprehensive interest among students. Additionally, integrating agribusiness entrepreneurship into the curriculum and providing opportunities for hands-on experience could enhance students' readiness for the agribusiness sector.

Ultimately, leveraging students' perceptions and aligning them with the diverse opportunities in agribusiness could play a crucial role in cultivating a new generation of agricultural entrepreneurs, contributing to food security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the perception and interest of agriculture undergraduates in agribusiness:

1. **Enhance Institutional Support for Agribusiness Training:** Universities should integrate hands-on agribusiness training into the curriculum, focusing on entrepreneurial skills, modern technology, and market dynamics. This would help bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical readiness, addressing the perception that graduates are not adequately equipped to manage agribusiness ventures.
2. **Provide Access to Mentorship and Expert Assistance:** Establish mentorship programs and partnerships with successful agribusiness professionals to guide students in starting and managing agribusiness enterprises. This could help reduce students' reliance on external expert

assistance and foster confidence in their ability to navigate the agribusiness sector.

3. Promote Niche Agribusiness Opportunities: Institutions and stakeholders should create awareness and provide incentives for students to explore less popular agribusiness areas, such as Agricultural Tourism, Agroforestry, and Academia. Targeted campaigns and exposure to the potential profitability and career prospects in these domains could increase interest.
4. Facilitate Access to Start-Up Capital and Resources: Stakeholders, including universities, financial institutions, and government agencies, should establish funding schemes or grants tailored to young agripreneurs. This would help address start-up capital as a significant barrier and encourage more students to actively pursue agribusiness as a career option.

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