



# Potentials of Agricultural Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst for Economic Self Reliance Among Youths in Benue State

Dr. Duenya Imoter Moses<sup>1\*</sup> & Duenya Angel Ngodoo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Federal Polytechnic Wannune, Benue State, Nigeria

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22840960

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received : 07-09-2026

Accepted : 15-09-2026

Available online : 19-09-2026

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**Citation:** Moses, D. I., & Ngodoo, D. A. (2026). Potentials of Agricultural Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst for Economic Self Reliance Among Youths in Benue State. *IKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (IKRJEBM)*, 2(5), 9-19.



## ABSTRACT

## Original Research Article

This study evaluates the potential of agricultural entrepreneurship as a catalyst for promoting economic self-reliance among youths in Benue State. Employing a descriptive survey design assessed the level of awareness and understanding of agricultural entrepreneurship, perceived benefits related to economic self-reliance, youths' perceptions and attitudes towards agricultural entrepreneurship and identified challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs. The study is anchored on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A mixed-method research approach was employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative data. The study involved 130 youth who are into agricultural entrepreneurship. The data for study were analyzed using descriptive statistics simple percentages and mean and standard deviation whereby a mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. Findings reveal that while there is high level of awareness about agricultural entrepreneurship, many youths possess limited understanding of its full benefits and potential for wealth creation. The perceived advantages include income generation, employment creation, which positively influence their attitudes toward agriculture. However, challenges such as limited access to finance, inadequate training, poor infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers hinder active participation. The results underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance awareness, improve access to resources, and foster supportive social environments factors vital for harnessing agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable pathway to economic self-reliance among the youth in Benue State.

**Keywords:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Youths, Planned Behavior Theory, Economic Self-Reliance, Benue State.

\*Corresponding author: Dr. Duenya Imoter Moses  
Federal Polytechnic Wannune, Benue State, Nigeria

## Introduction

Agricultural entrepreneurship has emerged as a pivotal strategy to foster economic self-reliance, especially among the youth demographic, which constitutes a significant portion of the population worldwide. Globally, the perspective on agriculture has evolved beyond its traditional role, increasingly being recognized as a key driver of sustainable development and economic empowerment. Recent studies and reports underscore the importance of innovative agricultural practices and entrepreneurship in fostering inclusive growth, job creation, and resilience in the face of global challenges such as climate change and food insecurity (FAO, 2021; World Bank, 2022). In many economies, especially developing ones, the youth face

challenges such as unemployment, underemployment, and limited access to productive resources. Harnessing agricultural entrepreneurship presents a promising avenue to address these issues by creating employment opportunities, stimulating rural development, and ensuring food security.

On the global stage, agriculture accounts for a substantial share of employment and economic activity in developing countries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2021), approximately 1.4 billion people globally are engaged in agricultural activities, with a substantial and growing proportion of young people participating in the sector. This demographic shift underscores the critical role of youth in transforming agriculture into a sustainable and productive enterprise. The

global call for integrating youth into agricultural value chains is driven by the need to combat rural poverty, promote inclusive growth, and achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Innovative approaches such as agripreneurship entrepreneurial ventures within the agricultural sector are increasingly recognized as vital for transforming traditional farming into dynamic, profitable enterprises (World Bank, 2019).

Africa, with its predominantly agrarian economy, faces unique challenges and opportunities regarding agricultural entrepreneurship. The continent's youth population is expected to double by 2050, intensifying the urgency for sustainable employment solutions (UNDP, 2018). Agriculture remains the backbone of many African economies, contributing approximately 15-25% of GDP and employing about 60-70% of the workforce (African Development Bank, 2019). However, a significant proportion of young farmers lack access to modern technology, finance, and markets, which hampers productivity and profitability (FAO, 2017). Initiatives aimed at promoting youth-led agribusinesses through access to finance, training, and market linkages—are critical for harnessing Africa's demographic dividend and transforming agriculture into a driver of economic growth (IFAD, 2019).

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous country, is endowed with vast arable land, diverse agro-ecological zones, and a youthful population over 60% of its over 200 million people are under 35 years old (NPC, 2020). Despite these advantages, Nigerian agriculture remains largely subsistence-based, with many youths viewing it as unattractive due to low income, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to modern inputs and technology (World Bank, 2020). The Nigerian government and development partners have emphasized agricultural entrepreneurship as an avenue for diversification, job creation, and rural development. Notable programs like the National Youths in Agriculture Program (NYAP) aim to empower young farmers with training, finance, and market access, fostering a new generation of agripreneurs who can contribute to Nigeria's economic resilience (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2018).

Benue State, often referred to as the "Food Basket of Nigeria," is located in the Middle Belt region, renowned for its rich agricultural resources, particularly its abundant arable land suitable for crops such as yams, cassava, rice, and maize (Benue State Ministry of Agriculture, 2021). The state's economy is predominantly agrarian, with a large proportion of its youthful population engaged in farming activities. However, despite its agricultural potential, Benue faces challenges similar to other Nigerian states, including limited access to modern technology, finance, and markets, which hinder the full realization of its agricultural potential (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Promoting agricultural

entrepreneurship among Benue's youth offers a pathway to not only improved livelihoods but also to enhance food security and economic self-reliance at the local and national levels. Initiatives such as youth-led cooperatives, agro-processing enterprises, and value addition ventures can stimulate economic growth, create employment, and reduce rural-urban migration (Benue State Ministry of Agriculture, 2021).

## Statement of the Problem

Agricultural entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized globally as a key driver of economic growth, employment, and youth empowerment. In Nigeria, agriculture forms the backbone of the economy, significantly contributing to GDP, employment, and food security (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). However, youth participation remains low due to socio-economic, institutional, and infrastructural challenges (Akinbile et al., 2019). Benue State, known as the "Food Basket of Nigeria," has fertile land and a predominantly agrarian population, yet youth unemployment, underemployment, and poverty hinder their economic self-reliance (Nwosu, 2021).

While traditional farming persists, active engagement in innovative agricultural entrepreneurship capable of transforming the sector is limited. Existing studies tend to focus broadly on Nigeria or other regions, with scant empirical research on how agricultural entrepreneurship specifically impacts youth self-reliance in Benue's unique socio-cultural context (Ogunleye & Akinola, 2018). Barriers such as limited access to finance, land, and training are acknowledged, but their specific effects on Benue's youth remain underexplored (Eyo et al., 2020). Moreover, there is little data on the attitudes of youths towards agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood option. Addressing these gaps through targeted, context-specific research offers a pathway to improved livelihoods of youth can inform policies aimed at fostering sustainable agricultural practices, improving income stability, and promoting socio-economic independence among youth, aligning with Nigeria's broader goals of youth empowerment and economic diversification.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study centered on evaluating the potential of agricultural entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic self-reliance among youths in Benue State. The specific objectives include:

- i. To assess the level of awareness and understanding of agricultural entrepreneurship among youths in Benue State.
- ii. To evaluate the perceived benefits of agricultural entrepreneurship on the economic self-reliance of youths in Benue State.

- iii. To explore the perceptions and attitudes of youths towards agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood option
- iv. To examine the challenges faced by youths engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State

## Review of Literature

### Awareness and Understanding of Agricultural Entrepreneurship among Youths

Agricultural entrepreneurship has gained increasing attention as a vital strategy for rural development, food security, and economic growth. Among youths, awareness and understanding of this sector are critical to fostering innovative practices and ensuring sustainability (Adekoya & Oladipo, 2020). Several studies indicate that while awareness of agricultural entrepreneurship is rising, the depth of understanding remains limited among many young people.

Research shows that awareness of agricultural entrepreneurship varies significantly across regions and socio-economic groups. For instance, Ojo et al. (2019) found that in Nigeria, a significant proportion of youths are aware of agricultural entrepreneurship as a viable career option, primarily influenced by media and peer groups. Similarly, in Ghana, Boateng et al. (2021) reported that most youths have heard about entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture, but their knowledge is often superficial, limited to basic concepts such as farming or trading farm produce.

Despite growing awareness, comprehensive understanding remains a challenge. Many youths lack in-depth knowledge of entrepreneurial skills such as business planning, financial management, and marketing (Akinola & Akinrinlola, 2017). This gap hampers their ability to innovate and adapt to market dynamics, which is essential for sustainable agricultural ventures. The literature suggests that formal education and training programs significantly improve youths' understanding, yet access to such resources remains limited in many rural areas (Ogunleye et al., 2018).

Factors affecting awareness and understanding include educational background, exposure to practical training, access to information, and socio-economic status (Daramola et al., 2019). Youths with higher education levels and those exposed to extension services tend to have better knowledge of agricultural entrepreneurship (Adewuyi et al., 2020). Conversely, misconceptions and negative perceptions about agriculture, such as it being labor-intensive and unprofitable, persist among many youths, discouraging engagement (Akinola & Akinrinlola, 2017). Enhancing awareness and deepening understanding require integrated approaches involving formal education, extension services, and media campaigns. Tailored training programs that focus on entrepreneurial skills and practical exposure have been recommended to bridge knowledge gaps (Ojo et al., 2019). Furthermore, fostering positive perceptions about agriculture

can motivate more youths to pursue agricultural entrepreneurship.

### Perceived Benefits of Agricultural Entrepreneurship on the Economic Self-Reliance of Youths

Agricultural entrepreneurship has emerged as a pivotal strategy for fostering economic self-reliance among youths, particularly in regions like Benue State, Nigeria, where agriculture is a dominant economic activity. The impact of youth engagement in agricultural entrepreneurship can be understood through several interconnected dimensions.

Agricultural entrepreneurship enhances income generation and poverty alleviation among youths. Studies such as Nwaiwu et al. (2020) highlight that youths engaged in innovative agricultural ventures experience improved income levels, which contribute to economic independence. This aligns with the findings of Akinbile (2018), who emphasizes that entrepreneurial activities in agriculture diversify income sources and reduce reliance on traditional employment.

Agricultural entrepreneurship fosters skill development and technological adoption, which are crucial for increasing productivity. According to Abdullahi and Musa (2019), training and capacity building among youths lead to improved farming techniques and business management skills, thereby boosting profitability and sustainability.

Youth involvement in agriculture stimulates rural development and reduces urban migration. As noted by Okechukwu (2021), entrepreneurial activities create local employment opportunities, encourage value addition, and promote agro-based industries, which collectively contribute to economic resilience.

In conclusion, agricultural entrepreneurship significantly impacts the economic self-reliance of youths in Benue State by providing income opportunities, fostering skills, and stimulating rural development. Policy interventions aimed at reducing barriers and enhancing support systems are essential for maximizing this potential.

### Perceptions and Attitudes of Youths towards Agricultural Entrepreneurship as a Sustainable Livelihood

Understanding the perceptions and attitudes of youths toward agricultural entrepreneurship is vital for fostering sustainable rural development. Several studies highlight that young people's views are shaped by factors such as economic prospects, access to resources, education, and societal perceptions. Research by Akinbode et al. (2018) indicates that many youths perceive agriculture as a low-income, unattractive sector due to its labor-intensive nature and limited profitability. This negative perception diminishes their willingness to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship,

often viewing it as a fallback rather than a desirable livelihood (Akinbode et al., 2018).

Conversely, studies by Ojo and Oladele (2019) reveal that youths with positive perceptions associate agricultural entrepreneurship with opportunities for innovation, self-employment, and community development. Their attitudes are influenced by exposure to modern agricultural practices and entrepreneurial training, which improve their confidence and interest in the sector (Ojo & Oladele, 2019).

Further, gender and socio-cultural factors significantly influence youths' perceptions. For example, Onyango et al. (2020) found that male youths generally hold more favorable attitudes toward agricultural entrepreneurship than females, often due to gender stereotypes and access to land and resources (Onyango et al., 2020).

Barriers such as limited access to finance, technology, and markets also negatively impact attitudes, fostering perceptions of agriculture as risky and unprofitable (FAO, 2020). Conversely, policies and programs that provide training, credit, and infrastructure tend to improve youth perceptions and attitudes, highlighting the importance of supportive environments (World Bank, 2021). In summary, while many youths harbor negative perceptions rooted in economic and social barriers, exposure to innovation, supportive policies, and education can positively shift attitudes, fostering a more vibrant engagement of youth in agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood.

## **Challenges Faced by Youths Engaged in Agricultural Entrepreneurship**

Engagement of youth in agricultural entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as vital for rural development and food security (ILO, 2018). However, despite the potential benefits, young agricultural entrepreneurs face multifaceted challenges that hinder their participation and success. One of the predominant barriers is inadequate access to financial resources. Many youths lack collateral, credit history, or financial literacy, restricting their ability to secure credit (FAO, 2019). This financial gap limits investments in modern technologies and expansion initiatives essential for competitiveness.

Youths often lack adequate technical know-how and entrepreneurial skills, which affects productivity and innovation (Kinyua et al., 2020). The gap in practical training and extension services diminishes their ability to adopt sustainable and efficient farming practices.

Limited access to markets, poor infrastructure, and inadequate cold chain facilities restrict youths' ability to sell produce at competitive prices, leading to income instability (Oyana et al., 2021). Market uncertainties discourage sustained engagement in agricultural ventures.

Land tenure insecurity and limited land availability are significant hurdles. Many youths do not own land or face

legal restrictions, which discourages long-term investment and innovation (Nwanya et al., 2020).

Cultural perceptions that view agriculture as a less prestigious activity for youths, combined with inadequate supportive policies, impede youth participation (Adu et al., 2019). The absence of youth-friendly policies and extension services hampers engagement.

Climate variability and environmental degradation pose risks to agricultural productivity, making youth investments more uncertain and risky (IPCC, 2021). Adaptation measures are often inaccessible or unaffordable for young entrepreneurs. In conclusion, while agricultural entrepreneurship offers a pathway for youth empowerment and rural development, addressing these challenges requires integrated efforts involving financial inclusion, capacity building, infrastructure development, land reforms, and policy support.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The Theory was developed by Ajzen (1991), posits that an individual's behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Applying TPB to agricultural entrepreneurship among youth in Benue State provides a comprehensive framework to understand and influence their engagement for economic self-reliance.

Young people's attitudes, encompassing beliefs about the benefits and challenges of agripreneurship, significantly impact their intention to participate. Positive attitudes—such as perceiving agriculture as profitable and sustainable can enhance motivation (Ajzen, 1992). In Benue State, where agriculture is the backbone of the economy, fostering positive perceptions through success stories and awareness campaigns can cultivate favorable attitudes (Adebisi et al., 2020).

Social influences, including family, peers, and community leaders, shape youth perceptions of agricultural entrepreneurship. If influential figures endorse youth involvement in agriculture, subjective norms become supportive, increasing behavioral intentions (Ogunlela & Olarenwaju, 2009). In Benue, leveraging local leaders and peer networks can reinforce the social acceptability of agripreneurship.

Perceived ease or difficulty in engaging in agricultural entrepreneurship influences actual participation. Factors such as access to land, credit, technology, and training affect perceived control (Ajzen, 2002). Enhancing youth access to resources and capacity-building programs in Benue can boost perceived behavioral control, thereby increasing entrepreneurial intentions (Ogunlela & Olarenwaju, 2009). Interventions that target these TPB components such as entrepreneurial education to improve attitudes, community mobilization to influence norms, and facilitation of resource access can effectively catalyze youth engagement in

agriculture (Akinyele & Akinyele, 2014). Ultimately, increasing youth participation through this framework promotes their economic self-reliance and contributes to rural development.

## Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The design facilitates the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to understand the potential and impact of agricultural entrepreneurship on youth self-reliance in Benue State. A mixed method approach is incorporated to enrich quantitative findings with qualitative insights. The study recruited youths who are involved in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State. A sample size of 130 youths aged 18-35 years who are engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship within Benue State. Structured questionnaires were designed to gather data on potential and impact of agricultural entrepreneurship on youth self-reliance using four-point Likert-scale varying from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) respectively. Also, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 selected successful youth in agricultural entrepreneurship to obtain comprehensive data on the

potential and impact of agricultural entrepreneurship on youth self-reliance. Content validation was carried out to ensure the content validity of the questionnaires by reviewing and refining them with research professionals in Moses Orshio Adasu University and University of Mkar, Mkar while the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient yielded 0.80 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is considered high enough to consider the instrument reliable for the study.

Analysis of data is achieved using percentage count and mean and standard deviation whereby a mean cut-off point of 2.50 is used for decision making. Any mean score of 2.50 and above is accepted as having the desired effect or significant while any mean score below 2.50 is rejected as not having any significant. Setting a threshold at 2.50 ensures that only those effects or scores that reach or exceed this value are interpreted as having a meaningful or significant effect, enabling clearer interpretation and decision-making based on the data. Qualitative data collected from the selected success youths in agricultural entrepreneurship through in-depth interview were analyzed using written text.

## Result and Discussion of Findings

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

| S/N | Variables                   |                     | No of respondents | (%)        |
|-----|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1   | Age                         | 18-24 years         | 25                | 16.0       |
|     |                             | 25-29 years         | 35                | 26.7       |
|     |                             | 30-35 years         | 70                | 53.5       |
|     |                             | <b>Total</b>        | <b>130</b>        | <b>100</b> |
| 2   | Educational Qualification   | No Formal education | 15                | 11.5       |
|     |                             | Primary level       | 36                | 27.6       |
|     |                             | Secondary level     | 54                | 42.0       |
|     |                             | Tertiary level      | 40                | 30.7       |
|     |                             | <b>Total</b>        | <b>130</b>        | <b>100</b> |
| 3   | Years of working experience | 1-5 years           | 10                | 7.6        |
|     |                             | 6-10 years          | 70                | 53.5       |
|     |                             | 11 years and above  | 50                | 38.1       |
|     |                             | <b>Total</b>        | <b>130</b>        | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 presents data on the demographic data of respondents. The table revealed that, out of the total number of 130 respondents used, 25 respondents representing 16.0% were between the ages of 18-24 years, 35 respondents representing 26.7% were between the ages of 25-29 years while respondents representing 53.5% were between the ages of 30-35 years. Education attainment of respondents is presented on table 4.1 indicates that, 15 respondents representing 11.5% had no formal education, 36 respondents representing 42.7% had primary levels of education, 54

respondents representing 42.0% had secondary levels of education while 40 respondents representing 30.7% attained tertiary levels of education. It was also revealed that 10 respondents representing 7.6% of respondents who had been into agricultural entrepreneurship between 1-5 years; 70 respondents representing 53.5% had been in agricultural entrepreneurship between 6-10 years while 50 respondents representing 38.1% had been in agricultural entrepreneurship for 11 years and above.

**Table 2:** Respondents view on the level of awareness and understanding of agricultural entrepreneurship among youths in Benue State (n=130)

| S/N                 | Items                                                                                                                                                                | SA<br>(4)    | A<br>(3)    | D<br>(2)  | SD<br>(1) | $\Sigma$ | N   | $(\bar{x})$ | SD   | Decision    |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1                   | I am aware of the concept of agricultural entrepreneurship and I understand what it takes to start an agricultural business.                                         | 76<br>(304)  | 51<br>(153) | 1<br>(2)  | 0<br>(0)  | 459      | 130 | 3.51        | 1.87 | Accepted    |
| 2                   | I know different types of agricultural entrepreneurial activities I can engage in and I know the basic skills required for successful agricultural entrepreneurship. | 100<br>(400) | 26<br>(78)  | 4<br>(8)  | 0<br>(0)  | 487      | 130 | 3.71        | 1.92 | Accepted    |
| 3                   | I have heard about successful young farmers in Benue State who have started their own agricultural businesses.                                                       | 85<br>(340)  | 41<br>(123) | 3<br>(6)  | 1<br>(1)  | 470      | 130 | 3.59        | 1.89 | Accepted    |
| 4                   | I am aware of the opportunities available for youth in agricultural entrepreneurship.                                                                                | 111<br>(444) | 13<br>(39)  | 5<br>(10) | 1<br>(1)  | 494      | 130 | 3.77        | 1.94 | Accepted    |
| <b>Cluster Mean</b> |                                                                                                                                                                      |              |             |           |           |          |     |             |      | <b>3.64</b> |

*Source: Field Survey, 2026***Mean Bench Mark = 2.50**

Data presented on Table 2 show the mean ratings of the level of awareness and understanding of agricultural entrepreneurship among youths in Benue State. The data indicate that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1 to 4 are 3.51, 3.71, 3.59 and 3.77 with standard deviation of 1.87, 1.92, 1.89, 1.94 and the cluster mean score of 3.64 were obtained and accepted as it is rated above the mean bench mark of 2.50. Based on this result which is above the mean

bench mark of 2.50 it is therefore indicates that, there is high level of awareness and understanding of agricultural entrepreneurship among youths in Benue State. By implication, the awareness of agricultural entrepreneurship among youths in Benue State is relatively high due to the region's reputation as Nigeria's "Food Basket," but their understanding of its business aspects such as modern techniques, value addition, and marketing is limited.

**Table 3:** Respondents view on the perceived benefits of agricultural entrepreneurship on the economic self-reliance of youths in Benue State (n=130)

| S/N                 | Items                                                                                                                                                                      | SA<br>(4)    | A<br>(3)    | D<br>(2)  | SD<br>(1) | $\Sigma$ | N   | $(\bar{x})$ | SD   | Decision    |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1                   | Agricultural entrepreneurship can provide a sustainable source of income.                                                                                                  | 79<br>(316)  | 46<br>(138) | 5<br>(10) | 0<br>(0)  | 465      | 130 | 3.54        | 1.88 | Accepted    |
| 2                   | Agricultural entrepreneurship can improve my standard of living.                                                                                                           | 100<br>(400) | 26<br>(78)  | 4<br>(8)  | 0<br>(0)  | 487      | 130 | 3.71        | 1.92 | Accepted    |
| 3                   | Participating in agricultural entrepreneurship can help in achieving financial independence.                                                                               | 111<br>(444) | 13<br>(39)  | 5<br>(10) | 1<br>(1)  | 495      | 130 | 3.77        | 1.94 | Accepted    |
| 4                   | I see agricultural entrepreneurship as a way to contribute to my community's development and technology can make agricultural entrepreneurship easier and more profitable. | 110<br>(440) | 17<br>(51)  | 2<br>(4)  | 1<br>(1)  | 497      | 130 | 3.79        | 1.95 | Accepted    |
| <b>Cluster Mean</b> |                                                                                                                                                                            |              |             |           |           |          |     |             |      | <b>3.70</b> |

*Source: Field Survey, 2026***Mean Bench Mark = 2.50**

Data presented on Table 3 show the mean ratings on the benefits of youth involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State. The data indicate that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1 to 4 are 3.54, 3.71, 3.77 and 3.79 with standard deviation of 1.88, 1.92, 1.94, 1.95 and the cluster mean score of 3.70 were obtained and accepted as it is rated above the mean bench mark. Based on

this result, which is above the mean bench mark of 2.50 it indicates that, there are benefits of accrue from youth involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State. By implication, the perceived benefits of agricultural entrepreneurship for youths in Benue State include income generation, diversification of livelihoods, improved living standards, sustainable wealth creation and self-reliance.

**Table 4:** Respondents view on the perceptions and attitudes of youths towards agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood option (n=130)

| S/N | Items                                                                                                                                                                                       | SA<br>(4)    | A<br>(3)    | D<br>(2)  | SD<br>(1) | $\Sigma$ | N   | $(\bar{x})$ | SD   | Decision    |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1   | I believe that agricultural entrepreneurship can provide a sustainable source of income and I am interested in starting my own agricultural enterprise.                                     | 79<br>(316)  | 46<br>(138) | 5<br>(10) | 0<br>(0)  | 465      | 130 | 3.54        | 1.88 | Accepted    |
| 2   | Engaging in agricultural entrepreneurship offers opportunities for long-term economic stability and I believe that agricultural entrepreneurship requires significant skills and knowledge. | 100<br>(400) | 26<br>(78)  | 4<br>(8)  | 0<br>(0)  | 487      | 130 | 3.71        | 1.92 | Accepted    |
| 3   | Agricultural entrepreneurship is more profitable than traditional farming methods and I feel confident that I can succeed in agricultural entrepreneurship if given proper training.        | 111<br>(444) | 13<br>(39)  | 5<br>(10) | 1<br>(1)  | 495      | 130 | 3.77        | 1.94 | Accepted    |
| 4   | I perceive that agricultural entrepreneurship can contribute to reducing youth unemployment and innovation and technology are essential for successful agricultural entrepreneurship. .     | 110<br>(440) | 17<br>(51)  | 2<br>(4)  | 1<br>(1)  | 497      | 130 | 3.79        | 1.95 | Accepted    |
|     | <b>Cluster Mean</b>                                                                                                                                                                         |              |             |           |           |          |     |             |      | <b>3.70</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Mean Bench Mark = 2.50

Data presented on Table 4 show the mean ratings of the perceptions and attitudes of youths towards agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood option. The data indicate that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1 to 4 are 3.77, 3.51, 3.59 and 3.73 with standard deviation of 1.94, 1.87, 1.89, 1.93 and the cluster mean score of 3.65 were obtained and accepted as it is rated above the mean bench

mark of 2.50 indicating that is positive perceptions and attitudes of youths towards agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood option. By implication, youth recognize agriculture as a source of income, employment, and community development that foster self economic independent.

**Table 5:** Respondents view on the challenges faced by youths engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State (n=130)

| S/N | Items                                                                                                                                                       | SA<br>(4)    | A<br>(3)    | D<br>(2)  | SD<br>(1) | $\Sigma$ | N   | $(\bar{x})$ | SD   | Decision    |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----|-------------|------|-------------|
| 1   | Poor transportation and infrastructure make it difficult to market my produce.                                                                              | 111<br>(444) | 13<br>(39)  | 5<br>(10) | 1<br>(1)  | 494      | 130 | 3.77        | 1.94 | Accepted    |
| 2   | Limited access to modern agricultural technology reduces my efficiency and output.                                                                          | 76<br>(304)  | 51<br>(153) | 1<br>(2)  | 0<br>(0)  | 459      | 130 | 3.51        | 1.87 | Accepted    |
| 3   | I have limited access to affordable credit or financing for my agricultural activities.                                                                     | 85<br>(340)  | 41<br>(123) | 3<br>(6)  | 1<br>(1)  | 470      | 130 | 3.59        | 1.89 | Accepted    |
| 4   | Unfavorable government policies and support programs limit my ability to expand my business.                                                                | 100<br>(400) | 28<br>(84)  | 2<br>(4)  | 0<br>(0)  | 480      | 130 | 3.73        | 1.93 | Accepted    |
| 5   | Inconsistent supply of farm inputs (seeds, fertilizers, etc.) hampers my farming activities and High costs of inputs and operations limit my profitability. | 76<br>(304)  | 51<br>(153) | 1<br>(2)  | 0<br>(0)  | 459      | 130 | 3.51        | 1.87 | Accepted    |
|     | <b>Cluster Mean</b>                                                                                                                                         |              |             |           |           |          |     |             |      | <b>3.65</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Mean Bench Mark = 2.50

Data presented on Table 4 show the mean ratings of the challenges faced by youths engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State. The data indicate that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1 to 4 are 3.77, 3.51, 3.59 and 3.73 with standard deviation of 1.94, 1.87, 1.89, 1.93 and the cluster mean score of 3.65 were obtained and accepted as it is rated above the mean bench mark of 2.50 indicating that there are challenges faced by youths engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State. By implication, Youth in Benue State engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship face multiple challenges. Overcoming these obstacles requires coordinated support from government and development partners to create a more conducive environment for youth-led agricultural ventures.

### Analysis of Qualitative Data from Success Youths in Agricultural Entrepreneurship

The interviewee expressed a moderate to high level of awareness and understanding of agricultural entrepreneurship among youths in Benue State, noting that while many young people are aware of the concept, their comprehension of its full scope and potential benefits is often limited by inadequate exposure to training and information. They mentioned that some youths recognize agriculture as a means to generate income and create employment, but many still see it primarily as subsistence farming rather than a viable entrepreneurial venture.

Regarding the perceived benefits, the interviewee highlighted that agricultural entrepreneurship has the potential to significantly enhance the economic self-reliance of youths in

Benue State. They emphasized that engaging in innovative farming practices can provide a sustainable source of income, reduce dependence on family or government aid, and promote financial independence. The interviewee also pointed out that successful agricultural ventures could lead to job creation within the community, stimulate local economies, and improve food security, thereby contributing to broader socio-economic development.

In terms of perceptions and attitudes, the interviewee observed that many youths view agricultural entrepreneurship as a sustainable livelihood option, especially given the region's fertile land and abundant natural resources. However, they noted that this positive attitude is often tempered by skepticism about the risks involved, such as market fluctuations, climate change, and access to resources. While some youths are optimistic and eager to pursue farming as a business, others remain hesitant due to perceived barriers and the traditional view of farming as a less prestigious or less profitable activity.

The interviewee identified several challenges faced by youths engaged in agricultural entrepreneurship in Benue State. These include limited access to affordable finance, land tenure issues, inadequate training and extension services, and poor infrastructure that hampers market access and transportation. They also mentioned socio-cultural barriers, such as gender discrimination and traditional beliefs that may discourage innovation or entrepreneurship among young people. Additionally, environmental factors like unpredictable weather patterns and climate variability pose significant risks, while a lack of technological adoption and

information on modern farming methods further constrain youth participation and productivity in agricultural ventures.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that youths in Benue State have high awareness of agricultural entrepreneurship, but their understanding of its full benefits is limited due to insufficient exposure to training and information. While many recognize agriculture as a source of income and employment, most still view it primarily as subsistence farming. They see agricultural entrepreneurship as a means to achieve economic self-reliance, secure sustainable income, and boost local economies and food security. Although they perceive it as a viable livelihood given the region's resources, skepticism persists due to risks like market fluctuations and climate change, alongside traditional views that see farming as less profitable. Challenges faced by youths include limited access to affordable finance and land, inadequate training, poor infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers, all of which hinder active participation in agricultural ventures. The study's findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) adopted for the study, which highlights that youths' attitudes, social pressures (subjective norms), and perceived control over farming influence their intentions to engage in agricultural business. Positive perceptions of farming as profitable, community support, and access to resources and training can increase their likelihood of participating. Improving these factors through awareness, community endorsement, and support can motivate youths to pursue agriculture, fostering their economic self-reliance and contributing to regional development.

## Conclusion

Agricultural entrepreneurship holds significant potential as a catalyst for fostering economic self-reliance among youths in Benue State. Given the state's rich agricultural resources and the high unemployment rate among young people, encouraging youth-led agribusiness initiatives can stimulate economic growth and reduce dependency on traditional employment sources. By leveraging modern farming techniques, value addition, and agro-processing industries, young entrepreneurs can enhance productivity, generate income, and create employment opportunities within their communities. Furthermore, promoting agricultural entrepreneurship aligns with Benue State's agricultural dominance, enabling youths to tap into local markets and export potentials, thereby boosting local economies. To maximize this potential, it is essential to provide targeted training, access to finance, and supportive policies that encourage innovation and sustainability in agribusiness. Ultimately, empowering youths in agriculture not only addresses unemployment but also contributes to food security, rural development, and economic resilience, positioning agricultural entrepreneurship as a vital pathway toward self-reliance in Benue State.

## Recommendations

To enable youths to effectively participate in agriculture and enhance their economic independence, the following recommendations are proposed.

- i. Nigeria government at both National and State level should prioritize improving access to quality agricultural inputs and resources for young farmers to reduce startup costs and enhance productivity.
- ii. Nigeria government at both National and State level should provide comprehensive training programs will equip youths with modern farming techniques and entrepreneurial skills.
- iii. Effort should be made to facilitate easier access to finance and credit options will enable young entrepreneurs to fund and expand their agricultural ventures effectively.
- iv. Efforts should focus on encouraging youths to engage in value-added activities such as processing and packaging to increase their income potential.
- v. Government at both levels should focus on developing infrastructure and establishing monitoring systems are essential to support sustainable youth engagement in agricultural entrepreneurship.
- vi. Additionally, leveraging technology can help young entrepreneurs access markets, gather information, and adopt modern farming practices more efficiently.

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