

## ABSTRACT

The study focused on the assessment of USAID MARKETS II soybean production project in Benue State, Nigeria. The population for the study included all project participant soybean farmers of USAID MARKETS II project. Multistage, purposive, proportionate and random sampling techniques were employed in selecting the respondents for the study. All the eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) participating in the project were used for the study. Two soybean farmers associations (S.F.A.) that participated in the project were randomly selected from each LGA giving a total of sixteen (16) SFAs. Proportionate sampling was used in selecting the respondents from each soybean farmers association (30% of the members of each soybean farmers association was selected to obtain a total of 150 respondents) that was used for the study. Interview schedule was used for data collection. Percentage, frequency, mean score and standard deviation were used to present some of the data while multiple regression and factor analysis were also used to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed that USAID MARKETS II soybean project farmers in Benue State were mainly males who were middle aged with long years of farming experience and large household size. Majority (68.0%) of them acquired land through inheritance. The majority (84.7%) of the farmers participating in USAID MARKET 11 project purchased agro inputs in open market at high price against the original plan of the project. Similarly, the majority (76.7%) of project farmers sold their farm produce in open markets contrary to the price setting and buy back arrangement between USAID MARKETS II and Hule Nig LTD initiated by the project. All the participants grew improved varieties of soybeans but had less access to extension services. Consequently, the farmers had low farm output, yield and income. Project participants had both positive and negative perceptions about the project. The results of the study also revealed that all the respondents adopted technologies such as TGX1448-2E variety of soybean and crop rotation (total adoption score= 750 and mean adoption score=5.00 each). Number of extension contact ( $t = 3.309$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) and membership of farmers' organizations/ cooperatives ( $t = -2.048$ ;  $p = 0.042$ ) were factors influencing adoption of the technologies significantly. The study also revealed that farming experience ( $t = 2.115$ ;  $p = 0.36$ ), number of bags of fertilizer applied ( $t=4.246$ ;  $p= 0.000$ ) and soybean farm size ( $t=4.843$ ;  $p=0.00$ ) significantly influenced soybean output. The study also showed that five out of the eleven variables regressed significantly influenced soybean yield of the farmers. These variables were farming experience ( $t = 2.162$ ;  $p = 0.32$ ), number of years spent in acquiring formal education ( $t=1.99$ ;  $p= 0.04$ ), quantity of fertilizer applied ( $t=3.136$ ;  $p=0.002$ ), soybean farm size ( $t= -2.931$ ;  $p=0.004$ ) and number of extension contacts  $t=2.522$ ;  $p=0.013$ ). Economic, institutional and linkage constraints were extracted as constraints hindering the success of the project. The study therefore recommended among others active participation of government especially at grass root level in good agricultural projects of this nature initiated and sponsored by internal or external body by way of providing logistic support and frequent monitoring and evaluation of the project. This will help to overcome lapses, boost interest and capabilities of farmers/ participants in the project and ensure success of the project.