

SALES OF AGRICULTURAL FOODS: THE DANGER IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Food poisoning and fraudulent practices associated with agricultural consumption foods have assumed ugly trend in the Nigerian market. This means consumers are largely vulnerable in the ever increasing market of agricultural foodstuffs. Though efforts were made to check the trend, the reality tends to persist without boundary. This is an indication that previous works were either inadequate or not empirical to address grave area for proactive solution. In light of this gap, the main objective of the study addressed weight and measurement cheat, and the causes of food poisoning in Bodija market, south western Nigeria. The study was hinged on Steven Messer's and Richard Rosenfeld's Institutional Anomie theory. The study adopted descriptive design method. Cross sectional survey, quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The study population comprised buyer, seller and government official as key informants. The sample size was limited to 140 respondents. Multi stage sampling was use. This comprised purposive, simple random of ballots, stratified and convenience. The instrument of data collection comprised questionnaire, in-depth interviews and key informant. Data were collected and analysed at both quantitative and qualitative methods

Two dimensions of food poisoning were identified. Poisoning caused by farmers as a result of preservation of harvested foods by chemicals (78.9%) and those caused by sellers in their inordinate ambition for profits (69.9%). At least 75.9% of the consumers experienced weight and measurement cheat. About 60.7% of the buyers said they had knowledge of the unethical practices committed in the market place. Not less than 50.0% of the sellers were also aware of measurement cheats. The methods used included boiling *derika* measurement rubber to reduce size (46.7%), collaboration with artisans to boycott standard measures (19.6%) or giving false information on actual gauge (e.g. in grams, kilograms) of food items (10.9%). About 21.6% of the buyers had experienced food poisoning leading to severe health damages or death (2.1%) in some cases. To ensure protection of consumers, 19.8% suggested government regulation of informal sector through routine inspection and check to comply with standards. At least 14.6% suggested consumer education through the media.

However, food consumption in Bodija market showed that both literate and non literate consumers, high and low income earners converged to purchase their needed food materials. This means everybody is vulnerable to whatever unethical practices in place, though varied by age, education and income. In the effort to protect consumers, it is important that government should establish specialized agency to regulate the sector, extend NAFDAC services to monitor agric foods. Consumers should also insist on standards.

Keywords: Informal sector; Food Poisoning; Weight and Measurement; Agricultural Raw Food; Consumer and Seller

INTRODUCTION

In every social relation, there is an exchange base on rule or trust. The nature of the exchange may take different forms. Some could be monetary that is business-like while others could be non-monetary which reflect a service free activities in human interaction. It is not uncommon to perceive in social exchange services of financial compensation as this serves the means of subsistent livelihood. Thus, it is pertinent to point that this relation of financial flow of services may occur on different grounds. There are those characterized with formal sectoral relations and those with informal characteristics. We must distinctly emphasize that formal sector relations are those defined by bureaucratic principles in which every social action must take precedence of rule and regulation established for getting things done. It is a rational social order in which goal attainment is achieved by strict principles of task accomplishment. This type of social exchange is prominent in the dialectic explanations of industrial sociologists particularly the concept of modernism by Max Weber, the German Industrial Sociologist.

However, the informal social exchange unlike formal does not accommodate any stringent rule or regulation of task execution. As put by Akintoye (2008), the informal sector is unorganized, unregulated and mostly legal, but unregistered. Although, rules may exist to guide social action, they may be substituted at any point in time thereby allowing task execution without any form of red tapism or bureaucracy. This type of explanation is prominent in the work of Elton Mayo of the Harvard business school, *Human relations*. Conversely, it is possible that irrespective of any level of social exchange individuals may find themselves, one cannot

underestimate behaviours of sharp practices that may tend to confront morality and ethics of interaction. The non ethical behaviour can be so destructive that without any proactive effort taken, the system may collapse. In this wise, we may contend that one of such non ethical behaviours is fraud. To start with, it is important to clarify the concept of fraud in its simplicity. Fraud may be defined as an intention to deceive person(s) in order to gain money or obtain goods illegally. It is an act of pretence to obtain benefits to oneself. It can be defined as intentional deception by concealing or misrepresenting information that harms the financial interest of another person(s) and benefits the financial interests of the perpetrator (Rossouw, Mulder and Arkhuysn, 2000). Thus, fraud will be perceived as crime, which is abnormal social behaviour in human society. Since fraud in corporate social organizations does not constitute exclusive area of social problems criminologists are interested, it becomes imperative to emphasise that fraud in other aspect of social relation (informal sector) has gained popular attention in the analysis of crime by scholars of social deviant. This may have been due to the important position informal sector occupies in society. The point is fraud can be significantly and scientifically analysed in formal sector as well as the informal sector.

Therefore, the thrust of the study captures the analysis of fraud in the informal sector. It must be recognized that fraudulent practices in the informal sector, particularly among traders or sellers of household consumption such as food stuffs like rice, beans, salt, palm/groundnut oil, to mention but few should be given adequate attention by criminologists due to the importance this presents to human life. It is no gainsay the fact that many consumers of

household materials mention in the foregoing may have suffered varying degree of cheats, damage, and short change in the hands of numerous unscrupulous sellers or distributors. With no exaggeration, many consumers have lost their lives and health status resulting from sharp practice by sellers. The incidence of *killer beans* reported by National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) (2008) lend credence to the fact of food poisoning in the Nigerian market. Similarly, there were reported cases of live death in Ilorin, Kwara state of Nigeria resulting from consumption of 'amala', product of yam flour (<http://www.nafdacnigeria.org/identified.html>). In this wise, given this scenario of different incidence in the informal social relation, we may logically conclude that researching in this field of human endeavour appears very important.

Meanwhile, what can we say are the causes, effects and possible solutions to this endemic social problem? Eventhough the situation is known to consumers, what concerted effort made by the victims to expose the evil to appropriate authority? If the act is reported what is the trend of improvement to combating the incidence? Therefore, the ultimate goal of the study examines varying degree of cheat and injury consumers may have suffered in the past and their percieved pattern of fraud that pervades selected agricultural food items. Specifically, the study shall explore area of food poisoning, and weight and measurement cheat in the effort of advancing solution to the problem.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Every service is designed for unique consumption. It may be stressed that goods or services cannot achieve the purpose

for which they are designed until ultimate consumers (end users) derive satisfaction that is greater or equal to the level of resources committed. Hence, both the consumer and the producer (wholesaler or retailer) aimed at unique concept called benefits. The benefit to service producer is 'profit' while it is 'veritable satisfaction' to consumer.

However, there are certain instances when satisfaction to consumer becomes evil and undesirable. This can be due to inordinate profit ambition of the seller that tends to affect consumer negatively. It is important to note that fraud committed by a particular service producer may affect numerous consumers since they (consumers) constitute a chain of end users. The point is that fraud manipulation with food consumption, particularly basic agricultural staple foods like beans or yam powder has led to lost of lives in many families in Nigeria. It was reported in the Nigerian Newspaper, THISDAY that a whole family once perished as victim of food poison (amala meal) (Awofadeji, 2008). Thus, the psychological pain resulting from such ugly act is devastating.

More importantly, the image this may portray to a nation like Nigeria can be degrading in the international scene. It may not only identify Nigeria as an underdeveloped country with increasing mortality rate, it will also indicate that food export from the country, especially agricultural items are not safe for consumption in the foreign nations. This can pose serious threat to gains that may result from agricultural produce as complement to crude oil.

Conversely, on the issue of weight and measurement fraud, consumer may be repressed under a high cost of living and hunger. In other words, a condition in which quantity of food

purchased is acutely short of its monetary value may not only promote inequality in the market situation, consumers may also develop feelings of distrust and suspicion thereby resulting to conflict situation. Thus, the quantity level of consumption may be negatively affected and may result in short fall of nutrient value in the body.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to explain the nature of sharp practices in the informal sector. The study focuses on the following specific objectives. To:

1. Examine pattern of weight and measurement cheat in selected agricultural foods.
2. Investigate perception of buyer and seller on measurement cheat.
3. Identify causes and effects of food poisoning.
4. Identify control mechanism as check to measurement cheat and food poisoning in the informal sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Food Poisoning in Nigeria

The increasing reported cases of food poisoning in the country as a result of preserving food items with harmful chemicals necessitates a new and sustainable sensitisation and education of farmers and food dealers on the danger of using harmful agrochemicals. Awofadeji (2008), stressed: worried by the prevalence and reckless sale and use of banned toxic agrochemicals nationwide for preserving foods like beans and other grains, the National Agency for Food, Drugs and Administrative Control [NAFDAC] has taken decisive steps to check the ugly practice and restore order to the non-observance of the withholding period of storage after

application of the appropriate agrochemicals before consumption of the grains. The agency's move is also meant to restore order to the chaotic agrochemicals distribution network across the country. This is an indication that cases of food poisoning is on the rise in the Nigerian market.

Reports by the world Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that at least three million cases of acute poisoning and 20,000 deaths occur annually in the world due to food exposure to pesticides (Awofadeji, 2008). The report puts: there is a rapid annual increase in sales, use and dependence on pesticides in developing countries including Nigeria. The recent rise in food prices, especially with cereal grains like rice, maize, sorghum, millet and pulses like cowpeas has increased the need for production of more food in short terms so that food is not out of the reach of the ordinary Nigerian. After production, it is estimated that up to 40 per cent of harvested food can be lost if adequate storage and preservation measures are not employed. The need to store and preserve food, which has been harvested, is therefore as important as its production.

However, the storage and preservation of grains and pulses is only valuable in meeting food storages, if after storage the harvested produce is still fit for human consumption and poses no health hazard (NAFDAC, 2008). February 2008, the House Committee on Health alerted NAFDAC of a health hazard incidence in Yobe State that was alleged to be due to the preservation of beans with chemicals. Press reports about the hospitalisation of students from Government Girls Secondary School, Doma in Gombe State, while in Cross River State, over 112 people were hospitalised with two children

allegedly died. Both incidents allegedly occurred after a meal of beans. The House Committee agreed that it is therefore important that the level of attention paid to the production of food in the field should be the same given to the product during storage because unsafe food can cause serious health problems (Awofadeji, 2008). In May 2008, NAFDAC in collaboration with CropLife Nigeria, representative of the plant science industry in the country, took a major practical step by convening a stakeholder's sensitisation workshop on "safe and responsible use of agrochemicals." The sensitisation parley was simultaneously organised in Taraba, Bauchi and Gombe States, targeting grain merchants, farmers, agricultural extension workers and other stakeholders involved in the use of agrochemicals (NAFDAC, 2008).

Addressing participants at the workshop in Gombe, the Director-General of NAFDAC, Professor Dora Akunyili vehemently warned that farmers, grain merchants and the general public should desist from using banned toxic agrochemicals such as Gammalin or overdose or wrong application of approved pesticides for preserving beans and other grains. According to her, "food poisoning arising from the consumption of beans and its products like moi-moi has become a serious health hazard which must be addressed so that it does not become like the fake drug incidence which has killed and maimed millions of Nigerians." She stressed that "seed treatment is to ensure that seeds are preserved until the next planting season whereas the grains for consumption require short term storage with different type of agrochemicals" (Akunyili, 2008).

Further, Akunyili stressed the need for all stakeholders to join hands to tackle the problems of food poisoning arising from the use of banned toxic agrochemicals for preserving beans and other grains observing that the non-observance of the withholding period of storage after application of the appropriate chemical before consumption of the grain as well as mixtures of pesticides applied at the same time could also lead to ugly situations. The major role of NAFDAC amongst other things, she pointed out, is to regulate and control the importation, exportation, manufacture, distribution, advertisement, sale and use of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, bottled water and chemicals under which Agrochemicals are considered (Akunyili, 2008).

However, THISDAY checks revealed that NAFDAC investigation into the ugly incidences of food poisoning 'killer beans' in Yobe, Cross River and Gombe States showed that the reported death of Mallam Bukar Garba was not confirmed to be due to inhalation of chemicals used to preserve the beans while in Cross River State where it was reported in March 2008 that many people in Bekwarra Local Government Area suffered from food poisoning after a meal of moi-moi and beans, NAFDAC report revealed that the offensive beans were sourced from Taraba and not Benue State as initially claimed (NAFDAC, 2008).

Subsequently, Akunyili stated thus: 'laboratory analysis reports of the moi-moi and beans from the homes of the victims and beans from the open market in Benue and Taraba State "contained outrageously high organophosphates, carbamates, fenithrothion and chloropyrifos which are highly toxic pesticides. They must have been used either higher

doses then recommended or applied wrongly' (Akunyili, 2008). In April 2008, several National dailies reported 120 students of Government Girls Secondary School, Doma in Gombe metropolis were rushed to the Gombe Specialist Hospital after consuming a meal of beans that was suspected to have been preserved with poisonous chemicals --- 10 of these students were reported to be in Critical condition. Samples of the cooked beans consumed, samples of uncooked beans, palm oil, onions, maggi, salt and other condiments used in cooking the beans were also tested in NAFDAC Laboratories to ascertain the cause of the problem. The result of the analysis showed that samples of the cooked beans and the uncooked beans contained outrageously high levels of lindane, an organ chlorinated pesticide that was banned under the 1989 Rotterdam convention. Lindane, also commonly known as Gammallin affects the nervous system producing a range of symptoms from nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness to seizures, convulsions and sometimes death (Awofadeji, 2008). Still on the case of killer bean, the analysis tested further showed that the sample of the uncooked beans also contained endosulphan in concentrations within acceptable limits. Endosulphan is a highly restricted pesticide under the Rotterdam convention, and has similar actions to Gammallin and should always be used cautiously (Awofadeji, 2008).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the havoc of food poisoning in Nigeria is colossal. Thus in this direction, NAFDAC in its commitment to enforce its mandate has put in place the statutory mechanism for the control of chemicals nationwide which include establishment of import permit procedure for the control of importation of chemicals including pesticides; chemicals monitoring division nationwide to monitor the

distribution, storage, sale and use of chemicals including pesticides; well equipped and maintained laboratories of international standards for analysis of pesticide and formulations and pesticide residue on food and chemicals manned by NAFDAC staff well trained (Akunyili, 2008). More importantly it is vivid that the case of food poisoning may not be wholesomely blamed on the seller exclusively. The fault then should be traced from the original source of supply. Though identifying who to blame or punished may not be the central parallel focus, rather finding solution must be our overriding goal.

While appealing to Agricultural extension workers, farmers, grain merchants and other stakeholders to be acquainted with the correct application of preservation chemical, NAFDAC also charged agricultural extension workers who are closest to the farmers to ensure that only registered agrochemicals are used. NAFDAC on its part will continue to use public enlightenment programmes and other regulatory measures to achieve effective control of agrochemical usage nationwide, calling on "all manufacturers and importers of agrochemicals that have not registered their products to come forward and register them " (NAFDAC, 2006). This may be administrative solution to problem of food poisoning by NAFDAC; the study shall elicit alternative solution to the foregoing problem.

Further still, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, NAFDAC intensifies effort to enlighten farmers on the dangers of applying banned agrochemicals to boost or preserve farm produce (Onwuzuligbo, 2009). For quite some time, there has been a paradigm shift by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and

Control, NAFDAC in its fight against fake drugs and unwholesome foods. The emphasis is on the regulation of agrochemicals particularly its misuse and abuse, in the storage of farm produce. The agency has embarked on an intensive enlightenment campaign to inform and educate farmers and other stakeholders in the agro business on the need to stop applying banned agrochemicals, especially pesticides in storage of farm produce. NAFDAC deputy director in charge of public relations, Abubakar Jimoh, said because of the number of casualties recorded over the years as a result of consumption of contaminated grains, the agency is leaving no stone unturned in flushing out these unscrupulous farmers who are bent on using the banned agrochemicals to boost and preserve their farm produce (Onwuzuligbo, 2009).

Abubakar disclosed that from NAFDAC, national survey, some grain merchants and marketers buy these farm produce during the peak and off seasons to create artificial scarcity. These products are then stored with banned chemicals which are injurious to consumers, as it leads to food poisoning. In his words, the agency has instances where people have been killed or hospitalised due to food poisoning. He lamented that the health consequences of consuming food contaminated by banned agrochemicals are very grave and could lead to the damage of some vital organs in the body, which might render the consumer incapacitated (Onwuzuligbo, 2009). The World Health Organisation, WHO estimates that at least three million cases of acute food poisoning and 20,000 deaths occur annually in the world due to food, exposed to pesticides. The hazardous nature of chemicals and their inherent toxicity and ability to poison makes it mandatory that the safety of the

user, populace and the environment is ensured (Onwuzuligbo, 2009).

Toxicity arising from chemicals could be acute or chronic ranging from minor discomfort to cancer, endocrine disruption, organic disorders and other effect. There have been instances of food poisoning in Nigeria. In Bekwarra local government area of Cross River State, many people have suffered from food poisoning due to indigestion of moi-moi and beans. About 112 people were hospitalised while death of two children was recorded. The moi-moi and beans were said to have contained a large dose of highly toxic pesticides such as organophosphate, carbonates, fenitrothion and chlorpyrifos. Report also has it that over 120 students of Government Girls Secondary School, Doma, in Gombe State, were rushed to Gombe Specialist Hospital after consuming a meal of beans suspected to have been preserved with poisonous chemicals (NAFDAC, 2009).

As a result of these unfortunate incidences, NAFDAC has warned farmers to stop using agro-chemicals that are not approved by the agency and desist from the dangerous practice of using gammalin to catch fish. It, however, confirmed that it has registered 301 pesticides for use by farmers, and grain merchants in the country. Some of the banned pesticides are aldrin, binapacryl, captafol, chlordane, chlordimeform, DDT, dieldrin, dinoseb, ethylene dichloride, heptachlor and lindane. Others are parathion, phosphamidon, monocrotophos, methamidophos, chlorobenzilate, toxaphene, endrin, merix endosulphan, delta HCH and ethylene oxide. The agency has since embarked on a sensitisation workshop in conjunction with an international non-governmental

organisation, NGO, called Crop Life International to enlighten grain merchants, farmers and other stakeholders on the inherent dangers of applying these banned agrochemicals to farm produce. So far, the awareness has covered states like Gombe, Ekiti, Cross River, Osun, Adamawa and Ondo (NAFDAC, 2009).

It is intended to cover all the states in the Federation. NAFDAC revealed that the sensitisation campaign is effective because there has been a reduction of food contamination. Hence, people are getting informed and educated on the need to apply the approved chemicals, adding that the campaign is gaining ground and farmers are complying with the directive. Following this development, hard times now await importers and users of these agro-chemicals. The director general of the agency, Dr. Paul Orhii has warned that anybody caught risk a jail of five to fifteen years. Farmers who use these banned agrochemicals are also liable to pay N500,000 as damages. He stressed that a task force has already been set up in all the states of the Federation to ensure that farmers comply with the directive (NAFDAC, 2009).

Conversely, it is unfortunate that the agency's law has not been reviewed with regard to banned agrochemicals. Abdul Sani, a commercial farmer at Galadimawa, a suburb of Abuja, said he only makes use of fertiliser he buys from the Federal government at a subsidised rate to boost his farm produce. Sani, who is also the secretary of Galadimawa Farmers' Association, GFA, admitted that some farmers still apply the banned agrochemicals for selfish reasons. He, however, urged those farmers who cannot afford fertiliser to make do with cow dung to enrich their farm produce (Onwuzirigbo, 2009).

Thus, until proactive steps are taken by NAFDAC with effective implementation of its laws, cases of food poisoning may assume defiant and devastating state dangerous to human health.

INSTITUTIONAL ANOMIE THEORY

The work of Steven Messner and Richard Rosenfeld (1972) in Gibbons (1979), *the institutional anomie* theory draws on control and social learning theories to explain the high crime rate in the United States. According to the theory, the high crime rate partly stems from the emphasis placed on the "American Dream". Everyone is encouraged to strive for monetary success, but little emphasis is placed on the legitimate means to achieve such success: "it's not how you play the game; it's whether you win or lose" (Steven and Messner 1972). As a consequence, many attempt to obtain money through illegitimate channels or crime. Further, the emphasis on monetary success is paralleled by the dominance of economic institutions in the United States. Other major institutions--the family, school, and the political system are subservient to economic institutions.

Noneconomic functions and roles (for example, parent, and teacher) are devalued and receive little support. Noneconomic institutions must accommodate themselves to the demands of the economy (that is parents neglect their children because of the demands of work). Moreover, economic norms have come to penetrate these other institutions (such as the school system, like the economic system, is based on the individualized competition for rewards). As a result, institutions like the family, school, and political system are

less able to effectively socialize individuals against crime and sanction deviant behavior (Steven and Messner 1972).

However, it is important to state that institutional anomie as applied to American society is also applicable to every other society, Nigeria inclusive. We must contend that voracious desire for monetary accumulation has dominated every norms of social relation thereby reducing ethical consideration to ridiculous level. The point is that most fraud perpetrated in the market place has been the reflexion of value for money and profit overriding the value for ethical sustainability and humanity. In essence, it is an absolute unfaire conduct in a market situation for consumers to suffer incidence of food poisoning or weight/measurement cheat. Although, some of the cheats experienced in the market may be due to ignorance and unintentional on the part of the distributors, one may not vindicate them absolutely from act of unlimited and endless desire for profit and wealth accumulation. Thus, this unlimited desire for economic surplus explains the central fact that underlines fraudulent practice that pervades the market place.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopts descriptive and multiple cross sectional design. It is descriptive because it intends to describe the nature and effect of fraud in the informal sector. In the same vein, it is multiple cross sectional in that two samples (consumer and seller) survey constitute unit of analysis and selection of respondents was done only once. Survey design was used.

Study Population

The population of the study comprised consumers (end users) and sellers. The respondents (consumers and sellers) cut across educated and non educated participants. The reason for selecting consumers and sellers is that they are most suitable to provide answers to questions raised in the study. Agricultural food such as beans, rice and yam powder were selected for study.

Sample Size and Sampling techniques

The sample size of the study consisted of one hundred fifty (150) respondents. The sample survey was conducted among buyers. Also, twenty (20) respondents of sellers were selected purposive.

Multistage sampling technique was adopted. This comprised purposive, cluster, quota, simple random and convenience sampling techniques. Purposive and quota sampling techniques were applied in the selection of seller. In this case, the 20 sample was divided into equal ratio, selecting 10 sellers of beans and 10 sellers of yam powder. Also, cluster, simple random and convenience sampling techniques were conducted in the selection of buyers. Bodija market is the largest market in Ibadan. The market was divided into ten clusters according to the street lanes that the market was originally labeled. Each cluster was a composition of 15 units. Simple random was applied to select 5 units from each of the ten clusters. A total of 50 units in Bodija market were selected. Subsequently, 30 respondents were selected from each unit and this summed up to 150 sample.

Method and Instrument of Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were adopted. Quantitative method collected quantitative data and this is presented in the form of frequencies and percentages and other statistical methods. Qualitative method collected qualitative data and they were presented in the form of *prose or written words*. Basically, questionnaire was used as research instrument to collect quantitative data from consumers (buyers) in Bodija market. Also, In-depth Interviews (IDIs) collected qualitative data from sellers.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were adopted. Quantitative data were analysed through the application of descriptive statistics consisting frequency and percentage, tables and cross tabulations. Qualitative method was used to analyse qualitative data. This was done through content analysis.

DATA RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion of Socio-demographic Characteristics

The role of socio-economic or demographic factors in shaping responses to substantive issues in research can not be overemphasised. This is due to its influence on respondents' tendency to perceive the social world as a reflexion of their social background.

Table 4.1.0: Distribution of Respondents on Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	45	32.1
Female	95	67.9
Total	140	100.0
Educational status	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	28	20.0
OND/NCE	38	27.1
B.sc/HND	36	25.7
Master/Ph.D	140	100.0
Total		
Income (monthly)	Frequency	Percentage
#1000-10000	21	15.0
#11,000-20,000	92	65.7
#21,000-30,000	11	7.9
31,000-40,000	16	11.4
Total	140	100.0
Family	Frequency	Percentage
Polygamy	61	43.6
Monogamy	79	56.4
Total	140	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-24	17	12.1
25-34	23	16.4
35-44	69	49.3
45-54	12	13.6
55 above	19	8.6
Total	140	100.0
Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	109	77.9
Islam	30	21.4
Traditional	1	6.7
Total	140	100.0

Source: field survey, 2010

The table above shows that more female (67.9%) than male (32.1%) respondents supplied information relevant to the study. This may not be unconnected with the nature of the study, as women are often prevalent in market for the purpose of domestic function of family sustenance with respect to cooking. The study also shows high level of education among respondents. That is respondents with postgraduate qualification is (25.7%) and secondary qualification is (20.0%). It can be stated that the nearness of the market to the University of Ibadan community is significant to high level of literacy observed among the respondents. Furthermore, the level of income is encouraging as respondents with #20,000 monthly income represents highest (65.7%) level. In addition, the point of educational qualification may be significant to the observed level of income. The information provided by socio-economic features shows that ages 35-44 (49.3%) represent the bulk of research respondents, while on religious affiliation, most respondents (77.9%) were identified with Christian faith. The indication is that most individuals that supplied information in the study were adults.

PATTERN OF WEIGHT AND MEASUREMENT CHEAT

The research objective in focus on this section is evaluation of patterns or methods in weight and measurement cheat. The goal of this objective is to uncover different tricks by which sellers perpetrate act of dishonesty as suspected by buyers.

Table 4.2.1: Distribution of Responses by Pattern of Weight and Measurement Cheat

Consumers of beans and yam powder	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	122	87.1
No	18	12.9
Total	140	100.0
Level of consumption of the identified food items	Frequency	Percentage
Low	68	39.3
High	140	100.0
Total		
Bulk purchase of food items	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	51.4
No	68	48.6
Total	140	100.0
Weight and measurement dishonesty	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	118	84.3
No	22	15.7
Total	140	100.0
Possibility of eradicating measurement cheat	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	33.6
No	140	100.0
Total		

Source: field survey, 2010

The information provided in the above table indicates that most respondents (87.1%) were identified with consumption of beans and yam powder as the level of consumption of the food items is low (60.7%). The indication is that though most consumers tend to have consumption interest for beans/yam powder, there are other sources of food supplement to the respondents. This can be linked to faire level of income observed. However, on the aspect of dishonesty associated with sales of the agricultural food items, it was reported that most respodents (84.3%) perceived a high level of cheat and trick associated with the sales. Thus, on the pattern or

method involved in act of dishonesty perpetrated by sellers, the views of discussant consumers reflect this direction:

What they (sellers) do in achieving their dubious act is that they boil the measurement module (kongo) in order to reduce the size. Some carefully cut the edge of the kongo. At times some sellers measure the beans quickly in order to short change consumer. Some manufacturers equally assist sellers to produce smaller size of kongo which does not measure up to the original size.

Follow up to the foregoing explanation, the effort of the study to provide constructive answer to research question 'patterns involved in measurement cheat' is successfully achieved. However, in the effort of uncovering the causes of the act, some crucial factors were identified by consumers. As put in the responses of discussant buyers:

The major reason is that there is high level of poverty in the land, which has affected the thinking of every person including the sellers. Greediness is a major factor. People want to get rich quick and hot. There is high level of illitracy among sellers, which is making them to lose knowledge of ethic in business. The mentality of abnormal profit is a major problem. There is lack of government's agency monitoring market to maintain standard. Transportation cannot be exempted from the cause.

In order to identify possible solution to the problem observed, the study extracted information from discussants thus:

There is need for stability of the economy if we must fight fraud in our society. Our infrastructure must be put in place and function consistently. The role of government through its agencies cannot be undermined. There is need for uniform measurement module which must be thoroughly inspected by government and union official. Education for sellers on need for good ethics is important. Punishment must be activated for defaulters.

It is obvious from the responses that the sales of food items are not usually free from dishonest act of sellers. The patterns involved in the cheat were successfully uncovered by buyers. Hence, since there is hope for its control the basis of emphasis is that concerted effort must be concentrated towards achieving the solution. It must be stated that the views of consumers relating to measurement cheat corroborate with existing literatures in reference to compromise of standards in Nigeria. As indicated in the earlier review of literature, the role of the Standards Organization of Nigeria was seriously criticised. In other words, rather than upholding acceptable standard, vanguards of this agency subjected themselves to intimidation of corruption, nepotism, and negligence of duty. The result is the ultimate price paid by the powerless. The point is that government agency such as SON that ought to collaborate with non-governmental organizations to protect consumers has not lived up to

expectation. The critiques of SON must be faire in their analyses since evaluation of such organization has brought little impact on people as indicated in the empirical survey. However, one may not condem the role of SON in absolute term, what is important is to extend their fuctional duty to cover the informal sector. Moreover, sellers should be encouraged to imbibe the culture of justice and faireness in their transcation. This must operate wiythin the model of criminal elite, with emphasis placed on fraud educaton.

PERCEPTION OF BUYER AND SELLER ON MEASUREMENT CHEAT

The central focus of the objective is to evaluate knowledge and awareness of both buyer and seller to identified fraud (measurement cheat) in the market. The ultimate goal is to uncover the level of consciousness among buyers on dishonest act of unscrupulous sellers.

Table 4.3.1: Distribution of responses on consumer knowledge and awareness of dishonest act in the sales of agricultural food items

Regular consumer in Bodija market	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	134	95.7
No	6	4.3
Total	140	100.0
Type of food consumed	Frequency	Percentage
Beans/rice/yam	44	31.4
Yam flower	25	17.9
Fish pepper/ingredient	18	12.9
Cassava flour	18	12.9
All kinds of foods	35	25.0
Total	140	100.0
Honesty in sales	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	6.4

No	131	93.6
Total	140	100.0
Magnitude of cheating	Frequency	Percentage
Minor	47	33.6
Major	93	66.4
Total	140	100.0
Awareness of seller(s) to the fraud	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	65	46.4
No	75	53.6
Total	140	100.0
Compensation to victim of fraud	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	35.7
No	90	64.3
Total	140	100.0

Source: field survey, 2010

The information above is an extract from consumers' responses on knowledge and awareness of fraudulent act of sellers, especially with reference to sales of agricultural foods. The information indicates that most consumers (95.1%) that responded to research question were regular buyers in Bodija market. The range of food items mostly consumed by these respondents includes beans, rice, yam/cassava flour, ingredients, and all kind of agricultural foods. However, beans or yam/rice (31.4%) constitutes the commonest type of food. On the basis of seller honesty in the sales of the identified agricultural items, it is obvious from the responses collected that there is suspected level of fraud as most consumers (93.6%) validate its existence in the market. Furthermore, most respondents (66.4%) were of the view that the level of suspected fraud is major. As put by a consumer discussant:

I once bought yam flour that was mixed with another substance, which was not noticeable

at the point of sales. All my children inclusive myself that ate the yam flour was stooling, and we were all admitted into a government hospital. The money I spent was very enomous.

This is an indication that the effect of dishonesty, particularly with agricultural item can be devastating, hence the need for its urgent control. This aptly supports the view of NAFDAC that the effect of dishonesty associated with agricultural items is devastating in the Nigeria context. Until action is initiated and effectively executed, Nigerinas are at high risk of health hazard. However, on the aspect of investigating whether consumers informed the sellers of the sharp practice suspected, high percentage of respondents (53.6%) did not border to report the case. In order to discover the reason for concealing the information from sellers, discussant consumers put their views thus:

I do not bother to report because I am always busy. Time does not permit. For me, I often suspect the fraud; but I decide to leave everything to God. If you report to them (sellers), they never agree. At times, the seller may begin to fight you if you are not careful.

Thus, the scenerio provided by respodents is that there is no working system in which complaint can be effective and acheive its objectives. One important factor identified in the review of literature on Consumer Protection Council is the inability of complainers to get redress for their action or lack of funding to channel their case. The indication is that many poor Nigerians are incapacitated to initiate action against

injustice done to them. In this wise, it becomes the duty of CPC to protect and give justice to the poor consumers. However, in order to correct and check the perceived level of confidence often exercised by unscrupulous sellers, the opinions of respondent reflect this:

There is need for seller association to take responsibility in advancing stiffer punishment for erring sellers. Government has responsibility through its agencies such as consumer protection council (CPC).

Therefore, based on the responses of consumers, it can be inferred that the level of suspected fraud in the market is high particularly with sales of agricultural items. The reality of the situation is that though victim consumers report the fraud, perpetrators tend to reject the existence of such crime. In this wise, it must be stated that since there is existence of fraud with sales of agricultural items; there is need for all stakeholders comprising government, sellers through their association and even consumers to take proactive step toward its eradication, if human society must be a better havens. In particular, the role of CPC must be affirmative and resounding to sustain healthy society. In reference to ethical factor stated in the literature, until such ethical attitude prevails, one may not be certain if such fraudulent act can be abated.

Table 4.3.2: Distribution of sellers' perception of dishonest act in the market

Knowledge and awareness of cheat	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	80.0
No	4	20.0
Total	20	100.0
Existence of seller association	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	95.0
No	1	5.0
Total	20	100.0
Existence of consumer cheating settled by seller association	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	20.0
No	16	80.0
Total	20	100.0
Compensation or redress to victim consumer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	10.0
No	18	90.0
Total	20	100.0

Source: field survey, 2010

The distribution above is an effort to establish the awareness of sellers to type of fraud suspected by buyers. It is obvious that most sellers (80.0%) approached for information confirmed the existence of fraud perpetrated by unscrupulous sellers. As put by a discussant seller:

We cannot dispute that some sellers are dishonest, particularly those that sell beans, rice, yam/cassava powder and other agricultural items. For example, some of them may mix yam flour with other substance. Some even carefully cut the edge of the kongo measurement. The beans seller for example, may sell the wrong type of beans if you are not vigilant. For instance, we have

types of beans that we sell. It differs in prices. Some sellers may deceive you to sell low quality for high price.

Furthermore, the information supplied by sellers indicates that there are certain cases of suspected fraud, which were settled by the association in the past as few respondents (20.0%) confirmed. The indication is that, though the power of association may be limited in checking and sanctioning members for case of dishonesty, it can be inferred that when the power of such association is supported and complemented by governmental effort success will be ascertained for market sanity. It is clear from the distribution in the table that the level of compensation (10.0%) is low for victim of fraud. This means, large percentage of victims who complain to either the sellers or their association were not given redress.

However, in order to seek for solution to suspected fraud committed in the market, many sellers responded thus:

To fight fraud starts with association. Our association should be empowered to punish any erring seller. They should not take side. Let every buyer come to market with his or her kongo measurement. There is need for better transportation system in order to ease prices. There is need for education and enlightenment or workshop for sellers to uphold good ethics. There is need for fear of God in all we do that should be promoted in church and mosque.

Therefore, it follows from the preceding analysis that to combat fraud in the market, union and government have role

to play. Ultimately, since there is confirmation of fraud perpetrated by sellers, it is strongly stipulated that appropriate sanctions must be established for the culprit. Moreover, one point must be clear that not only sellers should be focussed in the combat against fraud. The primary source from which sellers get their supplies must also be duely controlled. As indicated in the literature, most of the incident of poisoning is a result of preservative chemicals applied that are dangerous to human helath. This is aptly due to act of unscrupulous farmers desperate for high productivity. The campagn against fraud in the informal market place must be all encompassing in nature to achieve result.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF FOOD POISONING

The goal of the objective is to examine cause and effect of food poisoning. It is important to note that cases of food poisoning have been on the increase particularly with agricultural items. Hence, the objective of the study is to know the cause and profer possible solution.

Table 4.4.1: Distribution of respondents' views by the causes and effect of food poisoning

Knowledge of food poisoning	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	131	93.6
No	9	6.4
Total	140	100.0
Level of poisoning with agricultural foods	Frequency	Percentage
High	108	77.1
Low	32	22.9
Total	140	100.0
Poisoning common with beans and yam powder	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	114	81.4
No	26	18.6
Total	140	100.0
Victim to poisoning	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	20.0
No	112	80.0
Total	140	100.0
Effect of poisoning	Frequency	Percentage
Minor	115	82.1
Major	25	17.9
Total	140	100.0
Compensation for damage resulting from poisoning	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	3	2.1
No	137	97.9
Total	140	100.0

Source: field survey, 2010

The result in the table above indicates that most consumer respondents (93.6%) have the knowledge and awareness of food poisoning. In the words of consumer discussants:

Food poisoning is substance that harms victim. It indicates killer food. It is food that has been contaminated from source. Often, any food that one eats which damages one's health or causes injury to one's body can be called food poisoning.

It must be stated that the high knowledge of poisoning demonstrated by the respondents is not unconnected with the level of educational status of research participants. On the basis of prevalence of poisoning with agricultural items, it is vivid that the level is high (77.1%) with agricultural foods. Particularly, beans and yam powder were reportedly frequent (81.4%) to poisoning. The reasons for prevalence of poisoning with agricultural foods were given by discussants thus:

The type of fertilizer used for planting may contain chemicals poisonous to human health. Some foods were preserved with chemicals, which can be dangerous to health. Often time, the smuggling into market of the chemically preserved grains meant for planting is a major cause. Some foods such as yam powder are mixed with other substance harmful to health. The misuse of disinfectants for food storage is a cause.

Hence, it can be stated that most cases of food poisoning are man made which often originates from the source of supply. This accurately supports the view of NAFDAC in the literature review that most cases of food poisoning is a result of chemical substances used for food storage, most of which are contraband. However, the information supplied by respondents shows that at least (20.0%) of consumers were once victim to poisoning as (17.9%) affirmed the effect as major. In the words of discussant victims:

I lost two of my children to food poisoning after eating amala (yam flour) meal. It is very painful and heart breaking. I can recall my experience some years back after eating beans suspected to contain

poison. It was a hell in life; I almost lost my life; the hospital bill was devastating; we needed to borrow to settle the bill.

The indication from the responses of victims is a demonstration that effect of food contamination can be very deadly and devastating. As reported by NAFDAC, thousands of Nigerians are at risk of food poisoning. Until unscrupulous farmers are made to face the rot of the law, incident of poisoning with agricultural item may persist. Thus, checking or controlling poisoning, discussant respondents suggest:

There must be adequate knowledge about preservation method. Strict monitoring of grains in the Nigerian market to satisfy the safety; farmers should be more enlightened on the use of chemical or fertilizer; serminal for public to create awareness; and education for sellers.

Therefore, it follows from above opinions that when necessary considerations are given to actualization of suggested solution to poisoning, the problem can be effectively tackled and controlled. Since victims of poisoning are given little or no compensation for damage as reported (2.1%), necessary tool must be put in place to protect human life. The role of NAFDAC must be affirmative and complemented by other agencies to achieve land mark result.

MEASUREMENT CHEAT AND FOOD POISONING AND CONTROL MECHANISM

This objective seeks to identify workable solution and control mechanism for fraud, particularly weight and measurement cheat, and food poisoning.

Table 4.5.1: Distribution of respondents' views by mechanism of control for food poisoning and dishonest act

Possibility of fraud control	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	79	56.4
No	61	43.6
Total	140	100.0
Control mechanism for fraud	Frequency	Percentage
Government intervention	29	20.7
The media	54	38.6
Consumer protection council (CPC)	32	22.9
Empowerment of association	25	17.9
Total	140	100.0
Consumer role significant to fraud control	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	134	95.7
No	6	4.3
Total	140	100.0

Source: field survey, 2010

The information represented in the table above is an indication that fraud suspected with sales of agricultural items can be checked and controlled as most respondents (56.4%) affirmed the possibility. Hence, the possible mechanisms of control are identified as government intervention, the media, seller association, and consumer protection council. In the words of discussant consumers:

There is need for consumer protection council to extend its campaigns on radio and television. Most of its (CPC) offices are not accessible to complainants. The media can help by creating awareness of consumers to poisonous foods. Government should empower National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to extend their coverage to agricultural raw foods. Association of seller should be more

proactive and punish appropriately any failing member without fear or favour. There is need for government to set up committee to protect consumer interest.

Furthermore, it is apparent from information collected that the consumer has role to play, if measurement cheat and food poisonings must be controlled. Hence, most consumers studied (95.7%) affirmed the significant role of consumers. As put by discussants:

Every victim consumer must always report act of fraud suspected from sellers. It is required that we do not just buy things anywhere. Consumer should be sensitive to tricks of sellers. We must insist on correct size of kongo for measurement. There must be collectivity in the fight.

Therefore, since the fight against measurement cheat and food poisoning is the role of all, it can be stated that there is hope for sanity and safety with agricultural food consumption. NAFDAC has taken giant step in curbing food poisoning and protect consumers. It is apparent in the literature reviewed that punitive measure has been put in place by the food agency to bring to book any erring farmer. It must be emphasised that most cases of food poisoning has been alluded to negligence of farmers whose inordinate ambitions subject consumer to hell. In the effort to sanitise the system, NAFDAC has taken a giant stride at policing every grain released to Nigerian market for safety. The role of CPC cannot also be taken for granted. There is need to maintain standard both in measurement module and quality. Thus, the

function of these two organizations, NAFDAC and CPC should be sustained for safety of Nigerian consumers

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central conclusion revolves the objectives of the study. Hence, having established dimensions to measurement fraud and cause of food poisoning, the study holds that agricultural foods are vulnerable to manipulations that can be devastating to human health. This may not be unconnected with the fact that most of our markets have little or no workable instrument of control. This in effect facilitates the ease of greedy individuals to launch their inordinate desire for profit. That is with no limited boundary. What becomes the fate of innocent consumers is the survival of the fittest.

Therefore, on this context the study recommends the following:

- a. Government should begin to see reason to empower its consumer protection agency in order to extend its coverage to agricultural foods items. The point is that such agency must have task force that inspects the sales of raw foods either on interval or regular basis.
- b. The association of sellers must be proactive and cooperative in the struggle against dishonesty in the sales of agricultural items. This association must see the need to punish every erring member. Most importantly, there is need to organise seminar or workshop for sellers on ethics and code of conduct in sales of food items. This must be strongly facilitated by union.
- c. The role of the media must be seen as important as the function of government agency. The media should help create awareness to any suspected poisonous agricultural grains/food smuggled into the Nigerian

market. This can help trap the multiplier effect of possible outbreak of the poison.

- d. The role of consumers is important in the fight to sustain sanity and justice in the market place. The point is that let every consumer insists on quality and standard. Since the study reveals high level of consumer knowledge to dishonest act of sellers, it follows that necessary complaint must be made to appropriate channel. Therefore, when every instance of fraudulent act is acknowledged to right punitive agency or body and punishment is duly awarded, the tendency for its persistence would be low and controllable.

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