Entrepreneurial Skills Required By Youths for Watermelon (Citrullus Lanatus) Production: A Panacea to Unemployment Challenges in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study was carried out to identify the entrepreneurial skills required by youths for watermelon (Citrullus lanatus) production as a panacea to unemployment challenges in Ondo State, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 76; made up of 32 teachers of agricultural science in secondary schools, 28 registered watermelon farmers and 16 agricultural extension agents from eight agricultural zones in the state. The entire population constituted the sample because of the small size. Three sets of questionnaire containing 59 entrepreneurial skills items were developed and used to collect data. The questionnaire had a 4-point response scale of Highly Required, Averagely Required, Slightly Required and Not Required. The instrument was validated by experts, from the Vocational Teacher Education Department (Agricultural Education Unit) and the Department of Crop Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the questionnaires was established using Crobanch Alpha reliability formula to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Seventy six (76) copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents. All were retrieved. Mean and Standard Deviation were used for data analysis. The findings showed that youths in Ondo State required 59 major entrepreneurial skills for effective watermelon production. Objectively, the study identified the entrepreneurial skills needed for planning, preplanting, planting, post-planting, packaging and marketing of watermelon fruits to train and reduce unemployment challenges in Ondo State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the identified the entrepreneurial skills should be incorporated into the curriculum of the Skill Acquisition Centers Schools and Colleges by federal, state government, and training institutes to train youths in order to empower them and reduce unemployment challenges in Ondo State and Nigeria in general.

Keywords: entrepreneurial skills, youths, unemployment challenges, water melon production, secondary school leavers, planting operations.

INTRODUCTION
Watermelon (citrullus lanatus) is a fruit vegetable. Watermelon, according to Darin (2003) originated in Africa. It was first cultivated in Egypt where statements to its legacy was recorded in hieroglyphics painted on building walls. The author noted that this fruit was held in such high regard that it was placed in the tombs of many Egyptian kings. Watermelon as explained by Wikipedia (2013) belongs to the family Cucurbitaceae. It is a vine like (scrambler and trailer) flowering plants. The watermelon fruit is a berry which has a thick rind (exocarp) and fleshy centre (mesocarp). The centre is juicy and sweet usually red or pink but sometimes orange, yellow and even green if not ripe. It has a smooth exterior rind (exocarp) which is green or yellow. Watermelon is propagated by seed. It has many varieties. The varieties are the Carolina cross with red flesh, the Yellow crimson with yellow flesh, the Orangeglo with sweet orange, the Moon and stars with purple flesh, the Melitopolski and the Densuke. Other popular varieties are Charleston grey, Congo, Sugar bay and ice box. Depending on varieties, watermelon takes between 80 to 100 days from planting to maturity (Wikipedia, 2013).

Darin stated that watermelon has extremely high water content, approximately 92% thereby making it a thirst-quenching fruit. According to him, watermelon has many uses in terms of its nutritional values and health benefits. It is effective in promoting intestinal elimination, keeping the body free from toxic wastes. It is an excellent food for weight loss. The alkalizing effect maintains the acid – alkaline balance in the body, neutralizing the toxic condition of the body resulting from excess intake of acid forming foods. Its cleansing and natural diuretic effect is totally healing for kidney and bladder problems. Watermelon is a source of potent carotene antioxidant and lycopene. The powerful antioxidant travels through the body neutralizing free radicals that cause a great deal of damage in the body. They
Entrepreneurial skills in the opinion of Meredith, (1995) are young people of 15-24 years bracket. This study sought to identify entrepreneurial skills required by youths in: Planning and pre-planting operations of watermelon production enterprise, Planting and post-planting operations of watermelon production enterprise and Harvesting, packaging and marketing of watermelon fruits to reduce youth unemployment problem in Ondo State. Specific research questions guided the study:

1. Planning and pre-planting operations of watermelon production enterprise?
2. Planting and post-planting operations of watermelon production enterprise?
3. Harvesting, packaging and marketing of watermelon fruits to reduce youth unemployment problem in Ondo State?

METHODOLOGY
The design adopted for this study was a survey research design. Survey research design according to Olaitan, Ali, Eyoh and Sowande (2000), is a plan, structure, strategy that the investigator wants to adopt in order to obtain solution to research problems using questionnaire or interview in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. Therefore, the design is appropriate for this study because it collected data from the respondents through the use of questionnaire and the data were analyzed.

The study was carried out in Ondo State, Nigeria made up of nine (9) agricultural zones. Specifically, eight agricultural zones were used, leaving behind one agricultural zone which is in riverine area. The population of the study was 76, made up of 32 teachers of agricultural science, 28 registered watermelon farmers and 16 agricultural extension agents in Ondo State. The entire population constituted the sample for the study.

INSTRUMENTATION
Three (3) sets of questionnaire were the instrument used for eliciting responses from the respondents. It contained 59 entrepreneurial skill items which was developed from literature reviewed. The questionnaire adopted a four point response scale of Highly required (HR), Averagely required (AR), Slightly required (SR), and Not required (NR), with a corresponding value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Experts validated the instrument from the Department of Vocational Teacher Education (Agricultural Education Unit) and the Department of Crop Science validated the instrument used Crobanch alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Eight research assistants, one from each agricultural zone, who were familiar with the area of study were hired and were instructed on how to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. 76 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents. The entire 76 copies of their questionnaire were retrieved and used for data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS
The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.
1. Where the mean value of any item is 2.50 or above, the item was regarded as being Required; where the item had a mean value less than 2.50, the item was regarded as Not Required.
2. Where the standard deviation of the item was less than 1.96, it indicates that the respondents were close to the mean and not too far from one another in their opinion.

DISCUSSION
The result of the study revealed that the respondents (Teacher of Agricultural science, Watermelon farmers and Extension agents agreed that all the nineteen (19) entrepreneurial skill items in planning and pre-planting (9 skills in planning and 10 skills in pre-planting operations) of watermelon production were required by youths as a panacea to unemployment problem in Ondo state. The entrepreneurial skills required in planning include: formulate specific objectives for watermelon production, review the objectives periodically, budget for watermelon production among others. The findings are in agreement with that of Ukonze (2010), who conduct a study on vegetable production skills needed by instructors in universities for effective teaching of vegetable crop in Enugu State where it was found out that in planning a farm enterprise, the instructors should formulate objectives for vegetable production, review the objectives periodically and budget for various required for vegetable production.

The findings of this study on pre-planting operation of Watermelon production showed that the youths required entrepreneurial skills in clearing the weed on the selected site, pack and burn dry weeds on farmland, till the soil with appropriate tools, select appropriate cultivar for planting among others. The findings are in consonance with the findings of Ogungbade, Alkali and Ibekwe (2010) in a study on work skills required by secondary school graduates for entry into groundnut production enterprise in Kaduna State where they found out that secondary school graduates required work skills in clearing the acquired land, gather and burn debris, till the land and select good quality seeds for planting.

The findings of this study revealed that the youths required all the 26 entrepreneurial skills in planting and post-planting operations for watermelon production. (8 entrepreneurial skills in planting and 18 in post-planting operations), the skills in planting include maintain approximately 1.5 to 2 pounds (0.68-0.91kg) of seeds per hectare, break up large dumps of soil, plant seeds at 2-5 cm planting depth, put 2 to 3 seeds per hole among others. These findings are in line with the findings of Oketobo, Lawal and Onipede (2011), in a study on entrepreneurial skills required by graduates of schools of Agriculture for commercial cucumber production in South West Nigeria where they found out that graduates of schools of agriculture required entrepreneurial skills in maintaining approximately 0.68-0.91kg of seeds per hectare, sow 2 to 3 seeds per hole, and sow seeds at 2-5 cm sowing depth. Their findings on this study on post-planting operations of watermelon showed that the youths required
entrepreneurial skills in weeding the farm twice after planting, spray insecticide to reduce insect vectors, apply N.P.K fertilizer based on the need among others. The findings of the study are in agreement with the findings of Asogwa and Ohagwu (2010), who conducted a study on professional skills capacity building needs of teachers of agriculture for the effective teaching of vegetable production to students of Colleges of Education in South East Nigeria where they found out that teachers of agriculture in South East Nigeria needed professional skills in weeding the farm regularly, applying fertilizer to the farm and controlling pests and diseases among others.

The findings of this study further revealed that all the 14 identified entrepreneurial skills in harvesting, packaging and marketing, (3 entrepreneurial skills in harvesting, 5 entrepreneurial skills in packaging and 6 entrepreneurial skills in marketing) of watermelon fruits were required by youths as a panacea to unemployment problem in Ondo State. The findings of the study are in consonance with the findings of Oketoobo, Lawal and Onipede (2010), in a study on entrepreneurial skills required by graduates of schools of agriculture for commercial cucumber production in South West Nigeria where they found out that graduates of schools of agriculture required skills will be useful in the training of the unemployed youths who otherwise could be tempted to go into various forms of social ills such as house-breaking, armed robbery, rape, political thugery, car-snatching, kidnapping among others. The study identified the entrepreneurial skills required by youths for cultivating, managing, packaging and marketing operations as a panacea to solving unemployment challenges among youths and unemployed individuals in all states of the country where watermelon could be cultivated.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that

1. The identified entrepreneurial skills for watermelon production should be incorporated into the Training Modules of the Skills Acquisition Centers in Ondo State and all states of the federation including all Training institutes to enhance effective training of young entrepreneurs to reduce unemployment challenges.

2. Processing of watermelon into Juice and salad fruits salad should be encouraged among youths in all state where the fruit is cultivated.

3. All secondary schools should be encouraged to go into large scale watermelon production.

4. Entrepreneurs should be raised in the production, processing and marketing its products in all states of the federation where the crop could be cultivated.

REFERENCES


