

**MARKET DYNAMICS FOR COWPEAS: WEIGHT AND  
MEASUREMENT ISSUES IN KUTO MARKET, ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA.**

**BY**

**I. A. AYINDE**

**Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management,  
University of Agriculture, PMB 2240, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
E-mail: [idrisayinde@hotmail.com](mailto:idrisayinde@hotmail.com)**

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BUILDING A FOOD MARKETING POLICY EVIDENCE BASE IN NIGERIA**

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 General Context of the Study**

Over the years, marketing of agricultural output is seen as one of the most important factors affecting agricultural production in Nigeria because the typical small farmer plans his current production on the marketing experience of his previous farm output. The dynamics of food marketing is changing rapidly with increasing urbanisation and involvement of more key institutions in the performance of agricultural markets (Dipeolu *et. al.*, 2000). It is clear that the market dynamics for agricultural products vary with different agricultural product; hence, policies aimed at improving the markets for agricultural products need to take cognisance of these variations when handling various marketing issues. The lack of specific knowledge and understanding of existing formal and informal market institutions in urban Nigeria and their impact on the urban food systems forms the kernel of this research.

This study was carried out in line with the assertion of Porter *et. al.* (2004) on the need to understand how food marketing systems operate in order to assist and support the growing number of urban and peri-urban food producers and producer- marketers; who commonly wish to access established urban food marketing systems. The study focussed on the market dynamics for cowpeas; with emphasis on weight and measures in Kuto market located in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study assesses the marketing chains for cowpeas from sources to the final destination, describes the gender/ethnic composition of selected key actors/intermediaries (wholesalers and retailers) in cowpeas market and examines the issues surrounding weights and measures in the cowpeas market.

#### Study Area

Ogun State, created in 1976 is located in the southwest Nigeria, with the predominant agro-ecological zones being rain forest and derived savannah vegetation. It is also characterized by bimodal rainfall, which provides a favourable ecology for both early and late season cropping. The State has a total of twenty (20) Local Government Areas (LGAs) on a land area of 16,409.26 square kilometres. It has a total population of 2,338,570 people (CBN, 2003); with females accounting for 1,193,663, which constitutes 51.04% of the total population while males account for 1,144,907 people (48.96%). Abeokuta, the capital city of the state is predominantly an urban settlement where cowpeas produced in other parts of the country is consumed as an important supplement for animal protein particularly among the poor. Abeokuta boasts of three major markets (*Lafenwa, Omida and Kuto*) for cowpeas; Kuto market was focused on in this study.

#### Kuto Market

Kuto market is an urban market located in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. It is a daily (attracting estimated buyers of 2,000 people) as well as a 5-day market (attracting estimated buyers of 5,000 people). It is a well-laid out market along the link road to Lagos State, the former capital city of Nigeria. It is strategically located close to two major hotels in the town, the Federal Secretariat and a Government Reserved Area which serves as the

residence for rich elites in the town. It has a good network of roads; it is accessed through a major dual-carriage road which serves as a link to another dual-carriage road that leads out of the state. It is widely patronised by the rich and the poor who purchase various array of (agricultural and industrial) commodities from the market. Cowpeas features as one of the key agricultural products marketed in Kuto market.

## **1.2 General Characteristics of the Selected Commodity Chain**

Large scale production of cowpeas is mainly carried out in the northern part of the country, although its production is a common phenomenon in the cropping system of some farmers in Ogun State as a way of meeting the farm family needs as well as supplementing supplies from the market (Ayinde, 2004). This study found out that all the traders marketing cowpeas purchase outside the state; mainly Bodija market in Ibadan, Oyo State, which is a major assembly market for cowpeas in the southwest. Table 1 indicates the general characteristics of cowpea marketing chain in Kuto market.

## **2.0 STUDY FOCUS**

### **2.1 Components of Cowpea Marketing Chain**

This study focussed on the key intermediaries/ actors in the marketing chain of cowpeas especially the wholesalers and the retailers. These actors operate within the market conditions needed for cowpea marketing. Allied to these is the issue of measurement and weight; which is a key variable in the marketing chain of cowpea in the study area especially as they relate to accessibility of market operators to cowpea based on their economic wherewithal.

### **2.2 Understanding Market Access and Supply of Food to the Urban and Rural Poor through Measurement and Weight Issues**

Cowpeas as a food source provides the cheapest protein supplement to the urban and rural poor in Nigeria. An extremely important issue to note is the sheer deficiency of urban diets in relation to the nutritional needs and the impact of this on people's health (Porter *et. al.*, 2004). This is particularly so in Nigeria given the general rising poverty levels of both the urban and rural poor (Ayinde *et. al.*, 2002). This has affected the protein intake of most Nigerians. The eating habits of most poor people thus revolve round cowpea consumption in many forms; either through direct cooking of cowpeas, processing into *akara* (cowpeas cake), *moin-moin*, etc. or as component of other meals, as in cowpeas soup, rice and cowpeas, etc. The versatility of cowpeas in this respect makes it a component of the food consumed at least thrice in a week by most households in the study area.

Table 1: General characteristics of cowpea marketing chain in Kuto market, Abeokuta, Ogun State

Key Actors	Local Term	Role	Gender	Ethnic Group	Relative Wealth/Poverty
Wholesalers	<i>Alajapa, Onisowo lapolapo</i>	Buy in bulk and sell to retailers and other intermediate purchasers	Women; married and spinsters. Men; married - bachelors	Yoruba, Binis, Igbos and Hausas	Relatively rich.
Drivers	<i>Awako/Onimoto</i>	Transport cowpea from purchase location to the market.	Men; married - bachelors	Yoruba	Rich-Poor. Some own the vehicle while some drive for other owners.
Loaders	<i>Alaarw/Alabaru</i>	Head-loading of cowpeas in bags from vehicles to designated shops of sellers and to customers cars or taxis	Men, youths.	Yoruba, Hausas	Poor. Live on daily wages or charges from load carried.
Retail Traders	<i>Alarobo, Elewa</i>	Break bulk. Sell to consumers, restaurant owners.	Women, Few men: Married	Yoruba, Igbos, Hausas	Relatively Poor
Consumers	<i>Onibara</i>	Buy cowpeas for household needs	Women, Men, Youths: married and single	Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Binis, etc.	Poor – Rich
Restaurant/ <i>Bukateria</i> Owners	<i>Onibara, Elewa</i>	Sell cowpeas in cooked form	Women; married - spinsters	Yoruba	Relatively Poor
Trader Associations	<i>Egbe Elewa</i>	Dictates prices, Legislation.	Women	Yoruba	Poor – Rich
Local Government/ State Agencies	<i>Ijoba ibile / ijoba ipinle</i>	Revenue collection, Control, Measures and standards	Men	Yoruba	Rich
Security outfit	<i>Olopa, Olode</i>	Maintains law and order, Guard shops	Men	Yoruba, Hausa	Poor

Source: Field survey, 2005

Marketing systems do not operate in a vacuum. They are influenced by such economic factors as consumer's income, his propensity to consume and save among others. Cowpeas as a food crop has inelastic demand with respect to price, therefore, consumer's income is particularly important in this respect because it determines how much of cowpeas to purchase *ceteris paribus*. Furthermore, the increasing inflation rate in Nigeria from 6.9% in 2000 to 18.9% in 2002 further decreased the marginal propensity to consume animal protein and a situation whereby cowpea was seen as a probable avenue of bridging this protein requirement gap (Ayinde, 2004). This probably contributed to the rising production level of cowpeas relative to other staples from 4.7% in 1997 – 98 and 8.11% in 1999 – 2000 vis-à-vis 2.78% and 3.25% for other staples in the same range (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage increases in the production of cowpea vis-à-vis other staples in Nigeria.

Year	Cowpea	Other staples
	% increase in production	% increase in production
1997-98	4.7	2.78
1999-2000	8.11	3.25

Source: Computed from (CBN, 2001).

Use of appropriate weights and measures along the marketing chain provides for the participation of various market operators (who fall into the categories of both the poor and the rich) in cowpeas marketing. This implies that use of measures assists in the accessibility of cowpeas by consumers who can operate at their level of capability by buying just the appropriate measures/volume of cowpea depending on their affordability and preference pattern.

Furthermore, consumers are expected to have an idea of the proportion of their income to spend on the purchase of these commodities given the market price of these commodities which is assumed known by the household. The food budget of consumers in Nigeria is usually drawn in relation to weight and measurement of the foodstuff in question; that is, the volume of consumption for a particular food product is calculated on the number of *tin, muddu, kongo*, etc.; as the case may be. Weight and measurement in cowpea marketing is not an exception in this regard and it determines to a large extent, the market accessibility by the urban and rural poor.

### 3.0

### METHODOLOGY

Data obtained for this study were collected using the Participatory Appraisal technique; a widely acknowledged method for qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding of a community or situation (Goslin and Edwards, 1996; Hoddinot, 2001 and Oloyo, 2001). The procedure involved semi-structured direct interview of key actors/intermediaries (that is, wholesalers and retailers) in the cowpea marketing chain through the use of checklist. A total of 30 wholesalers and 20 retailers were interviewed in this respect. The survey also included direct observation and informal interview of other market participants such as buyers, service providers (government personnel, loaders, etc.).

Data were also obtained from secondary sources especially the Central Bank of Nigeria; data on the country's output of cowpeas and production of cowpeas according to states were obtained from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria; while other relevant existing publications were also utilised.

Data were collected on variables like age, gender, ethnicity and experience in cowpea marketing; sources of cowpeas purchase, purchase and sales arrangements, institutional affiliation of key operators in cowpea marketing, issues affecting weight and measures as well as the problems affecting cowpea marketing in the study area among others. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentage tables and cross tabulation as well as pictorial representations.

Field level activities were carried on three different days, for 12 hours each (from 6.30 am to 7.00 pm); the former building on the information vacuum existing in the latter. Emphasis was also on the collection of data at different market operating periods. For an instance, two field level activities were done during the market days (which come up every five days) and the other on a day preceding the market day wherein preparation is always in top gear for the market day.

The process of data collection was marred by some setbacks, such as unwillingness of members to be available for group meeting; this was understandable as respondents preferred being interviewed in their shops or sheds while carrying out their marketing functions and such meeting may translate into revenue loss to them. All efforts to interview the chairperson of the cowpea marketers association was not successful as members felt disinclined to provide useful information on how to access their leader. Data collection was however boosted by the conviction of respondents that information collected was not meant to set up cowpea marketing business and that researchers are not government agencies seeking information for the purpose of tax collection. This was accomplished by donning identification cards depicting nature of occupation of researchers.

## **4.0 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Basic Report of Findings**

#### **4.1.1 General Description of the Study Location**

Kuto market is linearly situated on a major township dual carriage road linking another dual carriage road which leads to Lagos, the former capital city of Nigeria. The market boasts of the availability of wide range of household goods from food (agricultural and finished goods), to industrial goods (such as electronics, textiles, etc.). The market is also situated beside a major motor park where passengers board vehicles into and outside the state. The market is made up row of buildings running parallel to each other. Each building is divided into two equal halves longitudinally, with equal numbers of shops facing different streets. Network of roads punctuate the building at intervals as well as car parking space, for the use of customers who patronise the market.

Cowpea marketers (wholesalers and retailers) unlike some sellers of agricultural commodities (e.g. ram, yam and vegetable sellers) are not localised within the market. They are interspersed within the market; two major areas (which are dominated by the Yorubas) are however, distinct

in term of their predominance. Marketers (wholesalers and retailers) do not lobby or pay more to secure this area as marketers could only get shops where such vacancies occur. The presence of cowpea marketers in these locations evolved over time. One interesting thing also is the fact that cowpeas do not form the sole stock in trade for all cowpea marketers. Majority (90%) feature the sales of other food stuff like rice while negligible percent (10%) feature sale of rice and other products like sorghum, millet, vegetable oil, etc. Where these occur, cowpea and rice dominates the component of items put up for sale in the market.

#### 4.1.2 Background Information on the Respondents

The general information on the cowpea marketers (wholesalers and retailers as well as other market operators) in Kuto is market presented in Table 3. The major variables examined in this respect are age, gender, ethnic group, years of experience, educational level, nature of marketing, profitability of cowpea marketing as well as problem encountered in cowpea marketing.

Table 3: General background information on the cowpea marketers in Kuto market, Ogun State.

Parameters	Range	Most Predominant	Remarks
<b>Wholesaler</b>			
Age	40 – 55	About 48 years	
Gender	Females – Males	Females	
Ethnic group	Yoruba, Binis, Igbos and Hausas	Yoruba	
Years of experience	8– 12 years	9 years	
Educational Level	Primary to Tertiary*	Secondary level	Most of the operators are literate
Nature of marketing business (family/individual)	Individual	Individual but with assistance from family members (mainly children,)	Children assist when they come back from school.
Profitability of cowpea marketing	Profitable	Profitable	Family needs and personal needs are met.
Problems	Pest (weevil) infestation, inadequate storage facilities, high transport fare for cowpeas, bad government policies on food production and marketing, poor credit facilities for cowpea marketing.	Weevil infestation in storage, high transport cost and poor credit facilities for cowpea marketing.	
<b>Retailers</b>			
Age	20 – 45 years	38 years	
Gender	Females – Males	Females	Males involved are cart pushers who sell mainly on market days.
Ethnic group	Yoruba, Igbos, Hausas	Yoruba	Majority of cart pushers are Hausas and Igbos.
Years of experience	8– 30 years	10 years	
Educational Level	No formal Education to secondary education	Primary education	Majority are literates
Nature of marketing business (family/individual)	Individual	Individual	
Profitability of cowpea	Profitable	Profitable	But would like to make

marketing			more profit
Problems	Poor credit facilities for cowpea marketing, high purchase price of cowpeas	Poor credit facilities for cowpea marketing, high purchase price of cowpeas.	
<b>Cart pushers</b>			
Age	28 – 40 years	35 years	
Gender	Male	Male	
Ethnic group	Hausa – Yoruba	Hausa	
Years of experience	2 – 6 years	3 years	
Educational Level	No formal Education	No formal Education	
Nature of marketing business (family/individual)	Individual	Individual	
Profitability of cowpea marketing	Profitable	Profitable	It suffices in the absence of nothing
Problems	Poor working condition, poor revenue, high cost of cowpeas.	Poor revenue and high cost of cowpeas	
<b>Head Porters</b>			
Age	28 – 34 years	32 years	
Gender	Male	Male	
Ethnic group	Yoruba , Hausa	Yoruba	
Years of experience	3 – 8 years	6 years	
Educational Level	No formal education to primary education	No formal education	Majority are illiterates
Nature of marketing business (family/individual)	Individual	Individual	
Profitability of cowpea marketing	Profitable	Profitable	Most of them would bve to have better jobs
Problems	Poor revenue	Poor revenue	
<b>Driver**</b>			
Age		35 years	
Gender		Male	
Ethnic group		Yoruba	
Years of experience		4 years	
Educational Level		Primary education	
Nature of marketing business (family/individual)		Individual	
Profitability of cowpea marketing		Just profitable	Profit is reduced due to fuel price increase and unfavourable working conditions, such as police interference, demand for more money by owner of vehicle.
Problems	Extortion by the police, high cost of fuel, high cost of vehicle maintenance, bad roads	Extortion by the police, high cost of fuel, bad roads	

Note: \* = Tertiary education did not exceed National Diploma certificate.

\*\* = Only one driver was available for interview



#### 4.1.3 Marketing Process for Cowpeas in Kuto Market

Most of the cowpeas produced come from the northern part of the country. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development (1989) asserted that the bulk of Nigeria's cowpea is produced in the Sudan savannah belt. The main cowpea producing states in Nigeria are mainly Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Bauchi, Borno and Gongola states. The cowpea marketing chain with particular reference to Kuto market is shown in Figure 1.

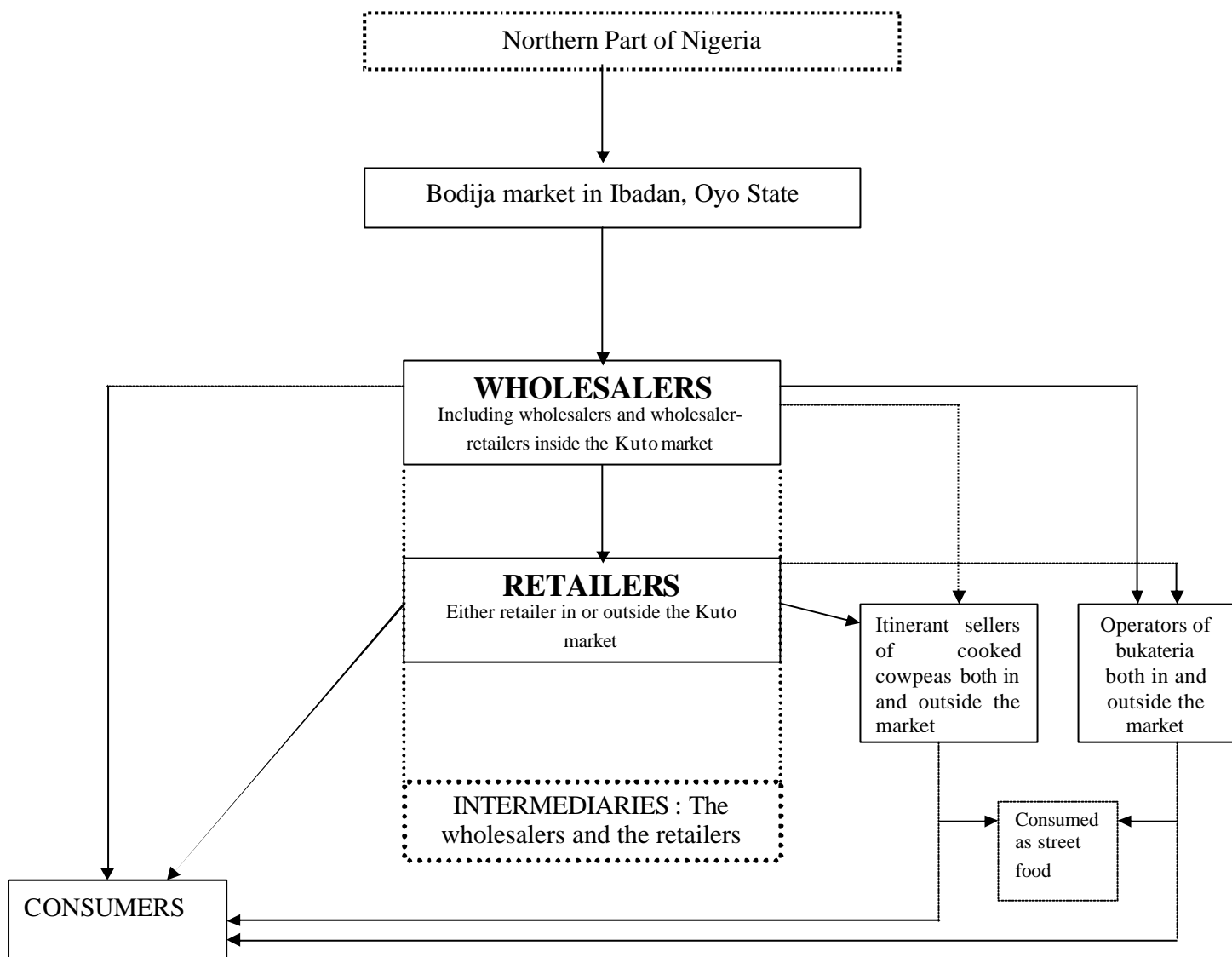
#### **Cowpea Marketing Chain:**

##### **Wholesaler**

Figure 1 shows the marketing chain for cowpeas in Kuto Market. The market intermediaries depicted in the figure are the wholesalers (who are located in and outside the market) and the retailers (located both in and outside the market), who participate actively in the cowpeas marketing process. The wholesalers are traders who sell cowpeas in bulk (usually in bags and sell to other market operators like the retailers and some consumers who buy in bulk). While the retailers are operators who break bulk; that is, sell in smaller measures mostly directly to cowpea consumers) All the cowpeas sold in Kuto market are sourced from Bodija market; an assembly market for cowpeas in Ibadan, Oyo State. Cowpeas from the northern part of the country especially, Kano, Sokoto and Maiduguri among others are transported to Bodija market. The cowpeas are purchased by wholesalers in standard bags of cowpea at the rate of ₦7, 000 to ₦9, 000 (including ₦300.00 per bag transport fare from the assembly market in Ibadan to Abeokuta) depending on availability of cowpea. Cowpeas are usually purchased a day after the market day, while purchase can be on group and individual bases depending on the operating capital and convenience. Group purchase is a common but not a dominant feature and it is based on personal arrangement and agreement between concerned individuals where some are constrained to undertake the journey. The group members defray part of the transport cost (of the member who agrees to undertake the journey on their behalf) but pay the full haulage fees for their goods. This arrangement does not bring about cheating in any form since it is based on mutual trust and the fact that marketers have knowledge of market prices prevalent in the assembly market.

Vehicles are boarded at dawn usually at the *Adatan terminus* in the heart of Abeokuta city, about 10 km to Kuto Market. Usually the quantity of cowpeas purchased per trip is dependent mainly on the prevailing demand pattern and fund availability to the market operators. Generally, more cowpeas are purchased during harvest period between June and September, because they are cheaper around this time. These are then stored by the wholesalers in their shops for maximum of two months and sold when prices increase; for more profit.

Wholesalers provide added value mainly in the form of winnowing to remove excess cowpea pod husks. The wholesalers sell mainly to the retailers who may be classified as market-based retailers, other retailers outside the market, operators of restaurants/bukateria and itinerant sellers of cooked cowpeas (*ewa kolobe*). One interesting finding is that majority (about 75%) of the wholesalers of cowpeas in this market also double as retailers in the same market wherein they sell to consumers who wish to buy smaller quantity of cowpea. Wholesalers are aware of the fact that negligible percentage of cowpea purchasers buy in bags; so, they adopt this strategy as a way of clearing their stock faster. The sales between wholesalers and retailers are strictly on cash and carry basis; however, sales on credit to few retailers are also a common feature. The



**Figure 1: Commodity Chain for Cowpeas in Abeokuta**

Note: \_\_\_\_\_ = Minor Chain; \_\_\_\_\_ = Major Chain

benefiting retailers are usually known to the wholesaler such that they are traceable (to their homes) in case of any default. The retailers would want to pay up on time to prevent the wholesaler from visiting their homes to request for the money; as they may be embarrassed in the presence of his neighbours if this happens. Payment of last purchase entitles retailers to another batch of purchase on credit; the range of time between purchases is between 1 or 2 market days and one month usually at the discretion of the wholesaler. Payment of extra cash (either in terms of interest or transaction cost) on credit purchase is not a feature of this sales arrangement. Furthermore, no commission agent is involved in cowpea marketing between the wholesaler–retailer–consumer chains found in the Kuto market.

### **Retailers**

Retailers outside the market are the bulk purchasers of cowpea (about 85%) from Kuto market. Other retailers can be classified as market-based retailers, operators of restaurants/bukateria and itinerant sellers of cooked cowpeas (*ewa kolobe*). The retailers outside the market sell at various parts of city either in shops or in front of their residence. Both market-based and non-market based retailers sell directly to consumers or to operators of restaurants/bukateria and itinerant sellers of cooked cowpeas (*ewa kolobe*) who add value to cowpea through cooking and make it available in ready-to-eat form. Consumers who do not have time to prepare cowpea at home patronise these street food vendors; this has implication for food safety and the health of consumers in general. Cowpeas retailers also sell to the consumers; the credit arrangement between market-based retailers and consumers is the same as what operates with the wholesalers. Credit opportunity is not ethnic or gender biased; rather it is an inter-personal arrangement based on the level of acquaintanceship existing between the two parties and it is usually based on trust.

Cart pushers are also one of the cowpea retailers operating in the market. They are mainly Hausas and Igbos. They sell mainly on market days, moving round the market until they finish selling their wares at rates (usually ₦10.00) lower than the prevailing market price. They operate independently of both the wholesalers and market-based retailers and are exempted from paying any market fee except the local government levy because they are seen as contemporary marketers from other markets within the town. Nobody disturbs their activity (despite selling a bit below the market price) while they sell little quantity of cowpeas only on market days only.

### Sourcing of Cowpeas through Producers in Kuto Market:

Recent studies (Ayinde, 2004) also found out that cowpea production is now a common feature of the cropping system in Ogun State but the level of production is still low and most farmers utilise their cowpea output for farm-family needs while negligible percentage produce for the market. Market operators (wholesalers and retailers) are aware of the fact that cowpeas are produced in Ogun State. These according to them, do not find their way into the market. Market operators also expressed willingness to buy cowpea from the local sources provided they meet the same requirements with those sourced from the northern part of the country. It was felt that if local cowpea production increases, there is every possibility that marketers could get cowpeas at lower prices and make more money.

### Market Institutions

The role of traditional marketing institutions in Kuto market is significant and this can be seen in the area of control of market access for key actors in cowpea marketing and provision of social

security for members. Cowpea marketers are organised into cowpea Marketers Associations. Membership of cowpea marketers associations is **compulsory** to all cowpea marketers regardless of marketer's ethnic group. This means no marketer can operate in the market without belonging to the association. This is because the monitoring team of this association look out for new entrants into the market every market days and on other days; such entrants are made to pay a given fine in addition to the association entrance levy if they are not duly registered. Merchandise of defaulters is seized by the association based in the market until they satisfy these entry requirements. A new entrant is initiated into the membership of the Cowpea Marketers Association by paying a registration fee of between ₦ 3, 000.00 and ₦5, 000.00, a bottle of gin, kola, bitter kola, biscuits, etc. The money goes to the association's account while the other materials are used for traditional prayer to initiate the new member into the market. Membership (mainly females) is however, dominated by the Yorubas who also occupy key positions of authority (such as chairperson, financial secretary, etc.) in the association. Other ethnic groups (so long as they are cowpea marketers) also form membership of the association as well.

Cart pushers who sell cowpeas are however **exempted** from this treatment as they belong to cowpea marketing associations of other markets in the city. Despite the fact that they sell a bit below (₦10.00 less) the market price, they are not seen as threats to the operation of resident cowpea marketers because they sell only on market days and they sell little quantity of cowpeas per market day. As a result of this, nobody disturbs their operation in the market.

The association's meeting is every nine days at the Kuto market. Meetings usually deliberate on the current trend in cowpeas marketing, security issues and members welfare. The Kuto marketers association like other cowpea marketing association in the city is affiliated to a central association which meets at the palace of the king (the *Alake of Egbaland*) once in a month. This bigger association selects representatives for the apex Market Association comprising marketers of various products; under the leadership of *Iyalode of Egbaland* (who is a female and key chief in the palace of the *Alake of Egbaland*).

The association also assists its members to fix market prices. This is mainly done with reference to the existing (or procurement) price of cowpea at the assembly market. Where there is a fall in market price, members are expected to adhere because this will usually bring down the market price on market days. Anybody who sells at a higher price would not make any sale at the market because buyers would go for the same product at a cheaper price. In the case of upward review in market prices, members would necessarily adhere because when they sell their stock they would buy at the assembly market at a higher price. Price communication is usually through the use of telephone messages and physical interaction between members.

The association do also settle dispute among members even though most disputes seldom get to the hearing of the association, as most disputes recorded (e.g. exchange of hot words, abusive language, etc.) are usually settled among members.

#### Credit Needs and Sources

Cowpea marketers especially the wholesalers view cowpea marketing as a capital intensive business. One avenue for fund mobilisation is the market association. The association operates like a cooperative outfit whereby members contribute a given amount of money on a monthly

basis, depending on convenience. Such monies may be collected to meet personal financial needs or used to collect loan under a cooperative arrangement. The limit of fund obtained is usually twice the amount a member has in her savings account within the association usually at the rate of 2.5% interest rate. This is one the main institutional sources of credit to most marketers (wholesalers and retailers) but relatively few of them utilise this opportunity because of member's low level of savings and the problem of payment default by beneficiaries which make little amount on money available for subsequent loan applications. When the latter happens, only those favoured by the leadership of the association could access the loan portfolio.

The other one is a *contributory credit scheme*, which is more widely patronised. The contributory credit scheme is an arrangement wherein marketers (wholesalers and retailers), who are close acquaintances come together as a smaller group to contribute equal amount of money at an agreed interval (mostly weekly) and each member then take turn (based on balloting) to collect all the monies contributed until the last on the list collects; the whole process will start all over again depending on earlier arrangement. This arrangement is based on trust, also there is no problem of entry and exit into the scheme but this must be at the beginning of a fresh arrangement.

#### State and Local Government Influence in Cowpeas Marketing

The Ogun State government is responsible for the provision and maintenance of market infrastructure, such as road network, buildings, electricity supply as well provision of other support facilities such as banks, etc. The state government charge rent on shops (₦250.00 for a shed and ₦500.00 per month for a shop) occupied by marketers and also makes rules and regulations governing the conduct of marketers in the market.

The Kuto market is under the control of Abeokuta South Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State. It is mainly responsible for the maintenance of market environment (refuse collection, drainage maintenance and other support services). The LGA charges a token (A flat rate of ₦ 10.00) paid by marketers (who do not have shops) who display their wares beside the road; cart pushers and transporters (drivers of vehicles, motorcycles and cart pushers); both on market and non-market days. This money serves as one of the sources of revenue for funding the LGA activities. Cowpeas marketers view the payment of levies to the LGA as exploitation of their meagre trading resources and are usually unwilling to pay this levy, because the local government authority at times, is negligent of their responsibilities until their attention is called by the market association from their perspective.

#### Security Arrangement

Security arrangement is both the responsibility of the State government as well as the marketers. Kuto market has a police post which assist to maintain law and order in the market. This to a large extent, curbs the incidence of theft in the market. At the level of marketers, private arrangement for the use of informal policing is in place. They secure the service of Night guards to provide security for their shops at night. Two guards are usually hired per row/street. The range of monthly salary earned by the night guards is between ₦ 3,500.00 and ₦4, 000.00; which is contributed by all the shops occupants. At nights the night guards keep vigil on the shops and patrol the surrounding at intervals. The night guards are usually equipped with locally made guns and other powers (such as *black magic*) which are used to protect themselves and also deal with

night marauders when necessary. The preferred sets of people to hire for this security job are members of the local hunters group and members of the *Oodua People's Congress* (OPC) (a non-governmental, informal law enforcement group). The local hunter group is an organised body of hunters who derives their livelihood partly from hunting games and also from this kind of market arrangement. They have been at the apex of security affairs since the establishment of the market while the use of OPC is a recent occurrence. The OPC is a socio-political organisation established to maintain law and order and also to protect the political interest of the Yorubas and Yoruba states. They provide security to prominent Yoruba politicians, markets, and also assist in unravelling criminal activities; if their assistance is sought in this respect. The OPC according to the marketers, are noted for their fierceness and capacity to stem any criminal act whatsoever, and they do not discriminate against marketer belonging to other ethnic groups in the discharge of their duties in the Kuto market.

### **Market Information System**

Information in cowpea marketing is both interpersonal and through telephones. Prices are fixed in relation to information about prices existing at the assembly market on a daily basis; this is further communicated to other marketers via phone calls and physical interaction. Recent development in the use of global system for mobile communication (GSM) services has particularly made communication between markets easier as marketers who do not have mobile phones can use public call boxes to make calls at affordable rates.

### **4.2 Weight and Measurement Issues**

Weight and measurement issues in cowpea marketing are a bit similar to what operates for *gari* marketing (Porter, *et. al.*, 2004). It suffices to state that the development of the market system for foodstuff has always taken cognisance of this issue of measurement and weight as a major determinant of success of the exchange function in marketing of foodstuff. One good achievement of the volume measurement is the fact that it has assisted to a large extent to break bulk of the commodity purchased, such that individual buyers can go for the measures of foodstuff needed for the upkeep of his household without having to buy more than they needed; thus eliminating the problems of affordability as well as storage. No two volume measures give the same weight. Experience on the field shows variation in weight (reduction by about 0.91% to 2.31% of the normal volume measure) for the most popular volume measure (*Kongo*) which are purportedly meant to have equal weight of cowpeas. Further variation also abounds in the way foodstuffs are measured with these volume measurements. Some women are better than others in measurement, and usually cowpea marketers are not too predisposed to allowing customers measure cowpeas themselves.

#### Types of Volume Measurements:

The various types of volume measurement in cowpeas marketing at Kuto markets are highlighted below:

- 1) Sack
- 2) Tin
- 3) *Kongo*
- 4) Half *kongo*

According to the respondents, government regulations on the adherence to standard weights and measurement are mainly in the area of use of the *Kongo* and half *Kongo* measures. The reason why this is so could not be ascertained during the survey. But it suffices to say that these two approved measures form the most widely used standard of measurement used in most markets especially in Ogun and Oyo states. Moreover, all the marketers have complied with the regulation on the use of these measures, albeit the initial reluctance of some marketers to adopt it when it was introduced because they felt that it will reduce profit accruable to them.

The equivalent average weight of these measurements is shown in table 4. The range of value for the weight of identified measures given in the table is an indication that no two measures are alike in the weight equivalent of cowpeas. With respect to sack however, the size differ mainly as a result of the type of cowpeas being marketed. This is applicable in the sale of *Ewa Oloyin* (“sweet” cowpeas). The reason for the smallness of sack in this respect could not be ascertained beyond the point of interview. But this weight also has implication on pricing. While other cowpeas type (*ewa drum*- big grained cowpeas and *ewa funfun* – white type) are sold for ₦9, 000.00 per big sack, *oloyin* goes for ₦6, 500.00 per big sack.

Table 4: Type of volume measurement for cowpeas prevalent in Kuto market in Abeokuta

Type of Measurement	Range of Weight (Kg)	Average Weight (Kg)
Sack	72 – 100	84
Tin	7.2 – 13	12
<i>Kongo</i>	1.1 – 1.3	1.2
Half <i>Kongo</i>	0.54 – 0.67	0.6

Source: Field Survey, 2004

Generally, the type of transaction (in terms of volume of sales) and preference of consumers determine to a large extent, the predominance of volume measurement used by the cowpea marketers. Figure 2 shows the use pattern of identified volume measurements. Sacks and tins are predominantly used by the wholesalers while the use of *Kongo* and *half Kongo* is predominant among the retailers. The existence of these measures is however, known to all operators (wholesalers, retailers and buyers; rich or poor); each operator can therefore access the market to buy needed measures of cowpeas at any level in the marketing chain depending on his economic wherewithal; hence both the poor and rich can access the market at all times.



Figure 2: Chart showing the predominance of use of volume measures by market operators in Kuto Market.

The matrix or cross tabulation of the equivalent rate for different volume measurements for cowpeas in Kuto market is presented in table 5. The values shown in the table is generally acknowledged to be a common knowledge to both the cowpea buyers and sellers in the market. Usually, most buyers who want to share a bigger measurement (for instance a sack) have at the back of their mind the equivalent number of smaller measures to expect. This allows buyers to buy in expectation of the number of measures they will get even if not physically present at the point of sharing the sack.

Table 5: Matrix of the equivalent rate for different volume measurements for cowpeas in Kuto market

Type of Measurement	Sack	Tin	<i>Kongo</i>	Half <i>Kongo</i>
Sack	<b>1</b>			
Tin	7	<b>1</b>		
<i>Kongo</i>	70	10	<b>1</b>	
Half <i>Kongo</i>	140	20	2	<b>1</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004

#### Measurement Process and Sharp Practices Inherent In the Use of Volume Measures for Cowpea

As explained earlier, measurement process when buying directly requires dexterity on the part of both buyers and sellers. If the buyer is not wary, part of cowpeas due to her will be reduced. For instance, the seller ordinarily should fill the measuring bowl to the brim until it form a perfect inverted cone before pouring it into a container for the buyer; but if the buyer is oblivious of this during the measuring process, the marketer (especially the retailer) may gain some cowpea



grains off the consumer; which translates to more profit on the part of the former. This phenomenon is usually common with lower measurements like the tin, *Kongo* and *half Kongo*.

Another form of sharp practice on the volume measurement adopted by cowpea marketer in Kuto market is the development of an ingenious way of reducing the volume of the widely adopted cowpea measures (that is the *Kongo* and *half Kongo*). The marketers boil this measuring bowl (which is made of plastic) in order to “shrink” it so that the weight equivalent of the cowpeas measured would be reduced. With this approach, it is difficult for the buyer to detect visually whether the volume measure has been tampered with or otherwise. This method is an improvement over the earlier sharp practice (which is also similar in context) perpetrated by cowpea marketers when the volume measure in use at that time was an iron bowl. They thumped the base of the iron bowl inward to accomplish the same purpose. As gathered from the survey; the marketers association is aware of this issue but it has not curbed members from this act. The reason for this is not known, respondents are helpless to pursue the issue because it is a common problem among the marketers.

One interesting fact gathered from the survey is the fact that when retailers buy from wholesalers, they use volume measures which have not been tampered with but they sell to consumers using the boiled volume measures. This translates to more profit to them at the expense of consumers who patronise the cowpeas market.

#### Disposition of consumers and marketers to the sharp practices

Some of the consumers interviewed are aware of the latest sharp practice (shrinking of measuring bowl) but they felt there is nothing they could do to stop it, since it is difficult to prove. On the other hand, some customers tried to circumvent this practice by insisting they would do the measurement themselves, but they are seldom allowed to do this. One of the customers who identified herself as simply *Iya Ade* (the mother of Ade) viewed that there is nothing anybody could do about it (Box 1). What makes the situation worse is the fact that this sharp practice cuts across most of the cowpea marketers.

Box 1: Consumer’s view on sharp practices in cowpea marketing in relation to volume measure

*The situation of weight and measure in this market is a hopeless situation. There seems to be nothing anybody can do about it. I normally want to bring my own volume measure and when I do, I was made to pay more (amount undisclosed), so I stopped it. Now I know they cheat me, I have to assume it is not happening. The implication is that I have to buy a bit more, but I get by.*

Most marketers interviewed did not own up, but just one of the respondents asserted that it is a common phenomenon although she reiterated her non involvement in the sharp practice (see Box 2). The irony is that the issue of sharp practice was not viewed by marketers as being serious; this is probably as a result of the fact that it is difficult to prove since the volume measure would still retain its normal shape (this was not the case with the earlier method which was very easy to

detect and which led to the development of what the state government felt was a *foolproof* method of checking the sharp practice).

Box 2: Marketer's view on sharp practices in cowpea marketing in relation to volume measure

*I am aware that they do magomago in measuring cowpea for the customers. But me o, I cannot do it because my conscience will not allow it. Instead I will sell using the approved Kongo. Nobody has come to me with a personal Kongo for measurement; I would have obliged the customer. My brother, the funny thing is that the difference in the original measurement is not much, na thief-thief dey do them.*

The implication of the operation of cowpeas marketing in relation to weight and measurement issue is mainly in the area of reduction in the purchasing power of potential consumers. With this arrangement the quantity of cowpea purchased by a consumer is reduced given the amount paid; although this is insignificant, the cumulative effect (say at the end of one year) would be significant in terms of what consumers ought to have saved or more cowpeas to have purchased. Usually, the State government which is responsible for the enforcement of regulations affecting weight and measures is looking at the other side because no formal complaint has been made in this respect.

#### **4.2 Agreement of Findings with Other Existing Works**

Very few research works abound on commodity marketing in the area of weight and measure. Most of the available ones (Olayemi, 1972, Okuneye and Ayinde, 2004) only talk about weight and measures as part of the marketing conducts in a general form. This provides the impetus for more research activities to focus more in-depth on the weight and measure issues as they affect the marketing of agricultural product in most Nigerian markets.

This finding is consistent with earlier works (Porter *et. al.*, 2004) in respect of gari. This study has also crystallised the fact that volume rather than weight measurement operates predominantly in cowpea marketing in the study area. The findings of this study however negate the fact that traders' associations "could in principle be used to guarantee good quality and conduct ...." As reported by Fafchamps (2001). This is because with respect to the weight and measurement issues in cowpeas, the traders' association do not see it as an aberration and hence has not been able to do anything about it in this respect.

### **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Good Practices Emerging From Cowpea Marketing System in Kuto Market**

This study has shown the dynamism of cowpeas marketing as one of the remarkable marketing institutions in food crop marketing in Nigeria. The marketing structure and conduct for cowpeas in the study area is a simple arrangement and it can provide a basis for understanding the

probable marketing operation of other types of food products given the similarity of market structure.

This study into the marketing of cowpeas in Kuto market provides avenue to meaningfully conclude that:

1. The cowpea marketing in Kuto contributes significantly to improved marketing access by both buyers and sellers given the existing marketing arrangements in respect of various measures available in the market, to cater for the needs of diverse consumers in the city of Abeokuta.
2. Supply of cowpeas to inhabitants could increase and be more affordable too, if efforts could be made by the marketing association to purchase directly from the source of production; this could also be complemented if local production of cowpeas in Ogun State increases.
3. The marketing process provides a source of income to diverse group of people (wholesalers, retailers, transporters, restaurant owners, itinerant sellers of cooked cowpeas etc., who derive their livelihood at different points along the marketing chain.
4. The use of varying measures in cowpeas marketing reduces a lot of constraint on purchasers in term of their demand for cowpeas relative to their income level. These measures also provide consumers the basis to budget for the quantity of cowpeas to consume by the households per given period.
5. Trust exist at every point of the marketing chain and this is reflected through buyer-seller interaction with respect to the credit arrangements on sales of goods and among marketers themselves in the operation of the market.
6. Engagement in sharp practices by cowpea marketers is an exploitation of cowpeas consumers who is forced to spend more of their income on cowpeas purchase. This has the possibility of making the poor consumer poorer because he spends more of his disposable income on food consumption.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Cowpea marketing in the study location is an established and dynamic process. Improvement in cowpea marketing process in Kuto market with respect to weight and measure issue needs to take into consideration the following recommendations :

- 1) There is the need to enforce the adherence of cowpea marketers to the approved measures in cowpea marketing. This should be closely monitored not only in term of use but also in terms of using measures that have not been tampered with for market transactions. Both the State and LGA should see this as a priority area to focus on as part of their responsibilities towards the smooth operation of the market.
- 2) Easing of bottlenecks (such as high transport cost and poor credit availability) in cowpea marketing would go a long way to improve cowpeas marketing in the study area. The current intervention of Federal Government of Nigeria in prohibiting policemen from mounting road blocks indiscriminately (for the purpose of extortion of marketers) would reduce tolls paid by transporters of foodstuff across the country. This will reduce market prices and also decrease consumer's expenditure on cowpea. Credit facilities could also be extended to cowpea

marketers through the recently established Ogun State Agricultural and Multipurpose Credit Agency (OSAMCA) in order to assist cowpeas marketers increase their volume of trade and make cowpeas more available to consumers.

- 3) The operation of the market association should be closely monitored especially in the area of failure to guarantee good market conduct and promoting poor consumer interests. This implies that the existing Consumer Protection Council in the country should also focus at the activities of marketers at the foodstuff market level rather than the marketing of manufactured or finished goods which tops its priority presently. Intervention of the council can be in the form of developing tamper proof measures for the target markets; the enforcement of which should be ensured through the supervising government agencies in charge of market operations.

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