



PERCEIVED EFFECT OF FUEL PRICE HIKE ON FARMING HOUSEHOLDS IN IMO STATE

Okoroh Juochi P.

Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, Imo State University, Owerri.

Email: okorohjuochi@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT: *The study assessed the perceived effect of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State. The study described the socio-economic characteristics of farming households in Imo State; ascertained farming households' awareness of fuel price hike; identified the perceived causes of fuel price hike; ascertained the perceived effect of fuel price hike on farming activities among farming households in Imo State and identified the coping strategies used among farming households to cushion the effect of fuel price hike in Imo State. A multi-stage sampling was adopted in selecting 120 farming households for the study. Primary data were used for the study using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis employed percentages, means, frequencies and mean score analysis. The result on the awareness of the effect of fuel price hike among farming household showed that all the farmers were aware (100%). farming households perceived fuel subsidy removal ($\bar{x}=3.7$), instability in government policies ($\bar{x}=3.5$), high cost of importation of refined fuel ($\bar{x}=3.4$), Non-functional of local refineries ($\bar{x}=3.3$) among others as the causes of fuel price hike. Farming households perceived increased cost of transportation for farm inputs ($\bar{x}=3.9$), Increased cost of production/farming activities like ploughing, clearing etc($\bar{x}=3.9$) Increased price of farm produce ($\bar{x}=4.0$), Increased food prices ($\bar{x}=4.0$), decreased agricultural productivity ($\bar{x}=3.4$), Limited access to agricultural machinery and equipment, ($\bar{x}=3.3$), increased in transportation of farm produce to the market ($\bar{x}=3.4$) as the effects of fuel price hike. The highest ranking coping strategies used by farming households were trekking some distances to reduce the cost of transportation (Ranked 1st), Minimising spending habits due to fuel price increase (2nd), Explored the use of alternative energy sources e.g solar panels for irrigation, charcoal, firewood (3rd). Explore the possibility of collective purchasing or bulk buying with others to reduce individual costs (4th) and skipping meals (5th). Educational level, household size and access to credit were the significant socioeconomic variables influencing farming households' perceived effect of fuel price hike. The study therefore recommends that Nigeria's crude oil should be refined domestically so that the importation of refined fuel can be banned which will reduce the cost of refining and pump price.*

KEYWORDS: Effects, fuel price hike, farming households, Imo.



INTRODUCTION

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022), agriculture used to be the foundation of Nigeria's economy provided livelihoods for most Nigerian farming households and guaranteed millions of jobs (Isaac, 2002). With the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in the early 70s, Nigeria's reliance on Agriculture shifted to a crude oil economy and brought radical changes in the economy of Nigeria masking other sectors especially agriculture which was relegated to second position (Oduhara, 2008). Currently, Nigeria is the 8th World oil producing country and oil is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy (Ocheni, 2015). Thus making the country completely dependent on oil for her foreign exchange earnings and for domestic budgetary finances. Realizing the danger of this exclusive reliance on oil, futile efforts have been made to diversify the economy of the country and give it back to agriculture which is hoped to provide a turn-around improvement (Ocheni, 2015). It is the belief of policy makers that if the revenue realized from oil is combined with that of Agriculture, Nigeria will have stable national revenue earnings (Jukman, 2022).

According to Jukman (2022), Nigeria's agricultural sector has four sub-sectors namely- crop production, livestock production, forestry and fishery. With a total arable land of 34 million hectares out of 70.8 million hectares, 6.5 million hectares are used for permanent crops while 80.3 million hectares are available for pastures and meadows. The major crops cultivated in Nigeria are maize, millet, cowpea, yam, cassava, soybean, groundnut, potato etc (Trenbath, 2015). Over 70% of households are engaged in crop farming with 7.3% of the households practising fishing while 69.3% of households own or raise livestock in Northwest Nigeria (Feedifuture, 2021).

Petrol in Nigeria's economy has been known to serve as an intermediate input in agricultural production. Therefore changes in price, quality and quantity of oil affect agricultural productivity and profitability (Aderite, 2022). This is because most agricultural machinery and technology are powered using petroleum products especially premium Motor Spirit (PMS) also called Petrol. Any increase in the world market could lead to an increase in the cost of production of agricultural products, goods and services. Also, an increase in agricultural expenditure due to an increase in fuel price increases the transportation cost of conveying producers and their products which will subsequently increase products' price to cushion off the increased fuel price hike.

A fuel price hike is an increase in price per litre of petrol. It is said to be caused by a surge in the landing cost of petrol which has gone up by 37.4 per cent month-on-month to ₦632.17 per litre in July 2023, up from ₦460 per litre in June 2023. Nigeria is a major oil producer but doesn't refine its own oil. So even though it produces crude oil, it still has to import it which makes it expensive (<https://www.npr.org.2023/07/12>).

In Imo State, farming households also feel the microeconomic implications of higher oil prices especially petrol since petrol purchases are necessary for most households and farming operations. When petrol prices increase, a larger share of a household's budget is likely to be spent on it which leaves less to spend on other goods and services like farming operations.

The erratic petroleum pump price increment which dates back to the 1970s (Philip and Akintoye, 2006) has had a negative impact on both industrial and agricultural productivity in Nigeria. The multiple negative effects of this disruption on the entire national economy are



linked to the oil sector and any increase in the petrol pump price affects other sectors of the economy and by implication, the micro-economic policies of the country (Ogunbodade, Ilesanmi and Olurunkenese, 2010). The two ways in which fuel price increment affects the agricultural sector are in production and in the transportation of products to consumers. According to Bhuyveller and Kastenis, (2005) the agricultural sector is one of the economic sectors that are harmed by higher oil prices considering the fact that most agricultural machines and equipment are powered using either Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) diesel or Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol). Commercial agriculture relies on fossil fuel for several purposes – fertilizer production, water and irrigation provision, farm product preservation and processing, transportation of goods, personnel and maintenance of farm infrastructure, transportation of equipment and goods to the market, etc (Adepibe, 2004). As a result, fuel price variations affect the cost of production in the Agricultural sector. According to Ocheni (2015), there was a significant relationship between the increase in fuel price and agricultural growth in Nigeria.

The literature is few, especially on the perceived effect of petrol price hike on farming households in Imo State. This study is therefore aimed at bridging the literature gap. In view of this, the following research questions guided the study: 1 Are farming households aware of fuel price hike? 2 What do farming households perceive as the causes of fuel price hike? 3 What do they perceive as the effects of fuel prices on farming activities? 4 Are their strategies farming households have adopted to cope with the effects of fuel price hike?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to ascertain the perceived effect of fuel price hike on farming households in Imo State and specifically, the study sought to:

- i. ascertain farming households' awareness of fuel price hike.
- ii. identify the perceived cause of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State;
- iii. ascertain the perceived effects of fuel price hike on farming households /farming activities in Imo State and
- iv. identify the coping strategies used among farming households to cushion the effect of fuel price hike in Imo State.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Imo State, Nigeria. The State has 27 Local Government Areas divided into three Agricultural zones Okigwe, Owerri and Orlu. It lies within latitude 4°45'N and 7°15'N and longitude 6°50'E and 7°25'E (Climate and Weather, 2018). The State has fertile and well-drained soil suitable for farming and a good proportion of the population are mainly farmers involved in both crop and livestock production.

The population for the study were farming households in Imo State. A multi-stage sampling was adopted in selecting the sample for the study. The first stage involved the censored selection of the three agricultural zones in Imo State, namely Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu, In the first stage, purposive sampling techniques were used for selecting four local Government Areas from each of the three (3) agricultural zones in Imo State making a total of



(12) local government areas for the study namely: Ohaji-Egbema, Isiala Mbano, Aboh Mbaise, Ezinihite Mbaise, Owerri North, Ehime Mbano, Obowo, Okigwe, Nkwere, Oru East, Nwagele and Owerri West. This was done to capture areas of high concentration of farming households

The second stage adopted random selection of one autonomous community each from the twelve L.G.A's selected. The last stage employed the collection of a list of farming households from the village heads of each of the 12 communities selected. Ten farming households were randomly selected from each of the twelve communities selected making a total sample size of one hundred and twenty farming households for the study

Farming households constituted the population for the study. The sources of data collection for this research work were from primary sources. The primary data were collected through the use of questionnaires to obtain information on the objectives of the study such as the socio-economic characteristics of farming households, the perceived cause and effect of the fuel price hike on farming households in the study, and the coping strategies used among farming households to cushion the effect of fuel price hike in Imo State.

Descriptive statistical tools were employed to analyse data to be collected for the study. This included frequency distribution, percentage and mean score and inferential statistics such as regression analysis will be used to test the hypothesis.

Objectives i, ii, iii, and v were realized using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean while objective iv was realized using the mean score analysis through a four (4) point Likert-type scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The value of this Likert-type scale rating was summed and then divided by the number of scales to obtain the discriminating index ($4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10/4 = 2.5$). Thus, any statement with a mean score greater than or equal to 2.5 was regarded as the perceived effect of fuel prices hike on farming households in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State

The result of the farming households distribution based on awareness of fuel price hike is presented in Table 1. It revealed that all the farming households sampled for the study (100%) were aware of the fuel price hike. The finding implies that farming households are aware of the fuel price hike and must have been adopting several coping strategies to mitigate the effect. The study is in line with the findings of Olumba and Rahji (2014) who opined that awareness of technology/strategy promotes demand and demand is a force for rapid adoption.

**Table 1: Distribution of farming Households 'awareness of fuel price hike**

Awareness of fuel price hike among farming households	Frequency	Percentage
Not Aware	0	0
Aware	120	100
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Perceived causes of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State

The distribution of farming households according to their perceived causes of fuel price hike is presented in Table 2. This result shows that farming households perceived fuel subsidy removal ($\bar{x}=3.7$), instability in government policies ($\bar{x}=3.5$), high cost of importation of refined fuel ($\bar{x}=3.4$), Non-functional of local refineries ($\bar{x}=3.3$), lack of local production of fuel ($\bar{x}=3.3$), panic buying and selling ($\bar{x}=2.9$) as the causes of fuel price hike. Nigeria has the capacity to refine its crude if the refineries are put into productive use but because this crude is being exported to other countries for refinery and later imported for domestic consumption adds to the production cost which leads to a high cost of pump price. The Nigerian government has been involved in deregulation policy in the downstream petroleum sector which requires withdrawal of petroleum subsidy. Withdrawal of petroleum subsidies often stimulates increases in the prices of petroleum products and hence, increases in transportation costs and prices of other commodities (Henry, Emmanuel, Eseosa, Abiola, 2020). This study is in agreement of Pirog (2004) who asserted that Other causes of price hike include political instability in the producing countries as well as panic buying and selling.

Table 2: Distribution according to Perceived causes of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State

Perceived causes of fuel price hike	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	\bar{x}	SD	RM
a) Fuel subsidy removal	90	30	0	0	3.7	.61	Acc
b) Lack of local production of fuel	40	78	1	1	3.3	.49	Acc
c) High cost of importation of refined fuel	71	39	7	3	3.4	.45	Acc
d) Cost incurred as a result of crude exportation.	8	2	99	20	3.9	.72	Acc
e) High cost of refining.	109	11	0	0	3.1	.48	Acc
f) Instability in government policies.	18	100	0	2	3.5	.47	Acc
g) Non-functional of local refineries	88	22	1	9	3.3	.49	Acc
h) Panic buying and selling	9	11	80	20	2.9	.92	Acc
Grand mean							

Source; field survey, 2024; Mean score ≥ 2.5 ; Acceptance (A); < 2.5 Reject (R), Discriminating index 2.5



Perceived effects of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State

The distribution of farming households' perceived effects of fuel price hike on farming activities is presented in table 3. This result shows that farming households perceived increased cost of transportation for farm inputs ($\bar{x} = 3.9$), Increased cost of production/farming activities like ploughing, clearing etc ($\bar{x} = 3.9$), Increased price of farm produce ($\bar{x} = 4.0$), Increased food prices ($\bar{x} = 4.0$) Decreased agricultural productivity ($\bar{x} = 3.4$), Limited access to agricultural machinery and equipment, ($\bar{x} = 3.3$), increased in transportation of farm produce to the market ($\bar{x} = 3.4$) as the effects of fuel price hike Price. Increase in fuel has made transport operators all over Nigeria to increase the cost of transporting human being and goods in order to meet up with their operational and maintenance cost (Abimbola, 2022; Bolaji, 2022). This leads to poor distribution of food items all over the country, thus, compelling the food vendors that managed to obtain food items to increase the prices of available food items. Price fluctuations in Nigeria affect farmers' investment decisions that have serious ramifications for the growing farm debt, farm incomes and productivity (Udochukwu, Echebiri, Olohije Abode, Aigbe, Onaghise, Onyebuchi and Amolo, 2022). When the prices of food increase, definitely the number of goods that can be bought automatically reduces. Purchasing power affects every aspect of economics from consumers buying goods down to a country's economic growth. However, when a country's purchasing power decreases due to a persistent rise in food price, there are always significant consequences, such as high cost of living.

Changes in prices of domestic petroleum products in Nigeria affect economic activities that depend on petroleum products as sources of energy. The implication is that farmers have to spend more on transporting their farm produce to the markets. Not only this, but diesel and petrol are also the main sources of fuel for small-scale industries like bakeries, and corn and rice mills. The problem is exacerbated because Nigeria generates insufficient electricity to power these activities. This makes the energy costs of an average producer both in the formal and informal sectors one of the highest in the world (Olawepo-Hashim 2021). These excessive costs are consequently transferred to the cost of foodstuff which the final consumer bears. Thus, the increase in prices of diesel and petrol will automatically raise the prices of other commodities generally, especially food items. In addition, high natural gas prices have raised fertilizer prices, putting upward pressure on agricultural prices and food items. High energy prices are also driving up the cost of cooking gas in Nigeria thus affecting household consumption and the income of food vendors, thereby increasing the prices of overall food items in Nigeria (Kyarem & Felix, Dodo 2023)

Table 3: Distribution according to Perceived effects of fuel price hike among farming households in Imo State

	Perceived effects of fuel price hike on farming households	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	\bar{x}	SD	RM
a)	Increased cost of transportation for farm inputs.	111	9	0	0	3.9	.72	Acc
b)	Increased price of farm produce.	120	0	0	0	4.0	.23	Acc
c)	Reduced profitability of farming.	9	11	80	20	2.9	.92	Acc
d)	Limited access to agricultural machinery and equipment.	59	41	18	2	3.3	.49	Acc



e)	Decreased agricultural productivity.	55	61	3	1	3.4	.46	Acc
f)	Increased food prices.	120	0	0	0	4.0	.10	Acc
g)	Decreased income for farmers.	0	89	11	20	2.4	.74	Acc
h)	Increased unemployment in the agricultural sector.	0	0	108	12	1.9	.99	Rej
i)	Increased cost of transportation of produce to the market	66	50	4	0	3.5	.43	Acc
j)	Increased cost of production/farming activities like ploughing, clearing, milling, storage etc.	118	2	0	0	3.9	.29	Acc
Grand mean								

Source; field survey, 2024; Mean score ≥ 2.5 ; Acceptance (A); < 2.5 Reject (R), Discriminating index 2.5

Coping strategies used/adopted among farming households to cushion the effect of fuel price hike in Imo State

The distribution of farming households based on coping strategies used to cushion the effect of fuel price hike is presented in Table 4. This result shows that the highest-ranking coping strategies used by farming households were trekking some distances to reduce the cost of transportation (Ranked 1st), Minimising spending habits due to fuel price increases (2nd), Explored the use of alternative energy sources e.g solar panels for irrigation, charcoal, firewood (3rd), Explore the possibility of collective purchasing or bulk buying with other to reduce individual's cost (4th) and skipping a meal (5th). This result is in line with the findings of Isaac and Alagbe (2015) who observed that the highest-ranked coping measures employed by households interviewed were trekking. Households tend to trek more not as a result of yielding to advice offered by medical practitioners that exercises are good for the body but because they are looking for ways to cut down costs and still maintain their happiness. The use of alternate energy sources ranked second, the commonest alternate energy sources used by respondents were firewood and charcoal, which are obtained from trees in the forest. The forest is very good at reducing the direct impact of the sun on man and animals, it covers the soil from excessive evaporation and releases oxygen needed by man into the atmosphere. If we continue to cut down trees, we are contributing hugely to global warming and temperature (Isaac and Alagbe, 2015)



Table 4 Distribution according to coping Strategies used among farming households to cushion the effects of fuel price hike

S/N	Coping Strategies used among farming households to cushion the effects of fuel price hike	Frequency	percentage	Rank
1.	Sought assistance from local agricultural co-operatives to reduce costs.	1	0.8	12 th
2.	Reduced the size of my farming operations to manage expenses related to fuel.	70	58.3	7 th
3.	Explore the use of eco-friendly and low-cost farming practices to offset fuel price increases.	101	84.1	5 th
4.	Explored the use of alternative energy sources e.g. solar panels for irrigation, charcoal, firewood.	109	90.8	3 rd
5.	Collaborated with another farming household to share transportation costs.	20	16.6	8 th
6.	Involve in governments or NGO programs aimed at supporting farming household during period of fuel price increases.	1	0.8	10 th
7.	Skipping meal	90	75	6 th
8.	Actively sought more fuel-efficient farming equipment's and practices.	2	1.6	9 th
9.	Minimized spending habits due to fuel price increases.	111	92.5	2 nd
10.	Explore the possibility of collective purchasing or bulk buying with other to reduce individuals cost affected by fuel price hike.	108	90	4 th
11.	Trekking some distances to reduce the cost of transportation	116	96.6	1 st

***Multiple responses were recorded; Source: Field Survey Data, 2024**

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that farming households were very much aware of fuel price hike and perceived the causes as fuel subsidy removal), instability in government policies, high cost of importation of refined fuel, Non functional of local refineries, lack of local production of fuel and panic buying and selling. The farming households perceived the following as the effect of fuel price hike; high cost of transportation for farm inputs, increased cost of production/farming activities (like ploughing, clearing, etc..), increased price of farm produce, Increased food prices, Limited access to agricultural machinery and equipment, increased in transportation of farm produce to the market among others. The farming households adopted trekking some distances to reduce the cost of transportation, Minimized spending habits, Explored the use of alternative energy sources e.g solar panels for irrigation, charcoal, firewood, and sipping meals as the coping strategies used to cushion the effect of fuel price hike. Educational level, household size and access to credit were the significant socioeconomic variables influencing farming households' perceived effect of fuel price hike.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the major findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 Fuel should be subsidized
- 2 Nigeria's crude should be refined domestically to prevent importation of refined oil which adds to the cost.
- 3 There should be stability in sound policies with respect to fuel.
- 4 The Federal government should encourage local production of premium motor spirit by rehabilitating our refineries

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