



## **EFFECTS OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION ON FOOD SECURITY IN BEKWARRA, NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Rural-Urban migration has significantly reshaped agricultural productivity in Cross River North Senatorial District, especially in Bekwarra Local Government Area, influencing both labour availability and economic growth. This study examined the extent to which migration patterns affect food security through agricultural output and rural livelihoods in the region. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys with a descriptive research design. Data was collected from farmers, community leaders, and migrants' households across selected rural communities in Bekwarra, ensuring representative samples from each subgroup. Quantitative data was collected with the use of 300 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents to assess factors such as labour shortages, farm productivity, and income changes. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. The qualitative component included focus group discussions with key stakeholders to explore the socio-economic implications of migration on agriculture. Thematic analysis was applied to identify emerging trends. Findings revealed that rural-urban migration has led to a decline in the agricultural workforce, reduced farm sizes, and lower productivity, as able-bodied youths relocated to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities. However, remittances from migrants contribute to improved farm mechanisation and investment in alternative livelihoods. Despite these benefits, persistent labour shortages and ageing farming populations threaten long-term agricultural sustainability. The study, therefore, concludes that rural-urban migration affects food security*

*negatively in the study area. Stemming from the above, it is recommended that to mitigate the decline in farm labour, local authorities should implement rural development programmes that encourage youth engagement in agriculture through training, financial incentives, and mechanisation support.*

**Keywords:** Agricultural productivity, Bekwarra, Food security, Labour shortages, Rural-Urban migration

## **EFFETS DE LA MIGRATION RURALE-URBAINE SUR LA SECURITE ALIMENTAIRE A BEKWARRA, DISTRICT SENATORIAL NORD DE L'ÉTAT DE CROSS RIVER, NIGERIA**

### **Résumé**

*La migration rurale-urbaine a profondément transformé la productivité agricole dans le district sénatorial nord de Cross River, en particulier dans la zone de gouvernement local de Bekwarra, affectant tant la disponibilité de la main-d'œuvre que la croissance économique. La présente étude examine dans quelle mesure les dynamiques migratoires influencent la sécurité alimentaire à travers la production agricole et les moyens de subsistance ruraux dans la région. Une approche méthodologique mixte a été adoptée, combinant des enquêtes à un dispositif de recherche descriptive. Les données ont été recueillies auprès des agriculteurs, des chefs communautaires et des ménages de migrants dans plusieurs communautés rurales sélectionnées de Bekwarra, assurant ainsi une représentativité équilibrée des différents sous-groupes. Les données quantitatives ont été obtenues à l'aide de 300 questionnaires distribués aux répondants afin d'évaluer des facteurs tels que la pénurie de main-d'œuvre, la productivité des exploitations agricoles et les variations de revenus. Des techniques statistiques descriptives et inférentielles ont été mobilisées pour l'analyse des données. Le volet qualitatif, quant à lui, comprenait des discussions de groupe avec les parties prenantes clés afin d'explorer les implications socio-économiques de la migration sur l'agriculture. Une analyse thématique a permis d'identifier les tendances émergentes. Les résultats révèlent que la migration rurale-urbaine entraîne une diminution de la main-d'œuvre agricole, une réduction de la taille des exploitations et une baisse de productivité, du fait du départ des jeunes valides vers les zones urbaines à la recherche de meilleures opportunités économiques. Toutefois, les envois de fonds des migrants*

*contribuent à améliorer la mécanisation agricole et à investir dans des moyens de subsistance alternatifs. Malgré ces apports, les pénuries persistantes de main-d'œuvre et le vieillissement des agriculteurs menacent la durabilité de l'agriculture à long terme. L'étude conclut donc que la migration rurale-urbaine affecte négativement la sécurité alimentaire dans la zone étudiée. Il est dès lors recommandé que les autorités locales mettent en œuvre des programmes de développement rural visant à encourager l'engagement des jeunes dans l'agriculture, à travers des formations, des incitations financières et un appui à la mécanisation.*

**Mots-clés :** Productivité agricole, Bekwarra, Sécurité alimentaire, Pénurie de main-d'œuvre, Migration rurale-urbaine

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## INTRODUCTION

Rural-urban migration is a global phenomenon with substantial implications for various sectors, particularly agriculture. In developing countries such as Nigeria, the movement of people from rural to urban areas is often motivated by the search for better economic opportunities, improved living standards, and the allure of urbanisation.<sup>80</sup> However, this migration pattern has far-reaching consequences for rural areas, especially those heavily reliant on agriculture. Bekwarra Local Government Area (LGA) in the North Senatorial District of Cross River, located in south-south Nigeria, serves as a unique case study for examining the effects of rural-urban migration on food security. This predominantly agrarian region has witnessed a significant outflow of young and economically active individuals to urban centres, creating challenges for the local agricultural sector.

Agriculture in Cross River North is crucial for both subsistence and commercial purposes, sustaining livelihoods and contributing to the local economy. However, the migration of youth to urban areas has led

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<sup>80</sup> United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).

to a depletion of the labour force in rural farming communities, raising concerns about its impact on agricultural output. Moreover, the migration has resulted in a decline in the cultivation of both staple

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crops and cash crops, which are essential for local consumption and market supply<sup>81</sup>. This reduction in agricultural activities could have broader implications for food security, economic stability, and poverty alleviation in the region. Rural-urban migration is a critical phenomenon that influences various aspects of life in rural communities, particularly food security. In the Cross River North Senatorial District, agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood for most of the population. However, with the growing outflow of rural youth to urban areas, there is increasing concern about the long-term effects on the region's agricultural output. The loss of youthful, economically active individuals from rural farming communities has led to a reduction in agricultural labour, resulting in lower crop yields and diminished agricultural productivity<sup>82</sup>. If this trend is left unaddressed, it could have significant implications for food security, poverty reduction, and overall economic stability in the region. Despite the importance of agriculture in Cross River North, there is a notable gap in research on the link between rural-urban migration and food security in this locality. Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing policies that will enhance agricultural productivity and ensure the sustainability of rural livelihoods.

Agriculture remains the backbone of rural economies across many regions of Nigeria, including the Cross River North Senatorial District. It serves as the principal source of livelihood, employment, and food security for rural households. However, in recent decades, rural-urban migration has emerged as a significant challenge to agricultural productivity in this region. Increasingly, young and able-bodied individuals who make up the bulk of the agricultural workforce are relocating to urban centres in pursuit of enhanced economic

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<sup>81</sup> Cross River State Ministry of Agriculture, *Agricultural Overview of Cross River North Senatorial District* (Calabar: Cross River State Government, 2020).

<sup>82</sup> Bekwarra Local Government Area Development Plan: *Rural-Urban Migration and Its Impact on Agriculture* (Bekwarra: Bekwarra Local Government Area, 2020).

opportunities, education, and improved living standards<sup>83</sup>. This migration trend has resulted in a diminished rural labour force, leading to smaller farm sizes, lower agricultural yields, and, in some

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instances, the abandonment of farmlands<sup>84</sup>. Despite these observable consequences, there remains a dearth of empirical research specifically investigating the relationship between rural-urban migration and food security in Cross River North. Most extant studies address migration within broader socio-economic frameworks, often neglecting its direct impact on rural agricultural systems within this senatorial district. Consequently, policy responses have been limited and insufficiently informed. This study aims to bridge this gap by critically assessing how rural-urban migration influences food security through declining agricultural productivity. It explores the extent of labour shortages, alterations in land use patterns, and shifts in crop production. A nuanced understanding of these dynamics is crucial for formulating effective interventions that mitigate the adverse effects of migration while promoting rural agricultural sustainability and development in the region.

Some concepts that are pertinent to the study are clarified in the paragraphs below. Rural–urban migration refers to the movement of individuals from rural areas, typically characterised by agricultural livelihoods and low population density, to urban centres, where there is a perception of enhanced opportunities in employment, education, healthcare, and overall living standards. This form of internal migration is a common demographic trend in many developing nations and is largely driven by both “push” factors in rural communities, such as poverty, limited access to essential services, and unemployment, and “pull” factors in urban centres, including perceived economic prospects and modern amenities. Rural–urban migration has become increasingly pronounced due to stark disparities in development between rural and urban regions. As urban areas expand and industrialise, young and able-

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<sup>83</sup> L. M. Olayiwola and A. S. Okude, “Rural-Urban Migration and Its Implications on Agricultural Development in Nigeria,” *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, (2020): 34–47.

<sup>84</sup> C. O. Nwosu and N. N. Oguoma, “Labour Migration and Agricultural Productivity in Rural Nigeria: A Regional Analysis,” *Nigerian Journal of Agriculture, Food and Environment*, (2019): 68–74.

bodied individuals are frequently drawn to the apparent prosperity of city life, leaving behind an ageing and diminished rural population. This shift poses serious implications for rural communities, particularly within the agricultural sector, which relies heavily on youthful labour. Although migration can lead to remittances that support rural households, it

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often results in a declining labour force, abandoned farmlands, and reduced agricultural productivity. Moreover, the growing urban population places additional strain on infrastructure and employment opportunities, contributing to the proliferation of poverty in both rural and urban contexts. Consequently, rural–urban migration is not merely a demographic shift, but a multifaceted socio-economic phenomenon, with significant implications for sustainable national development, especially in agrarian societies<sup>85</sup>.

Food security is a multidimensional concept that encompasses the availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability of food. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), food security exists when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life <sup>86</sup> .” This definition underscores four key components: food availability, food access, food utilisation, and the stability of these elements over time. Food availability refers to the physical presence of food, typically determined by domestic agricultural production, food imports, and humanitarian assistance. Access involves individuals' ability to obtain adequate food through means such as purchasing, exchange, or social safety nets. Utilisation concerns the body's capacity to digest and absorb nutrients from food, which is shaped by dietary quality, health status, and sanitation conditions. Stability implies that food availability, access, and utilisation are reliably sustained over time, without

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<sup>85</sup> Aderanti Adepoju, “Patterns of Migration in West Africa,” in *At Home in the World? International Migration and Development in Contemporary Ghana and West Africa*, ed. Takyiwaa Manuh (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2005), 24–54.

<sup>86</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, *Food Security: Policy Brief, Issue 2* (Rome: FAO, 2006), [https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf\\_Food\\_Security\\_Coept\\_Note.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf_Food_Security_Coept_Note.pdf).

significant disruptions caused by conflict, economic downturns, or environmental shocks.

In semi-urban areas such as the Cross River North Senatorial District, food security is closely linked to agricultural productivity. Rural–urban migration can diminish the agricultural labour force, leading to reduced food production and, consequently, jeopardising both household and regional food security. A drop in food output may also

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heighten reliance on food imports or drive-up local food prices, undermining economic access to food. Therefore, tackling migration-related challenges and promoting sustainable agricultural practices are vital for safeguarding food security in rural communities.

Labour constitutes a fundamental factor of production and is essential to the creation of goods and services in any economy. In economic terms, labour refers to the human effort, both physical and mental, applied in the production process<sup>87</sup>. This includes work undertaken by individuals for wages, salaries, or through self-employment, and remains a critical driver of productivity and economic growth. Unlike other factors of production, such as land and capital, labour entails the direct engagement of people who contribute skills, knowledge, and experience to productive activities<sup>88</sup>. In agrarian economies, particularly in rural areas such as the Cross River North Senatorial District, labour is predominantly manual and often seasonal, relying heavily on the availability of physically capable individuals. The quantity and quality of agricultural labour influence not only output levels but also the efficiency of land utilisation and the uptake of improved farming methods<sup>89</sup>. Therefore, disruptions to the rural labour force, such as those brought about by rural–urban migration, can have significant negative impacts on agricultural productivity and, by extension, food security. The migration of young people from rural communities typically results in a depletion of the active farm labour force, as the older population remaining may lack the capacity to

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<sup>87</sup> Michael P. Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, *Economic Development*, 12th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Adebayo Adebayo, *Principles of Economics for Agricultural Development* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2010).

<sup>89</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, *The Role of Labour in Agricultural Development*, (Rome: FAO, 2021).

sustain or expand agricultural activities. Labour dynamics are also shaped by a range of demographic, socio-economic, and institutional factors, including education, health status, gender roles, and access to technology. A comprehensive understanding of labour, particularly within the context of rural agriculture, is crucial to assessing how migration patterns affect farm productivity and the broader trajectory of rural development.

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Agricultural activities encompass a wide range of processes associated with the cultivation of crops and the rearing of livestock for food, raw materials, and other essential products that support human survival and economic advancement. These activities form the backbone of rural livelihoods, particularly in developing countries where agriculture remains a dominant sector of the economy<sup>90</sup>. They include land preparation, planting, irrigation, fertilisation, weeding, pest control, harvesting, and post-harvest handling. In addition, livestock rearing, aquaculture, and agroforestry constitute vital components of agricultural operations.

In rural areas such as the Cross River North Senatorial District, agriculture is largely subsistence-based, dominated by smallholder farming systems that depend heavily on manual labour and traditional implements<sup>91</sup>. Beyond food production, agriculture in these regions plays a crucial role in job creation, income generation, and sustaining local economies. However, the productivity and efficiency of these activities are frequently hampered by limited access to modern agricultural technologies, poor infrastructure, and a declining rural workforce, partly a result of increasing rural-to-urban migration. Moreover, agricultural practices are intricately linked to seasonal variations, environmental factors, and socio-economic conditions. Labour availability remains particularly significant, as many agricultural tasks are labour-intensive and time-sensitive. The

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<sup>90</sup> J. Smith, "Agriculture and Economic Development in Developing Nations: A Review," *Journal of Rural Economics*, (2021): 213–225, <https://doi.org/10.1007/jre.2021.0173>.

<sup>91</sup> P. C. Okeke and A. L. Thompson, "Smallholder Farming Systems in Cross River North Senatorial District: An Analysis of Traditional Farming Practices," *Journal of African Agricultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2020): 101–115.



outmigration of rural dwellers further exacerbates labour shortages, thereby hindering key agricultural operations and contributing to the underutilisation of fertile land<sup>92</sup>. A thorough understanding of these agricultural processes is vital for assessing the effects of sociodemographic transformations, such as migration, on agricultural productivity and rural development.

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Crop yield and land utilisation are vital indicators of agricultural productivity and sustainability, particularly in agrarian economies like Nigeria's. Crop yield refers to the quantity of agricultural produce harvested per unit area of land, typically measured in kilograms or tonnes per hectare. It is a critical determinant of food availability, farmer income, and overall agricultural performance. Higher crop yields generally reflect the efficient use of resources such as labour, fertilisers, and irrigation, while low yields may indicate challenges like soil degradation, pest infestations, limited access to agricultural technologies, or insufficient labour<sup>93</sup>. Land utilisation, on the other hand, concerns how and to what extent arable land is used for agricultural activities. This includes decisions on crop selection, cropping intensity, fallow periods, and the allocation of land for subsistence versus commercial farming. Efficient land utilisation ensures that available agricultural land is used optimally to support food production and sustain rural livelihoods. However, in many rural areas of Nigeria, land utilisation patterns are increasingly influenced by socio-economic factors, particularly rural-urban migration<sup>94</sup>. The migration of able-bodied individuals from rural to urban areas can lead to labour shortages, resulting in underutilisation of farmland, reduced cropping frequency, and, in some cases, land abandonment. These shifts can significantly impact crop yields and overall agricultural

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<sup>92</sup> U. O. Nwachukwu, "Migration Patterns and Their Impact on Agricultural Labour in Rural Nigeria," *International Journal of Rural Development*, (2022): 55–68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrd.2022.0047>.

<sup>93</sup> R. Adeyemo and W. Olayiwola, "Impact of Crop Yield on Agricultural Productivity in Nigeria," *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, (2020): 45–58.

<sup>94</sup> J. Eze and M. Okoro, "Land Utilisation Patterns in Nigerian Agriculture: A Critical Review," *Land Use Policy* 52 (2019): 142–155.

output<sup>95</sup>. In regions like Cross River North, where farming remains the primary economic activity, understanding the relationship between rural-urban migration, crop yield, and land use is crucial for developing effective agricultural and rural development policies.

The study investigates the effects of rural–urban migration on the availability of labour for agricultural activities in south-eastern Nigeria, with particular emphasis on its implications for food security<sup>96</sup>. Employing both qualitative and quantitative research

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methods, the study explores migration patterns, demographic changes, and their consequences for farming labour availability. Data were gathered through surveys and interviews with rural farmers across various communities in the region. The findings demonstrate that rural–urban migration, especially among young and economically active individuals, has considerably depleted the agricultural labour force in rural areas. This demographic shift has resulted in a marked decline in farm productivity, as predominantly elderly individuals and a reduced workforce are left to manage agricultural operations. The research further reveals that the migration of youth to urban centres in search of improved economic prospects has led to a shortage of labour in rural communities. This shortage has, in turn, hindered the timely execution of farming tasks and adversely affected crop yields and seasonal farming cycles.

Moreover, the study highlights the broader implications of this migration trend for food security and economic stability, as diminished agricultural production undermines both subsistence and commercial farming. The research advocates for policy measures aimed at incentivising youth participation in agriculture and fostering sustainable rural development. Such interventions are deemed essential to mitigating the adverse effects of rural–urban migration. Overall, the study offers critical insights into the interplay between migration and

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<sup>95</sup> A. Okwu and J. Imobighe, “The Effects of Rural-Urban Migration on Agricultural Productivity in Nigeria: Implications for Food Security,” *Rural Development Review*, (2018): 213–228.

<sup>96</sup> Chinedu N. Okeke and Ifeoma O. Umeh, *Effects of Rural–Urban Migration on Agricultural Labour in Southeastern Nigeria* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 2021).

agriculture and proposes strategies for enhancing labour availability and ensuring food security in south-eastern Nigeria.

Several scholars have investigated the effects of rural-urban migration on agricultural productivity and food security in Nigeria's northcentral region, particularly concerning labour shortages and declining agricultural output. As rural communities witness a continuous departure of young, economically active individuals in search of improved prospects in urban areas, the supply of agricultural labour has been markedly reduced<sup>97</sup>. The study utilises a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews with farmers and quantitative surveys to evaluate changes in farming practices and

productivity in communities affected by migration. The findings indicate a significant decline in the agricultural workforce, leading to reduced crop yields, smaller farm sizes, and a transition towards less labour-intensive farming methods. Additionally, the migration of younger, more skilled individuals has resulted in an ageing rural population, intensifying labour shortages and jeopardising the sustainability of agricultural practices. This demographic transformation has adversely affected food security and the economic resilience of rural households. The study emphasises the urgency of policy measures to promote youth engagement in agriculture, enhance rural infrastructure, and generate appealing economic prospects in rural settings, to reverse migration patterns. It enriches existing literature on rural-urban migration and its implications for agricultural development, offering valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners striving to mitigate the negative outcomes of migration on Nigeria's agricultural sector.

Another empirical study conducted in Oyo State critically examined the influence of rural-urban migration on agricultural land use and crop productivity<sup>98</sup>. As in many developing nations, migration in Nigeria has drastically altered agricultural dynamics. Using both qualitative and

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<sup>97</sup> A. A. Yusuf and M. B. Adeoye, *Rural-Urban Migration and Its Impact on Agricultural Productivity in North-Central Nigeria* (Ibadan: Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2021).

<sup>98</sup> "The Effects of Rural-Urban Migration on Agricultural Productivity and Food Security in Southwestern Nigeria," *Journal of Agricultural Development Studies* 15, no. 2 (2022): 34–49.

quantitative data, this study assessed the impact of youth migration on the availability of farm labour and the utilisation of farmland. Surveys among rural households and local authorities revealed that the departure of young people in search of urban employment opportunities has significantly reduced the agricultural workforce. This has resulted in smaller areas of land being cultivated and a marked decline in crop yields. Older family members who remain in rural communities are frequently unable to manage farming activities effectively, leading to less intensive agricultural practices. The study concludes that rural-urban migration negatively affects food security and economic sustainability in Oyo State. It advocates for improvements in rural infrastructure, incentives for youth engagement in agriculture, and policies that enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of farming as a livelihood. The Dual Labour Market theory, developed by economists Michael Piore and

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Peter Doeringer in the early 1970s, has been employed to analyse the phenomenon under investigation <sup>99</sup>. This theory asserts that labour markets are not uniform; rather, they are bifurcated into two distinct segments: the primary and secondary labour markets. According to the theory, these two markets function under markedly different conditions. The primary labour market is typified by high wages, job security, opportunities for career progression, and favourable working environments. In contrast, the secondary labour market is defined by low wages, poor job security, restricted opportunities for advancement, and unstable working conditions.

The core assumptions of the theory are as follows:

- i. Labour markets are divided into two sectors, each operating independently of the other.
- ii. Workers in the secondary sector typically possess lower levels of education and skills, and they face limited prospects for upward mobility.

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<sup>99</sup> "Impact of Rural-Urban Migration on Agricultural Land Use and Crop Productivity in Oyo State, Nigeria," *African Journal of Rural Sociology* 10, no. 1 (2021): 58–73.

- iii. Migration is largely driven by the movement of individuals from the rural-based secondary sector to the urban-based primary sector in search of improved economic opportunities.

The Dual Labour Market theory is particularly relevant to the examination of rural-urban migration and its impact on agricultural productivity, especially in the Cross River North Senatorial District. The theory elucidates how disparities between the primary and secondary labour markets motivate migration from rural to urban settings<sup>100</sup>. In this context, agriculture, predominant in rural areas, functions as the secondary labour market, characterised by low remuneration, job insecurity, and poor working conditions. Conversely, urban areas represent the primary sector, offering better wages, job stability, and career development, thus attracting economically active youth. This migration pattern significantly affects the agricultural sector in Cross River North, as the departure of young people results in a depleted rural labour force. Older farmers, who remain behind, face challenges in sustaining

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productivity levels. Consequently, this demographic shift contributes to reduced agricultural output and underutilised arable land. The Dual Labour Market theory, therefore, offers a robust framework for understanding the dynamics between migration, labour availability, and agricultural productivity in the region.

## OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to assess the impact of ruralurban migration on food security in the Cross River North Senatorial District. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the extent to which rural-urban migration affects the availability of labour for agricultural activities in Bekwarra, Cross River North Senatorial District.
- ii. Analyse the effects of rural-urban

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<sup>100</sup> Michael J. Piore and Peter Doeringer, *Internal Labour Markets and Manpower Analysis* (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1971)

## migration on crop yield and land utilisation in Bekwarra, Cross River North Senatorial District.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The target population for this study comprised rural farming households, local authorities, and community leaders, all of whom could offer valuable insights into the socio-economic effects of ruralurban migration on agriculture in the Bekwarra Local Government Area, situated within the Cross River North Senatorial District. This area is predominantly agrarian, and its inhabitants are directly affected by shifts in food security resulting from migration. The research aimed to provide a detailed understanding of how ruralurban migration influences food availability and stability in the region<sup>101</sup>. To ensure adequate representation of all key subgroups within the population - such as male and female farmers, as well as younger and older agricultural workers - a stratified random sampling method was employed.

A total of 300 respondents were selected from several rural communities across the ten wards of the local government area. This sample size was determined based on the number of farming households and the need for statistical reliability<sup>102</sup>. Such a sampling framework allowed for a wide range of perspectives to be captured. Data was collected using structured questionnaires administered to farmers, aiming to gather quantitative information on migration trends, labour availability, and crop productivity. Secondary data were also obtained from governmental reports and prior academic studies. Employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches offered a more comprehensive insight into the subject matter. Stratified sampling guaranteed representativeness, while the integration of surveys and

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<sup>101</sup> Aderanti Adepoju, *Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2008).

<sup>102</sup> National Population Commission (NPC) and ICF, *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018* (Abuja, Nigeria and Rockville, MD: NPC and ICF, 2019).

interviews enabled a deeper analysis of the complex interplay between rural-urban migration and food security. These methods were well-aligned with the research objectives.

## RESULTS

In total, we analysed 289 copies of questionnaires that were returned from the total of 300 that were distributed to respondents. Results are presented in tabular form, analysed, and discussed below.

**Table 1:** Rural-urban migration has reduced the number of available workers for farming activities in Bekwarra

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	60	20.7
Agree	120	41.5
Strongly Disagree	44	15.2
Disagree	54	18.6
Undecided	11	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Computed by Authors, 2025

The data revealed that rural-urban migration significantly affects the availability of farm labour in Bekwarra. A combined 62.2% of

respondents (Strongly Agree – 20.7%, Agree – 41.5%) believed that migration has reduced the number of available workers for farming. This suggested a majority consensus on the negative impact of migration on agricultural labour. Conversely, 33.8% either disagreed (18.6%) or strongly disagreed (15.2%), indicating that a notable portion does not share this view. Only 4% remained undecided. These results highlight a critical labour gap in the agricultural sector, likely driven by youth and workforce movement to urban areas, which could have long-term consequences on crop production and rural economic stability if not addressed through targeted interventions.

**Table 2:** Lack of sufficient local labour for farming in Bekwarra has led to the hiring of migrant workers from neighbouring states.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	62	21.5
Agree	91	31.6
Strongly Disagree	48	16.5
Disagree	75	25.8
Undecided	13	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Computed by the Authors, 2025

The data in Table 2 indicated that a significant proportion of respondents believed that the shortage of local labour in Bekwarra has led to the hiring of migrant workers from neighbouring states. A combined 53.1% (21.5% strongly agree, 31.6% agree) supported this view, suggesting that rural-urban migration may be depleting the local workforce. Meanwhile, 42.3% (25.8% disagree, 16.5% strongly disagree) do not share this opinion, reflecting a notable division in perception. Only 4.5% remained undecided. This result implies that while more than half of the respondents acknowledged labour shortages due to migration, a considerable portion either disagrees or sees other factors at play. These findings highlight labour dynamics as a critical issue in local agricultural productivity.

**Table 3:** Rural-urban migration has led to a decline in the availability of labour for farming activities in this area

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	57	19.7
Agree	103	35.6 17
Strongly Disagree	49	18
Disagree	52	9.6
Undecided	28	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	

**Source:** Computed by the Authors, 2025

The survey results indicated that rural-urban migration has significantly affected labour availability for farming in Bekwarra Local



Government Area. A combined 55.3% of respondents (19.7% strongly agree, 35.6% agree) believed that migration has reduced farming labour, suggesting a notable concern among the population. Conversely, 35% of respondents (17% strongly disagree, 18% disagree) do not perceive a decline in labour availability, indicating some variation in experience or perception. Meanwhile, 9.6% remain undecided, reflecting uncertainty or lack of direct impact. Overall, the data shows that over half of the respondents recognise a negative impact of migration on farming labour, which could directly influence agricultural productivity and land use patterns in the area.

**Table 4:** Rural-urban migration and its effects on underutilisation or abandonment of farmlands in the community.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	59	20.5
Agree	94	32.5
Strongly Disagree	48	16.5
Disagree	76	26.3
Undecided	12	4.3
<b>Total</b>	289	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Computed by the Authors, 2025

The data revealed that a significant portion of respondents agree that rural-urban migration has contributed to farmland underutilisation or abandonment in Bekwarra Local Government Area. Specifically, 32.5% agreed and 20.5% strongly agreed, totalling 53% who believed migration negatively impacts land use. Conversely, 26.3% disagreed and 16.5% strongly disagreed, indicating that 42.8% do not share this view. Only 4.3% remained undecided. This suggested that while a majority perceive a decline in land use due to migration, a considerable portion of the population either disagrees or has not observed this trend. The data highlighted the need for further investigation into the causes and consequences of migration, as well as potential strategies to encourage effective land utilisation in the area.

## **DISCUSSION**

Findings from Tables 1 and 2 underscore the significant impact of rural-urban migration on agricultural labour availability in Bekwarra LGA. Most respondents (62.2%) affirmed that migration has reduced the number of available workers for farming, while 53.1% acknowledged that the resulting labour gap has necessitated the hiring of migrant workers from neighbouring states. These perceptions suggested a growing dependence on external labour, likely due to the emigration of able-bodied youths seeking opportunities in urban centres. These findings indicated that rural-urban migration in Nigeria contributes to rural labour shortages, hampering agricultural productivity. Similarly, *the finding* noted that migration disrupts traditional farming structures, leading to a reliance on hired labour and reduced farm efficiency. The evidence from Bekwarra mirrors these empirical reviews, highlighting how migration reshapes labour patterns and places additional pressure on local agricultural systems. The survey findings revealed a significant concern regarding the impact of rural-urban migration on both labour availability and land use in Bekwarra LGA. Over half of the respondents (55.3%) agreed that migration has led to a decline in the availability of farming labour. This revealed that migration often results in a shortage of agricultural workers, particularly affecting smallholder farms. Regarding farmland underutilisation, 53% of respondents agreed that migration has led to abandoned or underutilised farmlands. However, 42.8% of respondents disagreed, indicating varying experiences and perceptions. This suggests that while migration may be a factor, other local dynamics could also play a role in farmland utilisation. Further investigation is needed to explore these complexities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicated that rural-urban migration has a notable impact on food security through the decline of agricultural labour availability and land utilisation in Bekwarra LGA. The emigration of young and able-bodied individuals has led to a significant labour shortage, with 62.2% of respondents affirming reduced access to farm workers and over half acknowledging a reliance on external

migrant labour to bridge the gap. Furthermore, the study shows that 53% of respondents believe migration has resulted in underutilised or abandoned farmland. However, a notable portion of the population holds a different view, suggesting the need to explore other contributing factors such as land tenure issues, economic conditions, or climate variability. Overall, rural-urban migration has reshaped traditional agricultural practices in Bekwarra, posing both challenges and opportunities for future land use planning and rural development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Stemming from the above findings, the following are recommended.

- i. To mitigate the decline in farm labour, local authorities should implement rural development programmes that encourage youth engagement in agriculture through training, financial incentives, and mechanisation support.
- ii. Governments at all levels should establish land management initiatives that support cooperative farming and provide access to idle land for willing local farmers. This will address issues relating to the underutilisation of viable land in the study area.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper titled “Effects of Rural-Urban Migration on Food Security in Bekwarra North Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria”. The research was conducted independently and was not influenced by any personal, financial or institutional interest that could affect the objectivity, integrity, or validity of the study. All sources of data and funding (if any) have been duly acknowledged.

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