

CHALLENGES OF COMMODITY MARKET ASSOCIATIONS AT MANAGING DISPUTES AMONG MEMBERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TRADING IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The Commodity Market Association (CMA); a pivotal body in regulating and ensuring smooth market operations, faces significant challenges in managing the disputes effectively among members leading to disruption of trading activities, strain relationships between members, and negative impact in the overall economic well-being of market participants. This study examined the challenges of the CMAs at managing disputes among members and their implications for trading activities in Kwara State, Nigeria. It specifically explored the sources of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State, examined the effects of trade disputes among members on trading activities, and identified the challenges of CMAs at managing disputes among members. The study employed a quantitative approach, and the survey was administered to members of selected Commodity Market Associations and other key stakeholders across the state. It also utilized secondary data sources to include relevant academic and research materials, books, journals, newspapers, archival materials, workshop and seminar papers, as well as sources from the Internet. Other methodology involved purposive sampling method in selecting two marketplaces in each of the senatorial district of the State to ensure representation across different commodity markets, while data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data. The study concluded that there are many sources of dispute among commodity traders with negative implications for the market traders in Kwara State while the management of such disputes by CMA are largely challenged by concerts of internal and external factors.

Keywords: Commodity Market Associations, Dispute Management Strategies, Trading Implications, Conflict Resolution Challenges

Introduction

Commodity markets serve as critical hubs for the exchange of raw materials and agricultural products, playing a pivotal role in global trade and economic development. These markets facilitate transactions between producers, traders, and consumers across borders, contributing to food security, price stability, and economic growth worldwide (Wu, & Salzman, 2014; Wonnacott, 2022; Hayes, 2024). Despite the functions and importance of markets to buyers and sellers, dispute is often triggered over different issues, including stiff competition for space to display market products and over snatching of customers, among other diverse sources of conflict generation in the market (Kenton & Boyle, 2020; Onwachukwu, et al., 2021). Also, conflictive parties in the market include the actors in the chain of distribution of market goods and services, including those between traders and customers, transporters and traders, and between traders and market tax collectors (Gent and Crescenzi, 2021). Invariably, there is strong potential for a range of trade-related issues leading to dispute in commodity markets. In many cases, such dispute is associated with sudden price hike, grievances over excessive tax levied on market goods, selfish desire to occupy market space meant for many traders by one person, and pursuance of sit tight-syndrome by market union leaders often cause trade dispute in the market. However, managing disputes within commodity market associations is a common challenge faced globally (Zartman, 2008 & Iyoboyi, 2014).

Globally, commodity markets are essential for food security, economic development, and poverty reduction. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates that commodity markets support the livelihoods

of over 2.5 billion people worldwide (WITS, 2020; Xiang, 2020). However, these markets are often plagued by disputes and conflicts, which often lead to market failures, price volatility, and reduced trade. Consequently, the best practices, globally, in dispute management include establishing transparent and efficient mediation processes, promoting dialogue among stakeholders, and leveraging technology for communication and monitoring. Countries with well-developed commodity markets often have regulatory frameworks and industry standards that govern dispute resolution, enhancing market integrity and investor confidence (Vernon-Shore, 2020; Mitchell, 2021). The sheer scale and diversity of participants in global commodity markets amplify the challenges of dispute resolution, requiring robust mechanisms to ensure fair and efficient outcomes. International organizations and trade agreements, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional trade blocs, provide frameworks and guidelines aimed at mitigating disputes and promoting smoother trading relationships across borders (Roodman, 2020).

In Nigeria, agriculture is a significant sector of the economy, contributing about 25% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The sector employs over 50% of the labour force, with many farmers and traders relying on commodity markets for their livelihoods (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Thus, commodity markets play a crucial role in the agricultural sector, which remains a significant contributor to the national economy. States like Kwara, located in the agricultural belt of Nigeria, host vibrant markets where farmers, traders, and consumers converge to exchange goods and services. However, these markets are not without challenges, particularly concerning the management of disputes among market members. Nationally, challenges in managing disputes by commodity market associations include inadequate infrastructure, lack of regulatory oversight, and limited access to market information. Disputes over pricing, quality, and resource allocation are prevalent, impacting market efficiency and trader relationships (Todorova, Goh, & Weingart, 2021; Yevsyukova, 2022).

Furthermore, market associations in Kwara State play a vital role in regulating trade activities, ensuring fair practices, and providing a platform for market participants to engage in commerce. Yet, managing disputes among members poses significant challenges to these market associations. Issues such as pricing disputes, disagreements over product quality, and conflicts related to resource allocation are common (Cadilhon & Dedieu, 2011). These disputes not only disrupt daily market operations but also hinder market growth and profitability. In Kwara State, market associations often lack adequate dispute resolution mechanisms, leading to prolonged conflicts and increased transaction costs for traders. These challenges generally lead to disputes and conflicts among farmers, traders, and other stakeholders, which are negatively impacting on trading activities and the livelihoods of those involved (Amadeo, 2021). Interestingly, some local efforts to address these challenges include capacity-building programmes, awareness campaigns on conflict management, and community-based initiatives to promote cooperation among traders.

Despite these initiatives, commodity market associations in Kwara State continue to face significant challenges in managing disputes and conflicts. There is a need for a comprehensive study to investigate the challenges facing commodity market associations in managing disputes and conflicts and the implications of these challenges for trading activities and the livelihoods of farmers and traders. This study will, therefore, explore the challenges of commodity market associations in managing disputes and conflicts and the implications of these challenges for trading activities and the livelihoods of farmers and traders in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study will provide insights into the sources of disputes among CMAs, the challenges facing commodity market associations, and the implications of these challenges on trading activities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to appraise the challenges of the CMAs at managing disputes among members and their implications for trading activities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to:

- i. explore the sources of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State;
- ii. examine the effects of trade disputes among members on trading activities in Kwara State, and
- iii. investigate the challenges of managing disputes among members by CMAs in Kwara State.

Research Questions

This study answers the following questions:

- i. What are the sources of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State?
- ii. How do trade disputes among members affect trading activities in Kwara State?
- iii. What are the challenges of managing disputes among members by CMAs in Kwara State?

Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey to achieve the stated objectives. The population for this study is estimated to be Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty-Nine (13,259) market traders in all the registered marketplaces in Kwara State (Kwara State Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of commerce, 2022). However, the targeted population would consist of men and women of commodity traders in some selected registered marketplaces in the three senatorial districts of the State, heads of the market union and security agents (NSCDC/POLICE) stationed at those marketplaces.

For this study, purposive sampling method is adopted in selecting two marketplaces in each of the senatorial district of the State, namely, Gbugbu International market and Kaima market both in Edu and Kaima LGAs of Kwara North Senatorial district; Owode Market and Kara Ajase both in Offa and Irepodun LGAs of Kwara South Senatorial district; and Ipata and Mandate market in Ilorin East and West LGAs of Kwara Central Senatorial district. A total One Thousand Three Hundred and Twenty-Six (1,326) respondents which represents ten percent (10%) of the estimated Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred and Hundred Fifty-Nine (13,259) study population was considered as sample size in the six purposively selected commodity marketplaces across the State. Also, this sample size of 1,326, includes other relevant stakeholders, i.e security agents and market union leaders in each of the markets. Invariably Two Hundred and Twenty-One respondents (221) in each of the six designated markets are served questionnaire. Due to some constraints, the study will make use of a total number of Nine Hundred and Forty-Two (942), representing 71% of the total sample size, duly answered and returned questionnaires for its data analysis and results.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections to satisfy the research questions and objectives of the study. Section A is concerned with the bio/demographical data of the respondents, whereas Sections B contained of items constructed to extract information from the respondents. Respondents are required to make choices from four (4) options Likert's scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to split-half to ensure its reliability and validity where a reliability of 0.71 was established. The secondary data used for the study include relevant academic and research materials, books, journals, newspapers, archival materials, workshop and seminar papers, as well as sources from the Internet dealing on challenges of commodity market associations at managing disputes among members and implications for trading in Kwara State, Nigeria. Furthermore, to the best of the researcher's ability and with the utmost honesty, the study was conducted with quality and profound integrity with the avoidance of any form of disrepute. Accordingly, full consent was sought from and obtained before the retrieval of all kinds of information as ethical issues will be given due consideration.

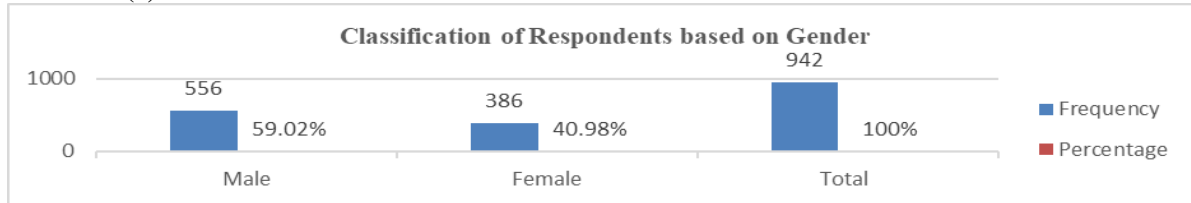
Data Analysis and Results

Questionnaires were produced to be distributed to a total number of One Thousand Three and Twenty-Six (1,326) respondents which represents ten percent (10%) of the estimated Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty-Nine (13,259) study population considered as sample size in the six purposively selected commodity marketplaces across the State, where invariably Two Hundred and Twenty-One respondents (221) in each of the six designated markets will be served questionnaire. However, administering the questionnaires was limited due to some constraints such as limited time where respondents have limited time to spare for participating in the research, trust and suspicion as it becomes challenging to establish trust with the respondents while some are suspicious of the researchers' intentions or concerned about potential repercussions for providing certain information, and limited education or data literacy

making it difficult to administer questionnaire on some respondents. Other constraints are language barrier which creates communication challenges for both researcher and respondents, as well as cultural sensitivity of respondents which the researcher is much aware of and respect the cultural norms and practices of the local commodity traders to avoid any unintended offense or discomfort during the questionnaire administration. Hence, the study will make use of a total number Nine Hundred and Forty-Two (942), representing 71% of the total sample size, duly answered and returned questionnaires for its data analysis and results.

SECTION A: Biodata / Demographic Distribution of Respondents

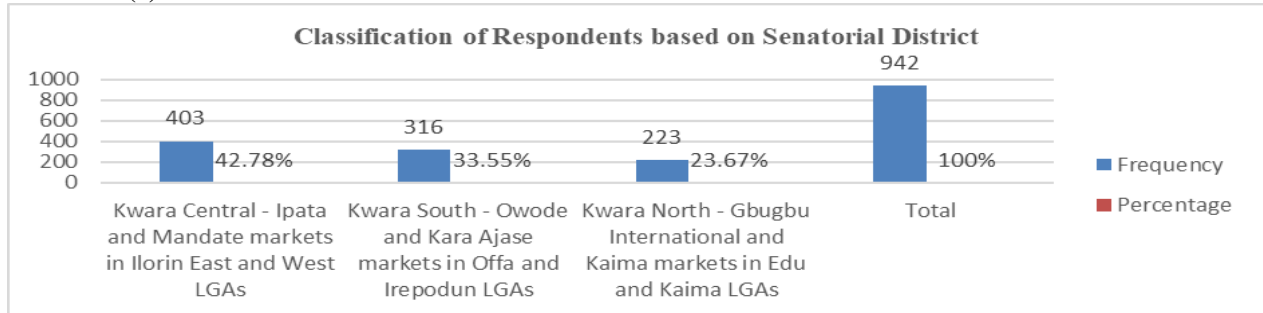
Table one (1)



Source: Field Study, 2023

From the above table it is evident that 556 respondents, representing 59.02% are male while 386 respondents, representing 40.98% are female. Accordingly, it can be seen that there were more male participants in the study than female.

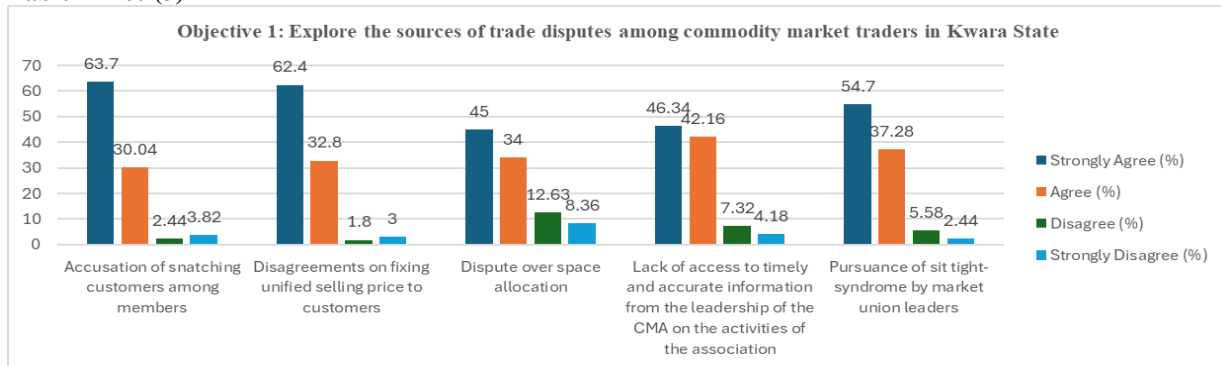
Table two (2)



Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 2 above shows that there were more respondents from Kwara Central Senatorial District of Kwara state, with 403 respondents, representing 42.78%, than either of the other two Senatorial Districts. While 316 respondents, representing 33.55% were from Kwara South Senatorial District, 223 respondents, representing 23.67% were from Kwara North Senatorial District.

Section B: Answering Research Objectives and Questions
Table Three (3)

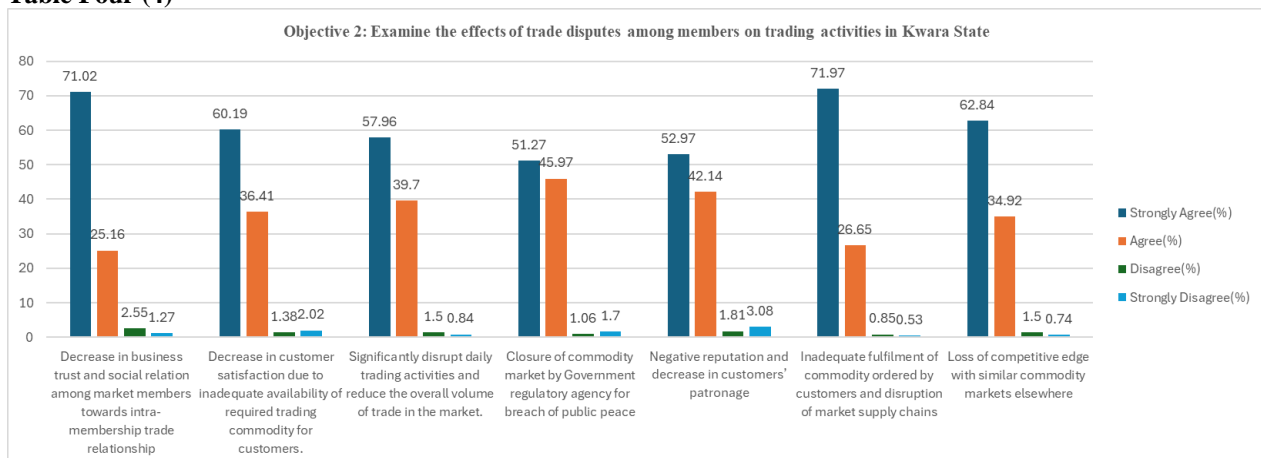


Source: Field Study, 2023

The table above shows that a significant majority of respondents strongly agree (63.7%) and agree (30.04%) that accusations of customer snatching are a major source of disputes, while very few respondents disagree (2.44%) and strongly disagree (3.82%), thus showing widespread acknowledgment of this issue. Also, a majority strongly agree (62.4%) and agree (32.8%) that disagreements over unified pricing are a key source of disputes, with minimal disagreement – disagree (1.8%) and strongly disagree (3.0%). This suggests that most traders see disagreements over unified pricing as a significant source of conflict. In the same vein, almost half of the respondents strongly agree (45.01%) and agree (34%) that space allocation disputes are common. This is corroborated by the levels of disagreement – disagree (12.63%) and strongly disagree (8.36%) to indicate the prominence this issue.

Furthermore, a large portion strongly agree (46.34%) and agree (42.16%) that lack of information is a dispute source within commodity market associations in Kwara State, while very few respondents disagree (7.32%) and strongly disagree (4.18%) to show broad acknowledgment of this issue. Similarly, majority of the respondents strongly agree (54.7%) and agree (37.28%) that leaders' refusal to step down causes disputes, and with a few respondents disagree (5.58%) and strongly disagree (2.44%) to indicate a general consensus on the pursuance of sit tight-syndrome by market union leaders. In the overall, the most common sources of trade disputes among members of CMAs in Kwara State include accusations of customer snatching and disagreements over unified selling prices. Issues like space allocation, lack of communication from leadership, and leaders' reluctance to step down are also significant but vary slightly in perceived impact.

Table Four (4)

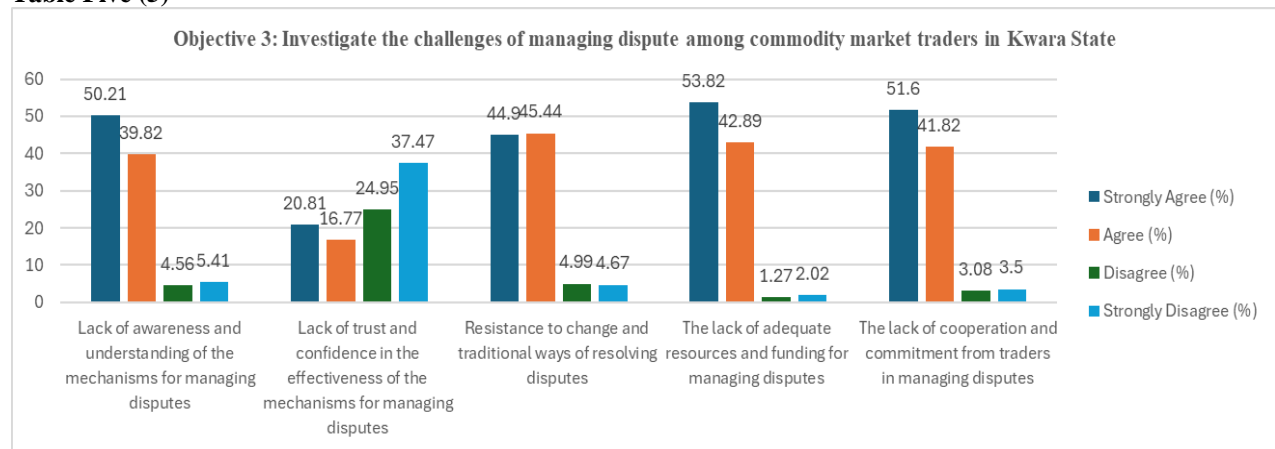


Source: Field Study, 2023

The above findings illustrate the significant effects of trade disputes among members of CMAs on trading activities in Kwara State. A vast majority of respondents believe trade disputes significantly decrease business trust and social relations among market members and as such affect intra-membership trade relationships. In the same manner, a high percentage of respondents agree that trade disputes lead to decreased customer satisfaction due to insufficient access to trading commodities as needed by customers. The data also shows most of the respondents who agree that trade disputes disrupt daily trading activities and reduce the volume of trade transactions in the market.

Similarly, a large majority believe that trade disputes often lead to market closures by regulatory agencies due to breaches of public peace. Furthermore, the table shows that a high proportion of respondents agree that trade disputes result in negative reputations of the market and its CMA, thereby resulting to decreased customer patronage. Also, inadequate fulfillment of orders and disruption in supply chains is seen as a major effect of trade disputes among members of CMAs in Kwara State because a vast number of respondents agree to this issue. Additionally, the majority agree that trade disputes cause a loss of competitive edge compared to other commodity markets. Generally, the findings demonstrate that trade disputes have overwhelmingly negative impacts on various aspects of trading activities, including trust among members, customer satisfaction, market operations, reputation, supply chain efficiency, and competitive positioning.

Table Five (5)



Source: Field Study, 2023

The table above shows that there are challenges of managing dispute among commodity market traders in Kwara State, Nigeria viz, lack of awareness and understanding, lack of trust and confidence, lack of adequate resources and funding, lack of cooperation and commitment from traders, as well as the resistance to change and traditional ways of resolving disputes. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to those items. However, more respondents disagreed (24.95%) and strongly disagreed (37.47%) to lack of trust and confidence in the effectiveness of the mechanisms for managing disputes as a major challenge of managing dispute among commodity market traders in Kwara State, Nigeria. Hence, despite the other challenges more commodity traders still have trust and confidence in the effectiveness of the mechanisms for managing disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State.

Discussion of Findings

These findings collectively emphasize the multifaceted impacts of trade disputes on commodity markets in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study highlights both the sources of conflicts and their broader implications for market dynamics, trader relationships, and operational efficiency. As suggested by Kenton & Boyle, (2020) and Onwachukwu, et al. (2021), a significant majority of respondents strongly agree or agree that accusations of customer snatching are a major source of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State. This indicates that dispute over

snatching of customers contribute significantly to disputes which affect market dynamics and trader relationships. Similarly, there was strong agreement among respondents regarding disputes over unified pricing. This suggests that most traders see unified pricing disagreements as a significant conflict source as posited by Cadilhon & Dedieu (2011) and Wagner (2017). In the same vein, a majority recognized leaders' refusal to step down at the expiration of their tenure as a source of disputes, emphasizing a general consensus on the pursuance of the sit-tight syndrome among market union leaders. The study also found widespread agreement that inadequate communication or information exacerbates trade disputes, thereby highlighting communication as a critical area for improvement. While disagreements over space allocation among traders are acknowledged as a prominent source of disputes. These corroborated the views held by some reviewed literature (Zartman, 2008; Iyoboyi, 2014; Todorova, Goh, & Weingart, 2021; Yevsyukova, 2022).

To align with Amadeo (2021), the findings highlight the impact of trade disputes such that trade disputes considerably reduce business trust and social relations among market members, thereby adversely affecting intra-membership trade relationships. Similarly, a high percentage agree that trade disputes lead to decreased customer satisfaction due to insufficient access to required trading commodities. It also identified the conclusion that trade disputes disrupt daily trading activities and reduce the volume of trade transactions, and that such trade disputes often result in market closures by regulatory agencies due to breach of public peace. The study further indicated that trade disputes lead to negative reputations for the market and its CMAs, resulting in decreased customer patronage. Furthermore, a significant number of respondents also agree that inadequate fulfillment of orders and disruption in supply chains are major effects of trade disputes. Moreover, the majority believe that trade disputes cause a loss of competitive edge compared to other commodity markets (Cadilhon & Dedieu, 2011). According to the study, trade disputes lessen customer satisfaction and loyalty. This outcome underscores the ripple effect of internal market conflicts on external stakeholders, influencing consumer behaviour and market reputation. It reveals that trade disputes lead to increased transaction costs. Also, from a significant portion of respondents, trade disputes are perceived to disrupt daily market activities and decrease trade volumes. This disruption indicates operational challenges that affect market continuity and economic transactions.

Finally, as emphasised by Mckinney (2021) and Coursera (2022), the study found out that key challenges in managing disputes among commodity market traders include lack of awareness and understanding, inadequate resources and funding, lack of cooperation from traders, and resistance to change in traditional dispute resolution methods and adopting new approaches. Similarly, slow dispute resolution processes hinder timely trade execution according to a significant number of respondents to support the view posited by Juneja (2022). These challenges highlight systemic issues that need addressing to enhance dispute management effectiveness. This emphasizes, as noted by Abioro, Odunlami and Ekpudu (2019), the importance of efficient and expedient resolution mechanisms to minimize disruptions and maintain market efficiency.

Conclusion

Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) in Kwara State, Nigeria, face significant challenges in managing member disputes, impacting trading activities and market dynamics. This study identifies critical aspects of these challenges and suggests potential improvements and interventions. Primarily, pricing disagreements and product quality disputes are major conflict sources among traders. These issues highlight the need for clear pricing policies and quality standards within market associations to prevent perceived unfair practices. The study reveals profound implications of these challenges on trading activities in Kwara State. Trade disputes disrupt daily operations, reduce trade volumes, and negatively impact market productivity. The erosion of trust among traders undermines long-term relationships and customer loyalty, affecting market stability and profitability. Unresolved disputes lead to increased transaction costs, financial burdens on traders, and decreased market efficiency. Delays in dispute resolution highlight the need for expedited mechanisms to minimize operational disruptions and ensure timely trade execution.

Effectively managing disputes within CMAs is crucial for enhancing trading activities and fostering a conducive business environment. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions is essential to promote stability, trust, and efficiency in the marketplace. These efforts are vital for mitigating the negative impacts of disputes, stimulating economic growth, and improving livelihoods in Kwara State. Embracing collaborative approaches and best practices in dispute resolution will be key to achieving these objectives and ensuring sustainable development in the state's commodity markets.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, managing disputes among members of Commodity Market Associations in Kwara State, Nigeria, presents several challenges that require targeted recommendations to enhance trading activities and foster a conducive market environment. These include:

- i. Efforts should be made to implement structured and transparent dispute resolution processes within market associations. This should include establishing mediation committees or panels with clear guidelines and timelines for resolving conflicts. Also, Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) should conduct regular training programmes for market association members on conflict management, negotiation skills, and effective communication. This will empower traders to resolve disputes amicably and prevent escalation. As such, educational materials such as handbooks, brochures, and online resources should be developed to disseminate information about management strategies processes and available support services.
- ii. It is crucial to ensure transparency in market operations, including pricing, allocation of resources, and decision-making processes. Transparent practices will reduce misunderstandings and disputes arising from perceived unfairness. In the same vein, Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) should facilitate access to legal resources and advice for market association members. This may include partnerships with legal aid organizations or providing information sessions on legal rights and responsibilities related to trading activities.
- iii. Communication and Transparency should be improved. In other words, there is the need to establish clear communication channels within market associations to facilitate timely information sharing and feedback. Technology such as mobile apps or online platforms should be utilized to enhance communication efficiency. In the same manner, Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) should foster a culture of cooperation among traders through regular meetings, forums, or workshops where concerns and grievances could be discussed openly, thereby encouraging dialogue that will build mutual understanding and trust.
- iv. Association leaders should make efforts to develop guidelines or policies for equitable allocation of market resources such as stalls and storage facilities, and ensure these guidelines are fair and transparent to minimize disputes over resource allocation. Also, regular assessments on the effectiveness of dispute resolution mechanisms and practices within market associations should be carried out so as to gather feedback from members and stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and refine strategies accordingly.
- v. CMAs should engage with state and local government authorities and other regulatory bodies to support market associations in resolving complex disputes or legal issues. The Government should prioritize the development of infrastructure for managing, resolving, and transforming disputes by establishing specialized centres equipped with essential facilities and technology. Additionally, the government should allocate financial support and resources for capacity-building programmes to enhance traders' skills in negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution. Strengthening partnerships with local institutions, legal professionals, and civil society organizations is crucial to leveraging their expertise and resources for improving dispute management capabilities.

- vi. Finally, to foster a culture of cooperation, mutual respect, and trust among traders, concerted efforts are needed. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, community-building activities, and collaborative initiatives. Traders should be encouraged to adopt a proactive approach to dispute resolution, focusing on early intervention, effective communication, and compromise. Recognizing and rewarding positive behaviour and adherence to ethical standards in dispute management and resolution processes will reinforce the value of cooperation and transparency within the market.

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