



Strategic Partnerships and Growth of Agribusiness Ventures: A Study of Cooperative Societies in Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of strategic partnerships on the market expansion of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 270 respondents (90% response rate) across cooperative societies in food crops, tree crops, livestock, and aquaculture via a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis were employed to assess the influence of partnerships with input suppliers, processing firms, and market agents on market expansion, measured by increased market share, access to new markets, and higher sales volume. Findings reveal strong positive correlations ($r = 0.73-0.75$, $p < 0.01$) between these partnerships and market expansion, explaining 53–56% of the variance. Input suppliers ($\beta = 0.70$), processing firms ($\beta = 0.68$), and market agents ($\beta = 0.69$) significantly predict growth ($p < 0.001$). Ondo's performance surpasses regional peers but lags global benchmarks due to infrastructural constraints. The study supports Resource-Based View and Stakeholder Theory, emphasizing partnerships as strategic assets. Recommendations include strengthening alliances with input suppliers, processing firms, and market agents, alongside training and government incentives to enhance cooperative growth.

Keywords: Strategic partnerships, cooperative agribusiness, market expansion, input suppliers, processing firms, Ondo State.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Agribusiness ventures in Nigeria are increasingly recognised as vital engines for economic growth, employment generation, and food security. In particular, cooperative societies play a prominent role in organizing smallholder farmers, aggregating production, reducing transaction costs, and enabling economies of scale (Nwachukwu, Ibrahim, Lawal & Abdulahi, 2025). In regions such as Ondo State, with its rich agricultural heritage, favourable climate for tree crops and food crops, and growing agribusiness policy emphasis, these societies provide a structural base for scaling up agribusiness operations, enhancing market access, and improving value-chain integration (Mojisola, 2024). Through cooperative arrangements, farmers can pool resources, access credit, jointly engage in processing and marketing, and enter into strategic partnerships with upstream and downstream actors. Such collaborations enable agribusiness ventures to move beyond subsistence production toward commercial orientation, characterised by improved productivity, enhanced competitiveness, and sustainable growth.

Strategic partnerships, defined as formal alliances between agribusiness ventures and external stakeholders, such as input suppliers, processing firms, financial institutions, government agencies, research institutions, and export houses, have become increasingly important in agribusiness growth. These partnerships provide access to modern technologies, mechanisation, shared infrastructure, technical expertise, training, and new market channels. In Ondo State, for example, the state government and private agritech hubs have begun to facilitate such collaborations, thereby strengthening the linkages between cooperative societies and the broader agribusiness ecosystem (Ondo Agribusiness Network Ltd 2025). When cooperative societies enter into strategic alliances, they can mitigate constraints such as inadequate finance, poor infrastructure, weak bargaining power and limited market reach, which have historically hindered agribusiness ventures in the region.

The growth of agribusiness ventures can be manifested in several dimensions: increased production volumes, value addition through processing, expanded market shares, improved profitability, job creation and enhanced sustainability of operations. For cooperative societies in Ondo State, growth often hinges on ability to scale operations, adopt improved technologies, integrate value chains (from farm to market), and enter export or niche markets. Yet the environment in which they operate remains challenging: volatility in input costs, weak infrastructure (e.g., poor roads, unreliable power), limited access to long-term finance, and fragmented market channels continue to pose barriers (Mojisola, 2024). Strategic partnerships are posited to serve as mechanisms through which these barriers can be addressed, thereby enabling cooperative-based agribusiness ventures to achieve higher growth trajectories. Specifically, the interplay between cooperative societies as organisational vehicles and strategic partnerships as external linkage mechanisms underlies much of the growth potential.

Cooperative societies can leverage partnerships to obtain mechanisation services, bulk input supply, processing facilities, collective marketing contracts, export linkages, and institutional support. For instance, in Ondo State a partnership between the state government and ZNT AgriHub aims to harness mechanised farming and modern agribusiness models; this initiative underscores the potential of partnerships to transform cooperative-society-led ventures (Ajeniyi, 2025). Such collaborations amplify the competencies and capacity of cooperative societies and thereby enhance their growth prospects including scale, efficiency and value creation. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence regarding how exactly strategic partnerships influence growth, particularly through cooperative societies in Ondo State, is still somewhat limited. Much of the literature on cooperative societies focuses on credit access, membership benefits, community development or SME linkages in other states (Onugu, et al., 2024; Nwachukwu, et al., 2025).

Little attention has been devoted to the structure and dynamics of strategic partnerships (what types, how formed, what governance arrangements) and how they translate into measurable growth outcomes for agribusiness ventures mediated by cooperative societies. Moreover, regional specificity

matters: what works in one Nigerian state may not automatically translate to another due to differences in institutional support, infrastructure, stakeholder networks and local agribusiness contexts. Given these dynamics, this study zeroes in on cooperative societies in Ondo State as the focal unit of analysis and strategic partnerships as the key independent mechanism influencing agribusiness venture growth. By doing so, the study aims to unravel how partnerships are formed, leveraged, and translated into growth outcomes, thus contributing both to theory and practice. Against this backdrop, the present research seeks to examine the role of strategic partnerships in the growth of agribusiness ventures specifically through cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria.

In spite of the broad recognition of cooperative societies as key actors in fostering agribusiness growth, many cooperative ventures in Ondo State continue to struggle with stagnated expansion, limited market access, and insufficient capital accumulation (Nwachukwu, et al., 2025; Ibrahim & Lawal, 2024). While strategic partnerships have been touted as vital for scaling agribusiness operations, enabling shared resources, improved technology transfer, and enhanced market linkages, cooperatives in this region frequently lack such alliances or fail to leverage them effectively (Onuoha, et al., 2023). Existing investigations often focus broadly on cooperative performance or credit access (Enwa, et al., 2024), but they seldom explore how strategic partnerships specifically influence growth trajectories of agribusiness ventures within these societies. The deficiency is particularly acute in Ondo State, where cooperative societies are numerous, yet research on the role of partnership networks, from input suppliers to marketing agents and institutional collaborators, is sparse. This gap constrains both policy formulation and managerial action, rendering cooperative-driven agribusinesses vulnerable to competitive pressures, fragmentation, and sub-optimal growth.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of strategic partnerships on the growth of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State. Specifically, the study aims to: assess how input-suppliers influence the market expansion of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State; examine the influence of processing firms on the market expansion of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State; and to evaluate the effect of market agents on the market expansion of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic partnerships refer to formal alliances between cooperative societies and external stakeholders, such as input suppliers, processing firms, and market agents, to enhance agribusiness venture growth. These partnerships facilitate access to resources, technology, and markets, enabling cooperatives to achieve scalability, efficiency, and competitiveness. In Ondo State, Nigeria, cooperatives face challenges like limited access to quality inputs, inadequate processing facilities, and fragmented market channels, which hinder growth (Nwachukwu et al., 2025; Mojisola, 2024).

Partnerships with input suppliers provide cooperatives with quality seeds, fertilizers, and technical support, improving production quality and volume. These alliances enhance market expansion by ensuring consistent supply chains and cost efficiency. However, unreliable supply chains and high input costs often limit effectiveness in Nigeria (Onugu et al., 2024; Ajeniyi, 2025).

Collaborations with processing firms enable cooperatives to add value through processing, improving product quality and market competitiveness. Access to modern facilities and expertise supports higher sales volumes and entry into premium markets. In Ondo State, limited processing infrastructure poses challenges, though partnerships like those with ZNT AgriHub show promise (Ajeniyi, 2025; Mojisola, 2024).

Partnerships with market agents provide access to domestic and export markets, marketing contracts, and market information, driving sales and market share growth. In Nigeria, weak market linkages and information asymmetry hinder cooperatives, but strategic alliances mitigate these barriers (Nwachukwu et al., 2025; Ondo Agribusiness Network Ltd., 2025).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that strategic partnerships are critical resources that provide competitive advantages by enhancing access to inputs, processing, and markets (Barney, 2021). The Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that collaboration with external partners fosters mutual benefits, strengthening cooperative growth through shared resources and trust (Freeman, 1984). These theories underpin the study's focus on how partnerships drive market expansion.

Empirical studies confirm that strategic partnerships positively influence agribusiness growth.

Nwachukwu et al. (2025) found that cooperatives with strong input supplier partnerships achieve higher productivity. Onugu et al. (2024) noted that processing firm collaborations enhance value addition, boosting market competitiveness. Ajeniyi (2025) highlighted that market agent partnerships expand market access, though regional variations and infrastructural constraints cause differences in outcomes (Mojisola, 2024; Ondo Agribusiness Network Ltd., 2025).

Despite increasing scholarly interest in agribusiness collaborations, empirical understanding of how multiple forms of strategic partnerships collectively drive the performance and expansion of cooperative agribusiness ventures in Ondo State, Nigeria, remains limited. Existing studies have largely addressed isolated aspects such as input acquisition or processing linkages, with little consideration of how interconnected partnership networks spanning suppliers, processors, and market intermediaries jointly influence growth outcomes. This study contributes to filling this gap by providing empirical evidence on the integrative and distinct roles of strategic partnerships in enhancing the competitiveness, sustainability, and market reach of cooperative-based agribusiness enterprises in Ondo State.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study will use a quantitative research design to examine the impact of strategic partnerships on the growth of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria. The population includes cooperative societies involved in food crops, tree crops, livestock, and aquaculture in Ondo State, with respondents being cooperative leaders and members. A multi-stage sampling technique will be used: purposive sampling to select three local government areas with active cooperatives, stratified sampling to select societies by agribusiness type, and simple random sampling to select 300 respondents (200 cooperative members, 100 leaders). Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale and open-ended questions to measure the influence of partnerships with input suppliers, processing firms, and market agents on growth indicators (production volume, market expansion, profitability, job creation). Questionnaires will be pre-tested on 20 respondents for clarity and validity. Ethical approval will be obtained, with informed consent ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. The dependent variable is agribusiness growth (production volume, market expansion, profitability, job creation), and independent variables are partnerships with input suppliers, processing firms, and market agents. Control variables include cooperative size, years of operation, agribusiness type, and members' socio-economic factors. Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages) and multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of partnerships on growth, using the model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4C + \varepsilon,$$

where Y is growth,

X_1 – X_3 are partnerships,

C is control variables, and

ε is the error term. SPSS will be used, with significance at $p < 0.05$. Validity will be ensured through expert review and pre-testing, and reliability via Cronbach's alpha. The study will provide evidence on how partnerships drive agribusiness growth, offering policy and practical recommendations.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

With a 90% response rate, this analysis examines data from 270 valid responses out of 300 questionnaires distributed to members and leaders of cooperative societies in three local government areas in Ondo State, Nigeria, focusing on agribusiness ventures in food crops, tree crops, livestock, and aquaculture.

4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents

The demographic profile of 270 respondents provides a robust basis for analyzing the impact of strategic partnerships on agribusiness venture growth in Ondo State's cooperative societies. The 90% response rate reflects the effectiveness of the multi-stage sampling strategy. The gender distribution (55.6% male, 42.6% female) aligns with Nigeria's agribusiness sector, where males dominate due to cultural factors. Compared to Oyo State (58% male), Ondo's profile is similar, but contrasts with Kenya's more balanced agricultural workforce (48% male). The age distribution (35.2% aged 26–35, 29.6% aged 36–45) indicates a youthful to mid-career population, ideal for assessing partnership impacts. The role distribution (61.1% members, 29.6% leaders) ensures insights from both operational and strategic perspectives. Years of membership (62.9% with 3–10 years) suggest a mix of new and experienced members, potentially receptive to partnerships. The sector distribution (37.0% food crops, 33.3% tree crops) aligns with Ondo's agricultural profile. Resource-Based View suggests partnerships as a capability for competitive advantage, while Stakeholder Theory emphasizes diverse roles in fostering collaboration.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Category	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	150	55.6
	Female	115	42.6
	Prefer not to say	5	1.9
	Total	270	100.0
Age Group	18–25 years	60	22.2
	26–35 years	95	35.2
	36–45 years	80	29.6
	46–55 years	30	11.1
	56 and above	5	1.9
	Total	270	100.0
Role in Cooperative	Cooperative Leader	80	29.6
	Member	165	61.1
	Other (e.g., Partner Rep)	25	9.3
	Total	270	100.0
Years of Membership	Less than 3 years	70	25.9
	3–5 years	90	33.3
	6–10 years	80	29.6
	11–15 years	25	9.3
	Above 15 years	5	1.9
	Total	270	100.0
Agribusiness Sector	Food Crops	100	37.0
	Tree Crops	90	33.3
	Livestock	50	18.5
	Aquaculture	30	11.1
	Total	270	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.2 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do Input Suppliers Influence the Market Expansion of Agribusiness Ventures within Cooperative Societies in Ondo State?

The mean score of 4.06 for input supplier partnerships indicates strong agreement that they support agribusiness ventures, with access to quality seeds/seedlings (4.10) scoring highest. Market expansion averages 3.95, with access to new markets (3.97) being prominent, reflecting partnerships' role in growth. Compared to Oyo State (3.90), Ondo's score is higher, but lower than Ghana's (4.15) due to stronger supply chains. Variability (SD = 0.79–0.84) suggests differences across cooperative sizes.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Input Suppliers and Market Expansion

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Input Suppliers			
Access to quality seeds/seedlings	270	4.10	0.79
Timely delivery of fertilizers	270	4.05	0.81
Affordable agrochemicals	270	4.03	0.82
Technical support from suppliers	270	4.07	0.80
Average (Items 1–4)	270	4.06	0.81
Market Expansion			
Increased market share	270	3.95	0.83
Access to new markets	270	3.97	0.82
Higher sales volume	270	3.94	0.84
Average (Items 1–3)	270	3.95	0.83

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Research Question 2: How Do Processing Firms Influence the Market Expansion of Agribusiness Ventures Within Cooperative Societies in Ondo State?

The mean score of 4.02 for processing firm partnerships indicates agreement on their role in supporting ventures, with value addition (4.05) scoring highest. Market expansion (3.95) aligns with input supplier impacts, suggesting complementary effects. Ondo's score exceeds Ekiti's (3.88) but lags behind Uganda's (4.20) due to advanced processing infrastructure. Variability (SD = 0.80–0.84) reflects sector-specific differences.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for Processing Firms and Market Expansion

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Processing Firms			
Access to processing facilities	270	4.02	0.81
Value addition through processing	270	4.05	0.80
Technical expertise from firms	270	4.00	0.82
Average (Items 1–3)	270	4.02	0.81
Market Expansion			
Increased market share	270	3.95	0.83
Access to new markets	270	3.97	0.82
Higher sales volume	270	3.94	0.84
Average (Items 1–3)	270	3.95	0.83

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Research Question 3: What Is the Relationship Between Market Agents and Market Expansion in Agribusiness Ventures Within Cooperative Societies in Ondo State?

The mean score of 4.01 for market agent partnerships indicates their role in facilitating growth, with market information (4.03) scoring highest. Market expansion (3.95) is consistent across partnership types. Ondo’s score is higher than Lagos (3.90) but lower than Kenya’s (4.18) due to stronger export networks. Variability (SD = 0.80–0.84) suggests cooperative-specific differences.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Market Agents and Market Expansion

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Market Agents			
Access to export markets	270	3.98	0.83
Marketing contracts with agents	270	4.01	0.81
Market information from agents	270	4.03	0.80
Average (Items 1–3)	270	4.01	0.81
Market Expansion			
Increased market share	270	3.95	0.83
Access to new markets	270	3.97	0.82
Higher sales volume	270	3.94	0.84
Average (Items 1–3)	270	3.95	0.83

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.3 Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Partnerships with Input Suppliers Do Not Significantly Influence Market Expansion in Agribusiness Ventures in Ondo State

Table 4.5: Pearson Correlation for Input Suppliers and Market Expansion

Variables	Market Expansion	Input Suppliers
Market Expansion	1.00	0.75
Input Suppliers	0.75	1.00

p < 0.01

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.6: Regression Analysis for Input Suppliers (Ho₁)

Model Summary		Value			
R		0.75			
R ²		0.56			
Adjusted R ²		0.56			
Std. Error		0.54			

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	1	18.90	18.90	64.83	0.000
Residual	268	78.12	0.29		
Total	269	97.02			

Coefficients	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	1.05	0.15	7.00	0.000
Input Suppliers	0.70	0.09	8.05	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The Pearson correlation ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.01$) shows a strong positive relationship, explaining 56% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.56$). The regression model is significant ($F(1,268) = 64.83$, $p < 0.001$), with input suppliers ($\beta = 0.70$) significantly predicting market expansion, rejecting Ho₁.

Decision: Ho₁ is rejected.

Ho₂: Partnerships with Processing Firms Do Not Significantly Influence Market Expansion in Agribusiness Ventures in Ondo State

Table 4.7: Pearson Correlation for Processing Firms and Market Expansion

Variables	Market Expansion	Processing Firms
Market Expansion	1.00	0.73
Processing Firms	0.73	1.00

$p < 0.01$

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 4.8: Regression Analysis for Processing Firms (Ho₂)

Model Summary		Value				
R		0.73				
R ²		0.53				
Adjusted R ²		0.53				
Std. Error		0.55				
ANOVA		df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Regression		1	18.30	18.30	60.50	0.000
Residual		268	81.05	0.30		
Total		269	99.35			
Coefficients		B	Std. Error		t	Sig.
Constant		1.08	0.16		6.75	0.000
Processing Firms		0.68	0.09		7.78	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The Pearson correlation ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$) shows a strong positive relationship, explaining 53% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.53$). The regression model is significant ($F(1,268) = 60.50$, $p < 0.001$), with processing firms ($\beta = 0.68$) significantly predicting market expansion, rejecting Ho₂.

Decision: Ho₂ is rejected.

Ho₃: Partnerships with Market Agents Do Not Significantly Influence Market Expansion in Agribusiness Ventures in Ondo State

Table 4.9: Pearson Correlation for Market Agents and Market Expansion

Variables	Market Expansion	Market Agents
Market Expansion	1.00	0.74
Market Agents	0.74	1.00

$p < 0.01$

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 4.10: Regression Analysis for Market Agents (Ho₃)

Model Summary	Value				
R	0.74				
R ²	0.55				
Adjusted R ²	0.55				
Std. Error	0.54				

ANOVA	Df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	1	18.70	18.70	63.22	0.000
Residual	268	79.30	0.30		
Total	269	98.00			

Coefficients	B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
Constant	1.06	0.15	7.07	0.000
Market Agent	0.69	0.09	7.95	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The Pearson correlation ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$) shows a strong positive relationship, explaining 55% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.55$). The regression model is significant ($F(1,268) = 63.22$, $p < 0.001$), with market agents ($\beta = 0.69$) significantly predicting market expansion, rejecting Ho₃.

Decision: Ho₅ is rejected.

Overall Model: Effect of Strategic Partnerships on Market Expansion

Table 4.11: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	Market Expansion	Input Suppliers	Processing Firms	Market Agents
Market Expansion	1.00	0.75	0.73	0.74
Input Suppliers	0.75	1.00	0.68	0.67
Processing Firms	0.73	0.68	1.00	0.66
Market Agents	0.74	0.67	0.66	1.00

$p < 0.01$

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings confirm that strategic partnerships significantly enhance market expansion in Ondo State's agribusiness ventures, with implications for theory and practice. Input supplier partnerships ($r = 0.75$, $R^2 = 0.56$) strongly influence market expansion, with access to quality inputs (4.10) driving growth, supporting Resource-Based View (Barney, 2021). Ondo's score (4.06) exceeds Oyo's (3.90), but lags Ghana's (4.15) due to supply chain strength. Processing firm partnerships ($r = 0.73$, $R^2 = 0.53$) enhance value addition (4.05), aligning with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984). Market agent partnerships ($r = 0.74$, $R^2 = 0.55$) facilitate market access (4.03), with Ondo outperforming Lagos (3.90) but not Kenya (4.18). Variability ($SD = 0.79$ – 0.84) reflects cooperative size and sector differences, with food crops excelling in market reach.

5.2 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of strategic partnerships on market expansion of agribusiness ventures within cooperative societies in Ondo State. Results show strong positive correlations between partnerships with input suppliers ($r = 0.75$), processing firms ($r = 0.73$), and market agents ($r = 0.74$) and market expansion, explaining 53–56% of the variance. These partnerships enhance access to inputs, value addition, and market channels, driving growth. Ondo's performance exceeds regional peers but lags behind global benchmarks due to infrastructure gaps. Resource-Based View and Stakeholder Theory highlight partnerships as strategic assets for competitive advantage and collaboration. Despite challenges like input cost volatility, partnerships are critical for sustainable growth. Cooperatives must strengthen alliances to improve resilience and market reach.

5.3 Recommendations

Cooperatives should prioritize partnerships with input suppliers to ensure consistent access to quality inputs. Engage processing firms to enhance value addition and product competitiveness. Develop contracts with market agents to expand market access and export opportunities. Invest in training for cooperative members to maximize partnership benefits. Government and OYWAN should provide incentives like subsidies to strengthen partnership networks.

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