

# GREEN MARKETING AND COMPETITIVE POSITIONING OF AGRICULTURAL CO- OPERATIVES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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## ***Abstract***

*The study empirically investigated Green Marketing and Competitive Positioning of Agricultural Co-operative organisations in Rivers State, Nigeria. Data on Green Marketing and Organic Farming were obtained from 223 agricultural co-operative farmers in Rivers State with the aid of a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0. There was a significant relationship between independent and dependent variables: a positive relationship between green product and improved environmental quality; a positive relationship between green product and health and safety; and a strong relationship between green price and improved environmental quality and health safety. The paper recommended, among others, that farmers should be provided with adequate funds*

*to enable them effect completely the practice of green farming and subsequently green marketing.*

**Keywords:** *Green Marketing, Green Product, Green Price, Organic Food.*

## **Introduction**

About 70% of Nigeria's over 140 million people engage in agriculture. Therefore, Nigeria is an agrarian country (NBS/CBS, 2006), providing subsistence for two-thirds (2/3) of the low-income population (Usman, 2006). The northern people in Nigeria can guarantee the production of cereals such as sorghum, millet, maize, groundnut, cowpea and cotton. The middle belt and the south have the potentials to produce root tubers such as cassava, yam, cocoyam and other crops like plantain as well as maize (Abdullahi, 2003). In addition to crops, the country is also involved in the production of livestock, fisheries, forestry, and wildlife.

Taking cognizance of Nigeria's agricultural produce is a good response to the calls for urgent responsible action in the management of planet's limited resources. The rising demand for exhaustible materials, the heavy use of non-renewable energy, uncontrollable deforestation and the production of big amounts of pollution waste have all put a strain on natural ecosystem. Not only are resources limited, but the way they are used also negatively affect the future.

According to (Walsh, 2012), marketers have already been targeting environmentally concerned segments through a series of products that are friendly to the environment (green product) either because of the way they are produced or consumed, thus giving rise to the term green marketing. Green marketing can be defined as the effort by a company to design, promote, price, and distribute

products in a manner which promotes environmental protection (Polonsky, 2011).

**The research problem**

There is negligence in application of green marketing procedures due to the fact that government has refused to educate its populace about the benefit and importance green marketing would have in the society. This negligence is shying away from the application of organic farming.

**Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to determine the influence of green marketing and the competitive positioning of agricultural cooperatives in Rivers State.

**Theoretical foundation**

Green marketing began in the developed countries. It came into being and developed in the 1980's with the focus on the environment, as a result of the aggravation of environmental problems in the 1970's and 1980's. People have become more recognized about the health of the environment and they have come to know that environmental problems, important and exigent. (Polonsky, 2011). Since 1970's, the campaign of the environment has developed prosperously at the aim of protecting the ecosystem (Ottman 2008; Henim and Kinear, 1976).

Green marketing approach was researched from a corporate interest point of view in the early 90's and the research indicated that 92% of multinational corporations (MNCs) from Europe changed their products to address growing concerns of environmental pollution (Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990).

In Nigeria, a body called Nigerian Organic Agriculture Network (NOAN), which is a non-governmental body located at the city of Ibadan, Nigeria, has drawn membership from farmers, scientists, processors, exporters, individuals, institutions, NGOs and organizations that are key players in the organic agriculture sector in Nigeria. In Rivers State, the overall objective of the Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) under the Rivers State Agricultural Development Programme is to achieve sustainable increase in the production of cassava, yam, cocoyam and sweet potato as well as their products and thus enhance natural food self sufficiency and improve rural household food security and income.

#### **Study variables and research framework**

In the study, green marketing is the predictor variable with its measures of green product and green place, while the criterion variable is competitive positioning with its dimension as improved environmental quality. Green marketing is defined as the effort by a company to design, promote, price, and distribute products in a manner which promotes environmental protection. Green price is the monetary (or bartered) amount a consumer pays for a product or service based on the product or services value or worth. Improved environmental quality refers to activities that look for information about environmental issues and participating in related activities such as reusing items. Health and safety concerns over exposure to toxic chemicals, hormones or drugs in everyday products which has made health and safety important choice considerations, especially among vulnerable consumers such as pregnant women, children, and the elderly.

Based on the research variable, this paper is expressed in functional relationship as indicated below:

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{CP} & = & f(\text{GM}) - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad 1 \\
 \text{GM} & = & \text{GP}_1, \text{GP}_2 \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad 2 \\
 \text{GM} & = & f(\text{GP}_1) + (\text{GP}_2) + \text{IEQ} + \text{HS} \quad - \quad - \quad 3
 \end{array}$$

Where:

- CP = Competitive Positioning
- GM = Green Marketing
- GP<sub>1</sub> = Green Product
- GP<sub>2</sub> = Green Price
- IEQ = Improved Environmental Quality
- HS = Health and Safety

**Research framework**

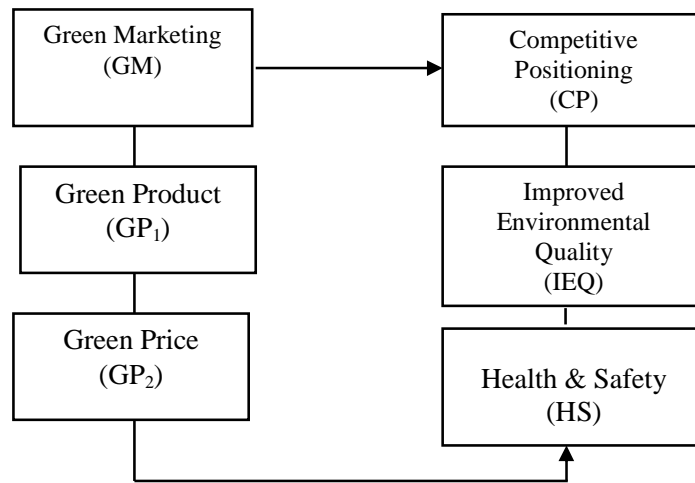


Fig. 5.1: Conceptual framework on green marketing and competitive positioning of agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State, Nigeria

Source: Survey Data, 2014

**Operational framework**

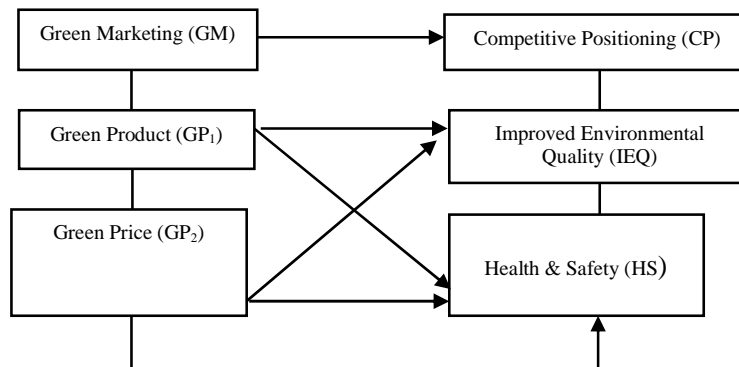


Fig. 5.2: Operational framework on green marketing and competitive positioning of agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State, Nigeria

Source: Survey Data, 2014

**Research hypotheses**

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between green product and improved environmental quality.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between green product and health and safety.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between green price and improved environmental quality
- Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between green price and health and safety

## **Literature review**

Green marketing practices generally promotes as the genuine concern for the nature of inputs as well as outputs waste reduction and the impact of these upon the environment and society as a whole both in present and future conditions (Walker and Hanson, 1998). According to American marketing association, green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. It includes various activities like waste reduction, changes in the product, and modifications in the communication mix.

Green marketing enables different companies to focus on different factors which influence the buying behaviour of the customers. Peatti (2001) traces the evolution of green marketing which initially is known as ecological where all environmental activities were concern with helping in mitigating environmental problems through provisions of remedies. This is followed by environmental marketing which focuses on clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products. The next and present marketing phenomenon is green marketing.

The AMA workshop attempted to bring together academics, practitioners, and public policy makers to examine marketing's impact on the natural environment At this workshop ecological marketing was defined the study of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion and non-energy resource depletion [Henjon and Kinnear, 1976].

This early definition has three key components, 1) it is a subset of the overall marketing activity; 2) It examines both the positive and negative activities; and 3) a narrow range of environmental issues are examined. While this definition is a useful starting point, to be comprehensive green marketing needs to be

more broadly defined. Before providing an alternative definition it should be noted that no one definition or terminology has been universally accepted. This lack of consistency is a large part of the problem, for how can an issue be evaluated if all researchers have a different perception of what they are researching. The following definition is much broader than those of other researchers and it encompasses all major components of other definitions.

Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment [Polonsky, 1994].

This definition incorporates much of the traditional components of the marketing definition, that is “All activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants”. Therefore it ensures that the interests of the organization and all its consumers are protected, as voluntary exchange will not take place unless both the buyer and seller mutually benefit. The above definition also includes the protection of the natural environment, by attempting to minimize the detrimental impact this exchange has on the environment. This second point is important, for human consumption by its very nature is destructive to the natural environment (To be accurate products making green claims should state they are “less environmentally harmful” rather than “Environmentally Friendly”). Thus green marketing should look at minimizing environmental harm, not necessarily eliminating it. Charter and Polonsky 1999, define green marketing as marketing or promotion of produce based on its environmental performance or an improvement thereof (Cited in Lee, 2005). Green marketing had been a vital academic research topic for at least 3 decades.

Peatti (2001) traces the evolution of green marketing which initially is known as ecological where all environmental activities were concern with helping in mitigating environmental problems through provision of remedies It is followed by environmental marketing which focuses on clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products Sustainable is the next and present marketing phenomenon (Peattie et al, 1995), define green marketing as a holistic process which predicts, encourages and assures the requirements of customers and society in an ecologically sustainable manner Cited in (Charter and Polonsky, 1992).

According to the American Marketing Association, green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe (Wikipedia, 2007) Thus green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities including product modification changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising.

Green marketing mix is a Particular form of development of product, price, promotion and place that do not harm the environment, then companies that apply “green” marketing philosophy are expected to take into consideration ecological aspects of each element of marketing mix before they develop and place products in the market.

The American Marketing Association definition of green marketing gives its three dimensions. According to the AMA, green marketing is.

1. The marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe (retailing dimension).
2. The development and marketing of products designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality (social marketing dimension).

3. The efforts by organizations to produce, promotion and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns (environmental dimension)

According to (Kotler, 2011), green marketing refers to holistic marketing concept wherein the production marketing consumption and disposal of products and services happen in a manner that is less detrimental to the environment with growing awareness about the implications of global warming, non bio-degradable solid waste harmful impact of pollutants etc Both marketing and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switch in to “green” products or services. While the shift to “green” may appear to be expensive in the short-run, it will definitely prove to be indispensable, advantageous, and cost - wise too, in the long run.

Green marketing refers to the process of selling products or Services based on their environmental benefits. Such a product or service may be environmentally friendly in itself or produced and or packaged in an environmentally friendly manner.

Green marketing is based on the premise that businesses have a to satisfy human needs and desires while preserving the Integrity of the natural environment There are significant indications that environmental issues will grow in importance over the coming years and will require imaginative and innovative redesign and re-engineering of existing marketing efforts in the part of many businesses.

Green issues have become increasingly important to corporate decision makers as cooperatives face mounting public sensitivity, stricter regulation and growing stakeholder pressures focused on preserving the natural environment (Banerjee et al, 2003; Hult, 2011) increasing numbers of customers have begun shifting their preferences to more environmentally friendly products

and services (Kotler 2011, Luchs et al 2010). Despite the resultant managerial interest, few empirical studies have examined sustainability issues in marketing strategy. As a result, knowledge about green marketing practices remains limited for both managers and policy makers. Two key gaps persist in existing knowledge. First, the few performance outcome studies undertaken to date have adopted widely differing approaches and been published in specialist journals. Secondly, even if mere environmentally friendly managers can best begin greening their Cooperatives marketing efforts is far from comprehensive.

Environmentally-friendly -purchase is just a behaviour, but the moves may differ even among environmentally-conscious groups According to (Fotopoulos and Krystallis 2002), research has shown that in general, health consciousness and personal hedonism precede environmental Consciousness when it comes to choosing organic food among “aware buyers” marketing campaigns should insist on educating the Consumers about the superior value that green produce offers.

This chapter extensively renews the literature pertaining to the current research, which includes green marketing and its facets and competitive Positioning of agricultural cooperatives in Rivers State.

### **Historical development of organic farming in Rivers State, Nigeria**

Nigeria has over 160 million persons, making it the most populous country in Africa. The country is blessed with both natural and human resources. The country’s mainstay before the oil boom was essentially Agriculture (Abdullahi and Kutama, 2012). There is a huge oil deposit in the Niger Delta region. This has both economic and adverse effect on the environment and the nation as whole.

There are several cases of oil spillage, gas flaring, water, land and air pollution. The Niger Delta people whose major occupation is predominantly fish farming could not continue with their profession. The natural aquaculture habitat has been polluted. Hence, the country depends on importation of frozen fish to balance the fish demand. Deforestation is going on heavily in some major part of the country where trees were the major source of cooking and production of charcoal.

Organic agriculture is still young in the country, with less than fifteen years of practical existence (Abdullahi and Kutama, 2012). As at 2007, Nigeria had 3,154 hectares under organic agriculture, of which 50ha were fully converted (Wilier and Kilcher, 2009). Practitioners are still few despite the great potential for organic agriculture.

### **Benefits of Organic Farming System**

Organic farming is beneficial in agriculture because it provides basis for healthy foods and healthy living. Organic agriculture reduces external inputs by controlling pests and diseases naturally, with both traditional and modern methods, increasing both agricultural yields and disease resistance. Organic farming practices enhance soil structures, conserve water and ensure sustained biodiversity and soil conservation and takes low intensity farming one step further by eliminating the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and genetically modified organisms, which is not only an improvement for human health and agro-bio-diversities, but also for the associated off-farm communities.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2008), organic agriculture promotes ecological resilience, improved biodiversity, healthy management, off-farms and the surrounding environment and building on community knowledge and strength.

Most of the synthetic fertilizers and other agrochemicals that are used in non-organic farming are manufactured using resources such as fossil fuels which are not renewable using such resources may cause pollution and contribute to environmental degradation, thus making such agricultural practices unsustainable. Some inorganic fertilizers used to increase crop yield and leached or washed away by erosion to nearby rivers, causing water pollution, which is dangerous to aquatic life and human health.

#### **Benefits of organic food**

In general, organic consumers, manufacturers and farmers strongly believe in organic food having following benefits over non-organic food.

**Better Health:** It is not produced using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It does not contain any traces of these strong chemicals and might not affect human body. The health benefits of organic foods are more perceived than real. However, the public opinion that (organic food) is healthier than conventional food is quite strong and is the sole reason for about 30% growth in the organic food industry since the past 5-6 years. However, there are some scientific studies that have proved organic milk and organic tomatoes to be better than the non-organicones.

**Organic milk:** Recent research conducted on organic milk has shown that it has more anti-oxidants, omega 3, CLA and vitamins than non-organic milk. According to the researchers at the Danish Institute of Agriculture research, University of Aberdeen, and the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, organic milk is healthier than non-organic milk as organic cows are pasture grazed with results in better quality milk.

**Organic Tomatoes:** According to a 10-year study conducted in the University of California, Davis, organic tomatoes are produced in an environment that has lower nutrient supply as nitrogen- rich chemical fertilizers are not added. This leads to excessive formation of antioxidant such as quercetin (79% higher) and Kaempferol (97%higher) in organic tomatoes. As well all know antioxidants are good for health and help in reducing heart disease.

**Better Taste:** A good reason for this is the belief that it is produced using organic means of production

**Environment Safety:** As harmful chemicals are not used in organic farming there is minimal soil, air and water pollution

**Animal Welfare:** It is an important aspect of producing organic milk, organic meat, organic poultry and organic fish People are happy that the animals are not confined to a miserable caged life while eating organic animal products.

## **Methodology**

A total of 226 copies of questionnaire were administered to farmers in Rivers State. A 5-point Likert-scale was used. Data were analysed using descriptive and univariate statistics. Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument.

## **Results and Discussion**

Out of 226 copies of questionnaire administered to farmers in Rivers State, 213 were retrieved and used for analysis. Table 5.1 shows responses on green product as a dimension of green marketing

**Table 5.1: Green product as a dimension of green marketing**

S/N	Options	Strong agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	It is environmentally friendly or safe	86	40.4	74	34.7	20	9.4	20	9.4	13	6.1	213	100
2.	The environment did not suffer to produce it	110	51.6	58	27.2	18	8.5	15	7.0	12	5.6	213	100
3.	Animal and human did not suffer to produce it.	66	31.0	102	47.9	16	7.5	18	8.5	11	5.2	213	100
4.	It has health benefits attached to it.	96	45.1	54	25.4	38	17.8	19	8.9	6	2.8	213	100
5.	Green product helps in the improvement of our environment	128	60.1	58	27.2	9	4.2	10	4.7	8	3.8	212	100
6.	It is safe for consumption	26	12.2	78	36.6	40	18.8	34	16.0	35	16.4	213	100
7.	I don't use any synthetic fertilizer on my crops	123	57.7	54	25.4	21	9.9	9	4.2	6	2.8	213	100
	Total	635	298.1	478	224.4	162	76.1	125	58.7	91	42.7	1491	700

*Source:* Survey Data, 2014

About 40.4% of respondents strongly agreed green product was environmentally friendly, 34.7% agreed, 9.4% disagreed, 6.1% strongly disagreed, and 9.4% preferred to be neutral. About 51.6% of respondents strongly agreed that the environment does not suffer for green production, 27.2% agreed, 7.0% disagreed, 5.6% strongly disagreed, and 8.5% remained neutral. About 31% of respondents strongly agreed that humans and animals do not suffer for green production, 47.9% agreed, 8.5% disagreed, 5.2% strongly disagreed, and 7.5% were neutral. About 45.1% of respondents strongly agreed that green production has health benefits, 25.4% agreed, 8.9% disagreed, 2.8% strongly disagreed, and 17.8% were neutral. About 60.1% agreed that green production helped in improving the environment, 27.2% agreed, 4.7% disagreed, 3.8% strongly disagreed, and 4.2% remained neutral. About 12.2% of respondents strongly agreed that green product is safer for consumption, 36.6% agreed, 16.0% disagreed, 16.4% strongly

disagreed, and 18.8% were neutral. About 57.7% of respondents strongly agreed with use of synthetic fertilizer, 25.4% agreed, 4.2% disagreed, 2.8% strongly disagreed, and 9.9% were neutral.

Table 5.2 shows the views of respondents on green price as a dimension of green marketing.

**Table 5.2: Green price as a dimension of green marketing**

S/N	Options	Strong agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly not agree		total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	The portion of the price perceived is going to a worthy cause, this may be charities, further research etc	120	56.3	56	26.3	12	5.6	15	7.1	10	4.7	213	100
2	The price perceived to subsidize other products necessarily	144	67.6	42	19.7	13	6.1	7	3.3	7	3.3	213	100
3	The price covers the real cost of production and customers of not feel exploited	128	60.1	58	27.3	20	9.4	4	1.9	3	1.4	213	100
4	Suppliers are perceived to receive a fair share of profit	74	34.7	110	51.8	11	5.2	9	4.2	9	4.2	213	100
	Total	466	218.7	266	124.9	56	26.6	35	16.5	29	13.6	852	400

Source: Survey Data, 2014

From Table 5.2, 56.3% of respondents strongly agreed that the green price was a worthy cause, 26.3% agreed, 7.1% disagreed, 4.7% strongly disagreed, and 5.6% could not take a stand. About

67.6% of respondents strongly agreed that the green price subsidized other products, 19.7% agreed, 3.3% disagreed, 3.3% strongly disagreed, and 6.1% remained neutral. About 60.1 % of respondents strongly agreed that the green price was unexploitative, 27.3% agreed, 1.9% disagreed, 1.4 strongly disagreed, and 9.4 were neutral. About 34.7% of respondents strongly agreed that suppliers received a fair share of profits, 51.6% agreed, 4.2% disagreed, 4.2% strongly agreed, and 5.2% preferred to be neutral.

### **Interpretation**

Table 5.3 shows decisions for hypotheses 1-4.

**Table 5.3: Decision for H<sub>01-04</sub>**

<b>H<sub>0</sub></b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>r<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>H<sub>01</sub></b>	3.68	1.096	0.370
<b>H<sub>02</sub></b>	3.60	1.230	0.316
<b>H<sub>03</sub></b>	3.61	1.073	0.366
<b>H<sub>04</sub></b>	3.87	1.103	0.347

*Source:* SPSS Version 15.0

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between green product and improved environmental quality. The null hypothesis one was tested statistically by the use of the Rank Order Correlation Coefficient.

The research hypothesis one states that there is no significant relationship between green product and improved environmental quality. As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis one, a significant relationship was revealed to exist between green product and improved environmental quality, this is evident in the correlation value of 0.37 (37%). The null hypothesis

one was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis one accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between green product and improved environmental quality.

**Hypotheses Two:** There is no significant relationship between green product and health and safety. The null hypothesis two was tested statistically by the use of the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient.

The research hypothesis two states that, there is no significant relationship between green product and health and safety. As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis two, a significant relationship was revealed to exist between green product and health and safety, this is evident in the positive correlation ( $r^2$ ) value of 0.32 (32%). The null hypothesis two was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis two accepted. Therefore there is a significant relationship between green product and health and safety.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant relationship between green price and improved environmental quality. Research hypothesis three states that, there is no significant relationship between green price and improved environmental quality. As even in the statistical testing of hypothesis three, a significant relationship was revealed to exist between green price and improved environmental quality. This is informed by the positive correlation ( $r^2$ ) value of 0.37 (37%). The null hypothesis three was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis three accepted. Thus there is a significant relationship between green price and improved environmental quality.

**Hypothesis four:** There is no significant relationship between green price and health safety. The research hypothesis four states that, there is no significant relationship between green price and health and safety. From the statistical testing of hypothesis four, a significant relationship was revealed to exist between green price and health and safety. This is evident in the positive correlation ( $r^2$ ) value of 0.35 (35%). The null hypothesis three was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis four accepted. Therefore there is a significant relationship between green price and health and safety.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

The study could draw the following conclusions:

- a. Green product has a significant effect on the improved environmental quality of agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State.
- b. Green product has a significant effect on the health and safety of users of the products of agricultural co-operatives on Rivers State.
- c. Green price has a significant effect on improving the environmental quality of agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State.
- d. Green price has a significant effect on the health and safety of users of the products of agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State.
- e. Green place has a significant effect on the improved environmental quality of agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are proffered:

- Farmers should be provided with adequate funds to enable them adequately undertake green farming and subsequent green marketing.
- The need to switch from inorganic to sustained organic farming practices/system should be regularly preached so as to make the environment more human friendly.
- Appropriate laws that will institute the sustained practices and adoption of green farming cum consequent green marketing activities should be made by government.
- There is need to organize regular seminars and training programmes for farmers, where they can be informed about the relevance of organic farming and green marketing practices and their role in improving the environment.
- Since green marketing is relatively new in the light of farming activities, there should be a regular evaluation and follow up on the level of success made in the preaching of organic farming and green marketing.

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