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# LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED AGRO-PROCESSING FIRMS IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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**Abstract**: The decline in the level of performance of agro-processors in Nigeria even with the increased level of support from government and other stakeholders in the industry has troubled critical stakeholders and researchers alike. This propelled this study which examined inventory management and order processing management and how they both affect the performance of agro-processors in North central area of Nigeria. Survey design was adopted wherein responses were elicited using five-point Likert scale structured questionnaire from 163 logistics managers or equivalent of agro-processing firms operating for a minimum of five (5) years. Data were analyzed using the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLSv3. The study found a significant negative effect of inventory management on performance and a significant positive effect of order processing management on performance. Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that agro-processors should adopt the use of technology in tracking inventory levels leveraging unique identifier for each batch of raw or finished stock. Similarly, that agro-processors should standardize their order processing procedures by creating a standard order form, establish order processing timelines as well as defining responsibilities for each step in the process.

**Keywords**: Agro-processors, logistics, inventory management, order processing.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector has received global attention in recent times evidenced by the huge attention and priority shown to it by global economies which has seen its contribution to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from 3.87% in 2010 to 4.0% in 2024 accounting for over 26% of global employment (World Bank, 2025). In Nigeria, the situation is not quite different as the agricultural sector's contribution to GDP rose to approximately 30%

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in the 3rd quarter of 2024 with the sector contributing about 38% of the nations' employment base (National Bureau of Statistics NBS, 2024).

The demand for more food consumption has been on the increase due to the increasing population year on year and the burden thrown on the agro-processing industry to ensure adequate food supply globally. The potential greatness of the sector has seen it witness influx of several agro-processing firms in recent times all seeking to turnout profit from the sector. Although, a worrying factor in Nigeria remains the inability to deliver processed produce to final users in its original fresh form. This has limited the potential of the firms operating in the sector and therefore becomes imperative for them to review and adopt numerous internal and external business improvement practices to better their performance and avert the ugly effect of the external environment – one of such areas is logistics management.

Logistics management firms are tasked with the responsibility of formulating and implementing strategies that if adopted will lead to achievement of a sustained competitive advantage. The volatility of the business environment, intense competition and improvements in technology has introduced dramatic changes to the logistics management. Globalization and severe competition of supply chains has forced agro - processing firms to look for better methods to remain competitive. Firms need to make solid inventory network connections that empower them to control their market directions by reacting to fast changes in clients' worth and rival moves for them to obtain prevalent business execution. (Muema & Achuora, 2020).

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The agricultural sector in Nigeria has received growing support from the government especially as the government has indicated its desire to diversify the economic base of the nation. However, despite the huge supports received, the growth and expansion of agro-processors in Nigeria remains abysmal as many of these processors maintain low operations resulting into shortage of supply of processed produce thereby forcing the government to part with its scarce foreign exchange (FX) in the bid to augment. In addition, a good percentage of processed agricultural produce do not meet its final consumer in the original form thus, deepening the supply shortage. This has left the firms weak in terms of competitiveness in quality, pricing and value addition against foreign competing brands. This calls for an investigation aimed at unveiling the cause as well as proffering lasting solution to the ugly trend by way of recommendation and hence this study which examined inventory and order processing management and how they affect performance of agro-processing firms in North Central Nigeria.

There exist studies in the area of logistics management and performance (Rutto & Omwenga, 2024; Jepherson et al., 2021; Muema & Achuora, 2020; Kirui & Nondi, 2017). However, while some focused on only financial aspect of performance, others focused on the operational dimension such as customers' satisfaction and efficiency. Despite the existence of studies in the area, there is paucity of studies that have been conducted using a combination of both dimensions of performance or even the balanced scorecard framework in the agro-processing sector of Nigeria.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To determine the extent to which inventory management affects the performance of selected agro-processing firms in North Central Nigeria; and
- To investigate the effect of order processing management on the performance of selected agro-processing firms in North Central Nigeria.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Logistics Management

Logistics is the process of planning, implementing and controlling procedures for the efficient and effective transportation and storage of goods including services and related information from the point of origin to the point of consumption to conform to customer requirements, and it includes inbound, outbound, internal and external movements" (Lambert et al, 1998). Logistics management, a subset of supply chain management, involves planning, executing, and controlling the flow and storage of products, services, and information from origin to consumption to meet customer needs (Amin & Shahwan, 2020). In this connection, "Logistics management activities typically include inbound and outbound transportation management, fleet management, warehousing, materials handling, order fulfillment, logistics network design, inventory management, supply/demand planning, and management of third-party logistics services providers (Thuy & Tran, 2025).

### 2.2. Inventory Management

Sugut and Ondara (2023) defines Inventory management (IM) relate to the various strategies employed by businesses to optimize inventory levels and provide superior service most cost-effectively. The primary focus is to ensure a harmonious alignment between supply and demand, which is achieved through careful monitoring and management of manufacturing and purchase orders, ensuring a seamless flow of materials. Inventory management entails the specification, retention and control of desired inventory level, on the one hand, and minimization of the total inventory cost, on the other hand. This means that the issue of inventory management lies on optimizing between understocking and overstocking cost (Alrjoub & Ahmad, 2017). Inventory management in an agro-processing firm plays a critical role because the firm deals with perishable agricultural raw materials such as cassava, maize, fruits, milk, or meat. These inputs must be carefully managed to avoid waste while ensuring continuous production. This study adopts the definition by (Alrjoub & Ahmed, 2017).

### 2.3. Order Processing Management

The concept of order processing management entails the coordination of activities directly relating to the handling of individual customer orders of goods or services and in the process, information flow is created preceding the goods, accompanying and returning after sales (Christopher, 2011). It encompasses verifying orders and stock availability, as well as activities like creating, filling, distributing, and fulfilling customer requests. The primary goal is to deliver the right product, quantity, quality, and timing to customers and workspaces (Chow et al, 1994). Overall, effective order processing drives sales and customer satisfaction by providing tracking visibility and minimizing delays, which are vital for maintaining positive customer service perceptions (Altekar, 2009, as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2025). Order processing in agro-processing firms refers to the series of activities involved in receiving, verifying, preparing, and fulfilling customer orders for agricultural products. It is a key logistics function that connects customer demand with production and distribution (Christopher, 2016). This study adopted the definition by (Christopher, 2011).

## 2.4. Performance

Organizations today are trying to adapt to all the changes surrounding them by improving their performance through the competitive advantage they create. Although, many studies focus more on financial metrics when assessing organizational performance, Tseng (2010) argues that financial ratio alone is insufficient to measure overall performance and needs to be harmonized with non-financial metrics. It is believed that concentrating only on financial success as a gauge of organizational performance is insufficient to increase financial results since they are merely reflections of history which lacks value creation measurement (Tuanmat & Smith, 2011). Performance in agro-processing firms is measured using both financial indicators such as profitability, revenue growth, and cost efficiency, and non-financial indicators including efficiency, productivity, product quality, customer satisfaction, innovation, and market performance, which together provide a comprehensive evaluation of organizational success. Therefore, the combination of the two dimensions (i.e financial and non-financial) to measure performance is the most favored in recent literatures.

## 2.5. Empirical Review

### 2.5.1. Inventory Management and Performance

Chala and Kumar (2021), examined the effect of logistics management on organizational performance at Wonji/Shoa Sugar Factory. The study adopted descriptive and explanatory research design as well as quantitative research approach was employed for conducting the study. The population under consideration was employees of Sugar Factory working under facility management and material planning and inventory management. To select respondents from the target population the researcher used stratified random sampling. The representatives selected from each stratum using simple random sampling. The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Data analysis was employed using descriptive statistics specifically mean and standard deviation; and inferential statistics namely Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis and then presented in tables. The finding of study implies that inventory management had positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance.

Jepherson et al. (2021) examined logistics management systems and performance of fast-moving consumer goods manufacturers in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between logistics management systems and supply chain performance of fast-moving consumer goods manufacturers in Kenya. The study used descriptive research design was targeted at 51 FMCG manufacturers located in Nairobi. The sample size was 51 respondents who were selected using the census method. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 23. The study found that inventory management systems positively and significantly influences Supply chain performance of FMCG in Kenya. The study recommends management of the company need to use strategic approach in practices of managing logistics by embracing modernized technology and training of employees on the use of the same.

### 2.5.2. Order Processing Management and Performance

Ibrahim et al. (2025) studied logistic management and e-commerce performance in Jumia operation in Abuja. The study examined the effects of order processing on Jumia's operational outcomes in Abuja, FCT. Employing a survey research design, data were collected from all 187 Jumia employees in Abuja using structured questionnaires. A partial least squares

structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. Among the key findings, it is notable that the efficient processing of orders has a strong positive influence on Jumia's performance, increasing customer satisfaction and repeat purchases. The study therefore recommends that Jumia Nigeria should adopt new order management systems, streamline warehouse activities, and provide specialized staff training. The study, however, is limited to Jumia Online operation in Abuja, there is need for such studies to be replicated in other sector of the economy in Nigeria.

Sandar (2024) explored how order processing impacts the performance of a firm at Dagon Foods Processing and Canning Factory (Hlaing Tet) in Myanmar. The study used a survey approach, sampling 80 employees out of a total of 98 through simple random sampling, representing 82% of the workforce. Data were gathered from the factory owner through interviews and from employees via structured questionnaires. The analysis applied descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression techniques. Results revealed a strong positive relationship between order processing and firm performance, with regression analysis confirming that order processing significantly boosts performance. The study was conducted in Myanmar and also in a Foods Processing and Canning Factory which makes the findings difficult to apply in a typical agro-processing sector of Nigeria.

### 2.6. Unified Theory of Logistics

The popularity of the resource based view (RBV) has been widely acknowledged in production and supply chain management (Mutuku & Senelwa, 2018). The RBV argues that a firm can attain sustained firm performance through suitably deploying its resources and capabilities that are often rare, valuable, not substitutable, and difficult to imitate (Barney 1991). Firms that develop superior logistics capabilities especially in inventory management and order processing gain a sustainable competitive advantage by efficiently managing resources, reducing losses, and delivering value to customers.. In the dynamic environment of Nigeria, the flexibility to change logistics processes, including improving information flow and processing orders, is crucial for further success based on constant organizational learning (Ibrahim et al, 2025). Therefore, firms should develop reverse logistics capabilities in order to reduce costs and maximise their value offer.

## 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey design while employing the use of structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire to obtain data from logistics managers and/or equivalent. The population of the study is 163 registered agro-processing firms operational in North-Central Nigeria in the last five (5) years. The firms were chosen using a census survey while focusing on only firms that are duly registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). Data were analyzed using the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM was assessed using the measurement and structural model.

Inventory management as a variable was measured using items adapted from Jepherson (2021), while order processing management was measured using items adapted from the scale developed by Ibrahim et al., (2025). Performance was measured using the balanced scorecard framework using items developed by Ibrahim et al. (2025).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study administered 163 copies of questionnaire to selected agro-processing firms out of which 139 was properly filled and returned representing a valid response rate of 85% which is greater than the minimum response rate of 20% recommended by literatures in supply chain management research. Preliminary checks for missing values and outliers (using Mahalanobis) were conducted and the results indicated absence of missing values and outliers. Common method bias test was conducted using the Harman single factor test and none of the variables explains more than 50% of the variance according to the test results, hence the absence of biased responses in the data.

*Table 1.* Descriptive Statistics

| Variables | Mean | Median | Min | Max | Standard Deviation | Kurtosis | Skewness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IVM | 4.38 | 4.00 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 1.07 | 1.73 | -1.26 |
| OPM | 4.27 | 4.67 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 1.07 | 1.50 | -1.94 |
| PRF | 3.25 | 3.86 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 1.09 | 1.34 | -1.93 |

Source: SMART PLS Output, 2025.

Data on the study variables were described in Table 4.1 above in terms of the mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis values. Inventory management (IVM) revealed an average value of 4.38 with a standard deviation value of 1.07. However, the minimum and maximum values stood at 1 and 5 respectively. Order processing management (OPM) had minimum and maximum values of 1 and 5 respectively however, it showed an average of 4.27 along with a standard deviation of 1.07. Furthermore, performance (PRF) showed a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 5 with an average value of 3.25 accompanied with a standard deviation value of 1.09. All the skewness and kurtosis values were less than 1.96 which suggest that the data were normally distributed (Lumley et al., 2002).

### 4.1. Assessment of the Measurement Model

In assessing the measurement model, we begin by assessing the item outer loadings. As a rule, loadings above 0.708 are recommended, as they indicate that the construct explains more than 50 percent of the indicator's variance, thus providing acceptable item reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

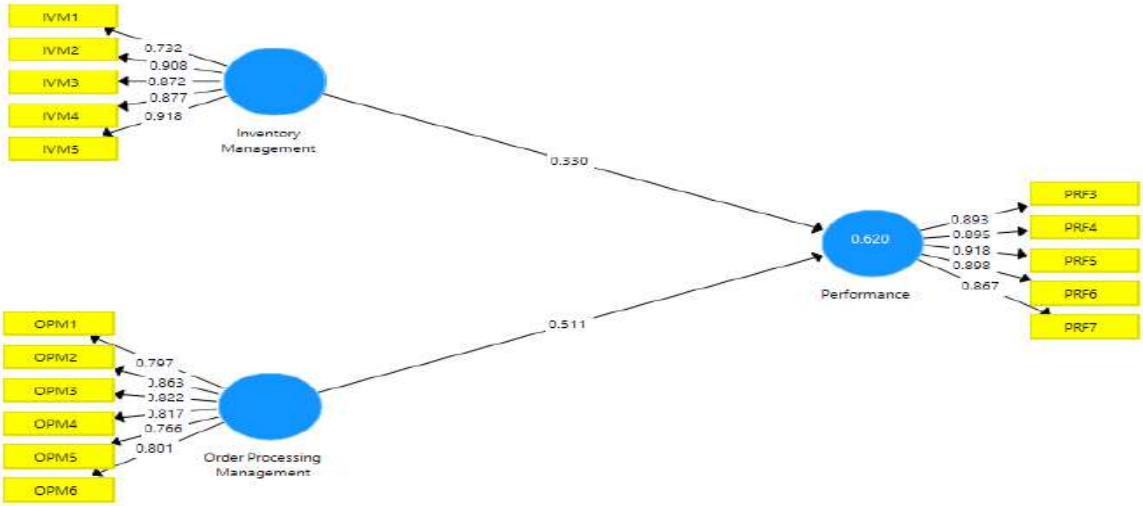



*Figure 1.* Indicator Outer Loadings

*Table 2.* Reliability of Study Scale

| S/N | Variables | | Factor Loadings | Cronbach Alpha | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | No of Items |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Inventory Management (IVM) | IVM1 | 0.732 | 0.914 | 0.936 | 0.746 | 5 |
| | | IVM2 | 0.908 | | | | |
| | | IVM3 | 0.872 | | | | |
| | | IVM4 | 0.877 | | | | |
| | | IVM5 | 0.918 | | | | |
| 2 | Order Processing Management (OPM) | OPM1 | 0.797 | 0.896 | 0.920 | 0.659 | 6 |
| | | OPM2 | 0.863 | | | | |
| | | OPM3 | 0.822 | | | | |
| | | OPM4 | 0.817 | | | | |
| | | OPM5 | 0.766 | | | | |
| | | OPM6 | 0.801 | | | | |
| 3 | Performance (PRF) | PRF3 | 0.893 | 0.937 | 0.952 | 0.800 | 5 |
| | | PRF4 | 0.895 | | | | |
| | | PRF5 | 0.918 | | | | |
| | | PRF6 | 0.898 | | | | |
| | | PRF7 | 0.867 | | | | |

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Composite reliability of Joreskog's (1971) was applied to test for internal consistency of the study. All the values fall within the 0.70 minimum benchmark rating of good consistency. Similarly, Cronbach alpha values were above 0.70 which is the minimum threshold as (Hair et al. 2019). To test for the convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was used. All the latent variables showed values greater than 0.50 which indicates that the constructs explain at least 50 percent of the variance of its items. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to evaluate collinearity of the formative indicators. All the VIF values were less than 5 indicate the absence of critical collinearity issues among the indicators of formatively measured constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

According to Henseler et al. (2015) the Fornell-Larcker criterion does not perform well when explaining discriminant validity, particularly when the indicator loadings on a construct differ only slightly. As a replacement, they proposed the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations which is the mean value of the item correlations across constructs relative to the (geometric) mean of the average correlations for the items measuring the same construct. Discriminant validity problems are present when HTMT values are high than 0.90 for structural models (Henseler et al., 2015).

*Table 3*. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of the Correlations

| | IVM | OPM | PRF |
|---|---|---|---|
| IVM | 1.000 | | |
| OPM | 0.810 | 1.000 | |
| PRF | 0.761 | 0.821 | 1.000 |

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

### 4.2. Assessing the Structural Model

Having satisfied the measurement model assessment, the next step in evaluating PLS-SEM results is to assess the structural model. Standard assessment criteria, which was considered include the path coefficient, t-values, p-values and coefficient of determination ($R^2$). The bootstrapping procedure was conducted using a resample of 5000.

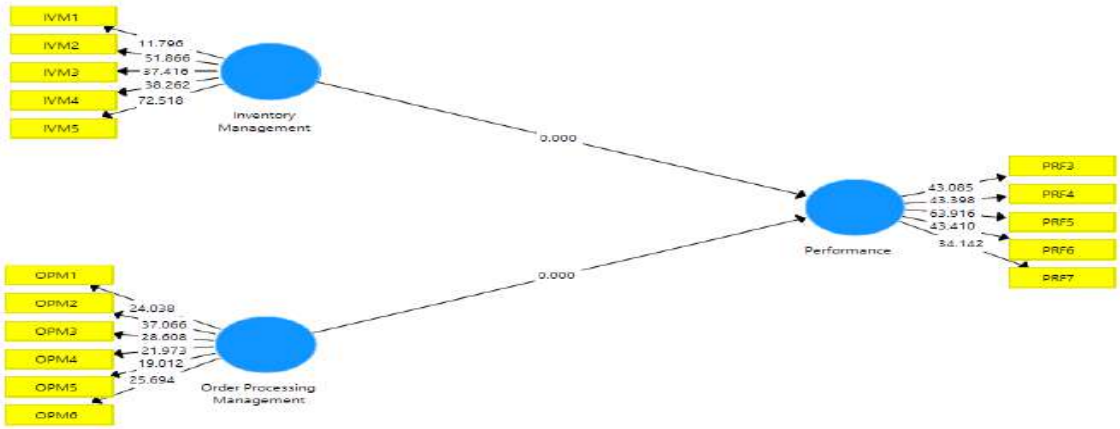



*Figure 2* Path Coefficients of the Regression Model

The R-square value stood at 0.620 indicating that variation in performance is explained by inventory management combined with order processing management to the degree of 62%. The remaining 38% variation could be explained by other factors not included in the study. The value of the r-square is classified to be moderate (Hair, et al., 2019). Additionally, the predictive relevance of the model ($Q^2$) was found to be 0.612 signifying a strong predictive relevance of the model. The result of the path analysis is presented in the table below:

*Table 4*. Path Coefficients

| Hypotheses | Variables | Path Coefficients **(Beta) | T-value | P-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $Ho_1$ | Inventory Management | -0.330 | 4.280 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| $Ho_2$ | Order Processing Management | 0.511 | 7.230 | 0.000 | Rejected |

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

### 4.3. Test of Hypotheses

The result from the analysis indicates that inventory management has a significant effect on performance of agro-processing firms in North Central, Nigeria. The decision was reached based on the t-value of 4.280 which is greater than 1.964 along with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, implying that the null hypothesis lacks sufficient ground to be accepted and as such the alternative hypothesis which states that inventory management has a significant effect on performance of agro-processing firms in North Central, Nigeria is accepted. Similarly, the result from the analysis indicates that order processing management has a significant effect on performance of agro-processing firms in North Central, Nigeria. The decision was reached based on the t-value of 7.230 which is greater than 1.964 benchmark along with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Thus, implying that the null hypothesis lacks sufficient ground to be accepted and as such the alternative hypothesis which states that order processing management has significant effect on performance of agro-processing firms in North Central, Nigeria is accepted.

### 4.4. Discussion of Findings

The study found a significant negative effect of inventory management on performance of agro-processing firms in north central Nigeria which could imply that management of inventory by agro-processors has overtime been done in an inappropriate manner which has led

to deficiency in the quality of raw materials even before they are finally processed thus reducing the quality of the final product translating into weak competitiveness and subsequently low patronage. This finding disagrees with that of Chala and Kumar (2021) who found positive effect of inventory management on performance. On a contrary, order processing management revealed a significant positive effect on performance which could mean that customers' orders have been managed by agro-processors in a manner that improves performance. This finding agrees Ibrahim et al. (2025) and Sandar (2024) who found positive and significant effect of order processing management on performance.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study examined inventory management and order processing management on performance of agro-processing firms in North Central, Nigeria. Based on the findings above, the study concludes that management of inventory and customers' orders is imperative for increase in performance however, although management of customers' orders may have been done in a decent manner, management of inventories (raw materials and finished goods) has remained below average. This has led agro-processors into fulfilling customers' orders with products in poor condition, hence reducing competitiveness. Based on the foregoing, the study recommends thus:

- That agro-processors should adopt the use of technology in tracking inventory levels leveraging unique identifier for each batch of raw or finished stock in addition to building strong and reliable relationship with their suppliers that ensures timely delivery of high-quality raw materials at reasonable cost.
- Similarly, that agro-processors should standardize their order processing procedures by creating a standard order form, establish order processing timelines as well as defining responsibilities for each step in the process. This can further be enhanced by way of technology through the development of an order management software which will provide personalized services for customers, allow interactions and ensure order monitoring.

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