



## AGRICULTURAL REHABILITATION: NIGERIA'S CUSTODIAL EXEMPLAR FOR THE PERIPHERIES



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### Abstract

Rising recidivism among ex-offenders implies dysfunctional custodial rehabilitation. This study examines how existing custodial rehabilitation norms predispose inmates to re-offence upon release in Nigeria. This article anchors its explanation of the problem on the combination of Thomas Kuhn's theory of revolution and the social farming theory. It used mixed methods to collect data from 284 inmate and non-inmate respondents. While quantitative data were analyzed at three levels, qualitative data were analyzed in terms of content and theme. Quantitative findings confirmed a significant positive relationship between inmates' custodial agricultural skills and re-offence in the study area ( $\text{Exp } \beta = .177$ ,  $P \text{ value} < .05$ ). Qualitative findings acknowledged the failure of existing rehabilitative norms to reform inmates because they did not resonate with local realities. It concludes that a paradigm shift from a barren rehabilitative norm to a productive custodial agricultural rehabilitation is desirable. Until custodial rehabilitative desire incorporates agriculture into restorative and healing templates, corrections may develop irreconcilable internal contradictions that may hinder inmates' positive character modification for productive community reentry. The study, therefore, proposes four agriculture-based structures to harness the transformative potential of custodial agricultural rehabilitation, enabling inmates, upon release, to develop self-confidence, confront inertia, and build safer communities in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** agriculture, custodial rehabilitation, exemplar, peripheries, recidivism, Nigeria

### Introduction

Worldwide, correctional administrators use culture-based custodial rehabilitation to stabilize inmates' post-release reentry. Precolonial authorities used indigenous penal practices to deactivate criminality. On

arrival to Nigeria, colonialism attacked these cultural practices and replaced them with alternative penal norms. Yet, this rehabilitative substitute, despite persistent reforms in the peripheries, has failed to replicate its celebrated crime-control triumphs in the West. It could not resonate with local realities, prompting Nigerian penal scholars to think outside the box for an indigenous rehabilitative solution to fortify correctional governance. Today, it is obvious that the country can no longer afford the luxury of expending huge resources on the feeding of unproductive inmates in its custodial institutions. Innovatively, therefore, correctional intervention should inspire inmates to function productively in agriculture to overcome depression, lethargy, and relieve Nigeria of the burden of inmates' seemingly unending dependency on the public. To effectively examine how the existing custodial rehabilitative norms predispose ex-offenders to worsen recidivism, it provides novel conceptual and theoretical explanations of how inmates can embrace custodial agricultural therapy to achieve sustainable post-release outcomes upon release.

### **Statement of the Problem**

To reduce recidivism, more than 65 percent of inmates in state and federal prisons work (ACLU et al., 2022). Since custodial farming enhances inmates' job skills and employability (Borsotto et al., 2022), it can increase inmates' accountability toward themselves, plants, and animals (Payne et al., 2023). In fiscal year 2020, the correctional industries programs in California sold over \$191 million in manufactured goods, services, and agricultural products of incarcerated workers. In 2021, the value of goods, services, and commodities produced by the incarcerated workers nationwide... totaled over \$2 billion (ACLU et al., 2022, p. 17). These striking realities predispose Nigeria to disregard the logic of the 'Nothing works' period of the 1970s... (Mathiesen, 2011) to ...take the task of rehabilitating offenders seriously" (Cullen, 2013, p. 361). Beginning ten years ago, across the world, nations have substantial ex-offenders being re-apprehended for similar crimes, doubting whether rehabilitative interventions are functional (Byrne, 2020). The retributive criminal justice system no longer properly serves Nigeria (Hermann, 2017).

### **Research Questions**

The scientific community knows little about what works using inmates' agricultural skills to facilitate their post-release reintegration (Adeloye, 2017) in Nigeria. Consistent with its objective of investigating how existing rehabilitation models have failed to rehabilitate inmates, this

study provides answers to the following questions: (i). Why does the existing custodial rehabilitation fail to prevent re-offense in Nigeria? (ii). What character-refinement strength can agricultural rehabilitation display in preventing ex-offenders from reoffending in Nigeria? (iii). How can agriculture be sustainably used as a custodial rehabilitative stimulus to prevent re-offence in Nigeria? In 2021, the value of goods, services, and commodities produced by the incarcerated workers nationwide ...totaled over \$2 billion (ACLU et al., 2022, p. 17). The unexplored potential of custodial agricultural rehabilitation in confronting recidivism in Nigeria and the peripheries is the knowledge gap that this study bridges in scholarship.

### **Significance of the Study**

For policymakers, this study identifies a new path to policy and systemic reform to achieve the transformation of correctional centres into a verifiably safe and rehabilitative environment. For researchers and students of criminology, the article provides a foundation for an evidence-based examination of inmate agricultural capacity building, aiming to develop advanced farming techniques and technologies. These dynamics sensitize institutions to adopt training programs that promote behavioural modification and resilience. Moreover, the engagement of researchers with skill development programs provides vigorous feedback from the field. By highlighting gaps in knowledge transfer and examining the relationship between the core focus of the article about inmates' agricultural rehabilitation, this article can ensure that security stakeholders focus more on agricultural skill development that matches the real-world needs of contemporary consumers. Moreover, the study holds considerable significance for researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders who struggle to optimize resource allocation and revolutionize the localized training in sustainable agricultural practices and stronger rural economies.

Promoting inclusive development, the article can align inmates' training with socioeconomic realities by bridging the existing gap between theoretical research, climate-smart agriculture, and functional farming to drive modern agricultural progress in Nigeria. Generally, this article offers stimulating insights into how effective rehabilitation of inmates can reduce recidivism, decrease the cost of incarceration, enhance food security, and equip inmates with marketable skills to achieve a self-reliant identity needed for positive community reentry. Therefore, to explore the untapped potential of custodial agricultural rehabilitation, this article dedicates section one to its introduction and literature review. Section two

offers the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Section three describes its methodology. Section four presents the results and unpacks the discussion of findings. Section five concludes with recommendations.

### **Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis is formulated to help in the realization of the research objective:

1. There is a significant relationship between existing custodial rehabilitation and its outcomes for re-offence in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

A correctional centre is an establishment where inmates are forcibly detained and denied some degree of freedom under the authority of the state as convicts or people awaiting trial (Wooldredge, 2020). Rehabilitation is the process by which individuals reconnect with the realities of their pre-criminal conduct (Dent et al., 2020) and acquire competencies to promote productive post-release behaviour (Petrich, 2020). This article conceives reentry as the post-custodial return and reception of inmates into their pre-custodial environment after a therapy-induced detachment from criminal tendencies appears to have been achieved. Globally, recidivism can be defined as reoffense, re-arrest, defiance of rehabilitation, or repetition of criminal conduct (Jonathan & Chad, 2023). Reintegration is the process that ensures inmates' community living (UNODC, 2016). Having made these conceptual clarifications, precolonial Nigeria's custodial procedures lacked agricultural components. Custodial Agricultural Rehabilitation is an emerging correctional initiative that imaginatively suggests the use of correctional agriculture as a potent custodial treatment to promote inclusive custodial governance, inmates' productive skills, and facilitated reintegration into society.

Pre-colonial Nigeria had culture-based custodial governance, but its confinement spaces were not designed to rehabilitate criminals or enforce regulated sentences (Bernault, 2007). They were hardly better than the existing corrections, which weaknesses predisposed them to implement a punitive custodial agenda rather than preparing inmates for rehabilitation (Uche et al., 2015). Existing evidence supports post-colonial corrections producing behaviorally defective ex-offenders for reintegration (Monehin, 2021), to become training grounds for hardened criminals (Owohunwa, 2024). The neglect of agriculture likely deprived inmates of the necessary rehabilitative experiences for sustainable reintegration into society (Vishor



& Eason, 2021), across precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial epochs. Except for the agricultural empowerment of inmates and ex-offenders, individuals with criminal records may never experience positive post-release socioeconomic reintegration (Zeto, 2022) in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This article anchors its explanation of the problem on the combination of Thomas Kuhn's theory of revolution and the social farming theory.

### **Theory of Revolution**

Kuhn (1962) propounded the theory of revolution to explain "paradigm shifts". The model uncovers untapped approaches for scholars to make sense of unproductive realities (Hairston, 2015). Kuhn's paradigm shift framework assumes that all scientists involved in scientific investigations pursue solutions to problems, often working within a single paradigm, in the context of normal science. Therefore, whenever a paradigm develops significant anomalies (as the existing custodial rehabilitation), and is no longer able to solve the pressing problems (recidivism) of the day, it is overthrown, and an identified new paradigm (custodial agriculture) takes over (Laudan, 2018) to prevent pathologies. The revolutionary shift proposal of Kuhn, a rehabilitative intervention will equip inmates who are trapped in passive captivity with agricultural vocational empowerment, contemporary farming skills, and sustainable economic reintegration. Also, the revolution does not just insist on systemic recovery and restoration, it will significantly downplay punishment and focus on the capacity of custodial agriculture to empower inmates with practical agricultural skills.

In addition, it will decrease rates of recidivism through the creation of legitimate post-release livelihood prospects, overcome lethargy, and remove depression from custodial facilities. Experience has proven that the panacea for recidivism does not essentially reside in alien rehabilitative norms, "but in the society's culture and its socioeconomic conditions" (Hairston, 2015, p. 102), which agriculture, in this instance, sufficiently represents. To ensure sustainable social order in Nigeria, the initiative of agricultural revolution will need to be anchored on full equipment of correctional facilities to prepare inmates effectively for efficient food production in a contemporary farming environment. In effect, this article uses the Kuhn's (1962) idea of a revolution to argue that altering the operational mechanism of custodial facilities - particularly through agricultural inclusion - a major shift in the rehabilitative paradigm to produce ex-inmates that will never return to criminality will be achieved.

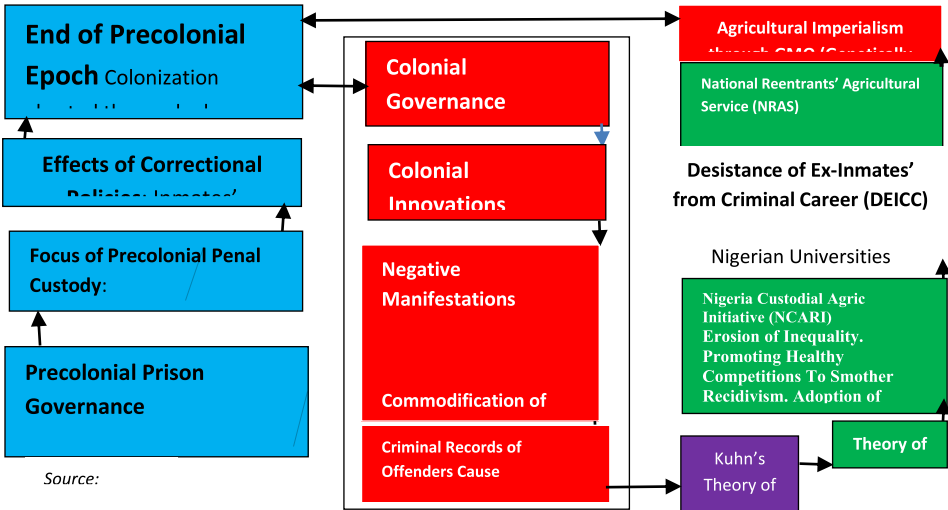
**Social Farming Theory**

The European Economic and Social Committee defines Social Farming (SF) as a set of practices that uses agricultural assets to provide social services. It transforms farms into places where people with special needs can participate “in daily farming routines” to advance “their well-being” (Willems, 2013, p. np). Social farming suitably merges agricultural resources with social services to enhance custodial rehabilitation in Nigeria. To this extent, the social farming theory promotes social and labour inclusion for marginalised groups (Jarábková et al., 2022). Moreover, social farming openly tackles high re-offence rate by enhancing the mental health of inmates, and improving food security in Nigeria. Di Iacovo and O’Connor (2009) identified two Social Farming models in Europe. The Northern European model shows institutional support for farms that offer therapy and rehabilitation, such as Care Farming. These are relevant to this article because farming helps inmates learn useful skills for future (self) employment (Borsotto et al., 2022). Social farming functions as a restorative vocational instrument that equips inmates with agricultural skills that are sought after for sustainable economic self-reliance upon release. The combination of these two theories improves the productive agricultural capacities of inmates in Nigeria.

**Inmates-Agriculture Confluence and Proposed Custodial Components in Nigeria**

To make rehabilitation resonate with local realities, corrections should stimulate behaviour modification as prescribed by law, enhance incentives, and life chances (Byrne, 2020).

**Conceptual Framework: Fig. 1 Framework of Nigeria Agro-Custodial Initiative**



Conscious of the capacity of custodial farming to re-socialize, integrate, and compensate inmates (Ivanics, 2022), this article proposes a four-layered agricultural framework to propel rehabilitative revolution in Nigeria. Therefore, Figure 1 presents the Nigeria Custodial Agricultural Rehabilitative Initiative (NCARI) as an agriculture skilling framework to transform inmates' interactions with the community and stop harmful correctional culture. Second, the Instant Post-Release Agricultural Engagement Opportunity (IPRAEO) will anchor ex-offenders' agricultural activities on the community's competitive economic platform. Third, the Desistance of Ex-offenders from Criminal Career (DEICC) will deprogram ex-offenders to live crime-free and productive agricultural lives. Fourth, the National Reentrants' Agricultural Service (NRAS) will, as the apex structure, partner with other actors to transform university curriculum to empower undergraduates in their service year, drive inmates' agricultural interest and activity. NRAS will redefine public safety and mobilize the elites to give "social healing to offenders, victims, and communities in the aftermath of victimization" (Ayodele, 2017, p. 44) in Nigeria. Three issues, climate change, Genetically Modified Seeds, and greedy elites, may stall this custodial idea in Nigeria.

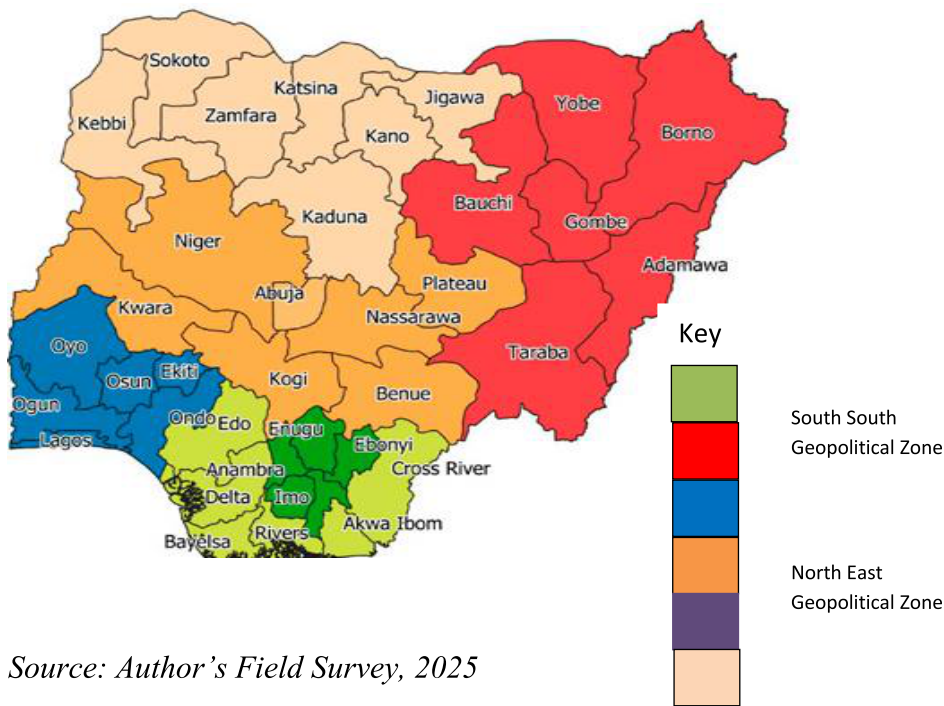
### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Nigeria using a mixed-method design. It used a multistage sampling technique to select its respondents. Stage 1: The study adopted Nigeria's six geopolitical zones (Fig 2). Stage 2: It selected three zones from the six geopolitical zones. Stage 3: From the three randomly selected zones in the North West, the researcher selected Kaduna Correctional Centre and Farm Centre in Kujama. Second, from the South-West, the researcher randomly selected Kirikiri, Lagos, and Ogbomoso Farm Centre. Third, from the South East, the researcher randomly selected Correctional Facility Enugu and Ibite Olo Farm Centre. Stage 4: The researcher used Yamane's (1967) simplified formula to calculate the study's sample size, based on a 95% confidence level. Stage 5: From the lists of inmates provided by the welfare officers of the selected correctional facilities, the researcher randomly selected 25 inmates from each facility and farming centre, respectively, in each of the three zones ( $75 \times 3 = 225$  inmates). From each of the three selected zones, 10 correctional workers were randomly selected at Kirikiri, Ogbomoso Correctional Farm Centre, Kaduna, and Kujama Correctional Farm Centre, Enugu Correctional Facilities, and its farm centre ( $25 \times 3 = 75 \times 3 = 225$  correctional workers). Stage 6: Overall, 450 respondents were randomly selected. While 225 inmates responded to copies of a questionnaire

labelled “A”, 225 randomly selected stakeholders responded to copies of a questionnaire labelled “B”, with an allowance of 5% for wrongly completed copies, the researcher produced 473 copies of the instrument, which were administered to respondents.

On completion, 385 copies of the questionnaire (185 for inmates and 200 for non-inmates) were successfully retrieved. Upon examination, 284 copies were found well completed for analysis. The response rate was 74%. A pilot study pretested the instrument among thirty ex-offenders and stakeholders in Ogun State, indicating that the inmates failed to relate to questions on precolonial and postcolonial events. Therefore, the researcher had to produce two versions of the questionnaire, marked “A” for inmates and “B” for non-inmates, to collect robust data from inmates and non-inmates based on the outcome of the pilot. The study deployed SPSS 18.0 statistical software for the data analysis of the quantitative data. The three levels of statistical analysis used are: univariate, bivariate, and multivariate. Firstly, the researcher used univariate analysis to explain the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (both inmates and non-inmates).

Fig 2: Showing the Six Geopolitical Zones of Nigeria



Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025

Secondly, the researcher used bivariate analysis to determine the relationship between individual characteristics and recidivism in the study area. The researcher also used the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) technique to test the association between each category. He employed multivariate analysis as the last level, where he used binary logistic regression to explain the likely effect of the categorical independent variables on the dependent variable, which he dichotomized.

The interview guide steered the qualitative data collection. The contextual information emerging from the in-depth interviews complemented the quantitative findings to produce a robust report. The Institutional Review Board of the Apex University of Liberia Research, Ethics Review Committee provided formal ethical approval, ensuring adherence to respect for and confidentiality of participants. Despite ethical regulations, the researcher still faced challenges. The general air of insecurity across Nigeria justified the insistence of correctional facilities to allow minimal access to inmates. The welfare officers of each facility handled questionnaire administration. This accounted for lapses in questionnaire completion. Instruments in this category were removed to present credible data for analysis. At the farm centres, the inmates were obviously occupied with work. This left them with scant time to effectively supervise the completion of the questions. Interviews with correctional staff were challenging because they obviously did not want to jeopardize their jobs, despite assurances of anonymity.

### **Presentation of Findings**

This study presents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in tables, as they are critical for disaggregating individual-level characteristics that shape respondents' perceptions of how custodial agriculture can sustain productive reentry and reintegration of inmates into society. It also reveals the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and inmates' perception of the effects of agricultural skills on recidivism. The research used logistic regression to explain the formulated hypotheses

| Table 1: Age, Sex, Ethnicity, and Religion |              |           |                |             |                |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Variables                                  | Category     | INMATES   |                | NON-INMATES |                |
|                                            |              | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Frequency   | Percentage (%) |
| Age (years)                                | 18 – 22      | 24        | 16.0           | 10          | 7.5            |
|                                            | 23 – 27      | 32        | 21.3           | 10          | 7.5            |
|                                            | 28 – 32      | 23        | 15.3           | 24          | 17.9           |
|                                            | 33 – 37      | 30        | 20.0           | 35          | 26.1           |
|                                            | 38 – 42      | 16        | 10.7           | 24          | 17.9           |
|                                            | 43 +         | 25        | 16.7           | 31          | 23.1           |
|                                            | Total        | 150       | 100.0          | 134         | 100.0          |
| Sex                                        | Male         | 129       | 86.0           | 102         | 76.1           |
|                                            | Female       | 19        | 12.7           | 30          | 22.4           |
|                                            | Others       | 2         | 1.3            | 2           | 1.5            |
|                                            | Total        | 150       | 100.0          | 134         | 100.0          |
|                                            |              |           |                |             |                |
| Ethnicity                                  | Yoruba       | 54        | 36.0           | 29          | 21.6           |
|                                            | Igbo         | 69        | 46.0           | 54          | 40.3           |
|                                            | Hausa        | 23        | 15.3           | 47          | 35.1           |
|                                            | Others       | 4         | 2.7            | 4           | 3              |
|                                            | Total        | 150       | 100.0          | 134         | 100.0          |
| Religion                                   | Islam        | 36        | 24.0           | 37          | 27.6           |
|                                            | Christianity | 95        | 63.3           | 93          | 69.4           |
|                                            | Traditional  | 17        | 11.3           | 4           | 3.0            |



|                |            |     |       |     |       |
|----------------|------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
|                | Others     | 2   | 1.3   | 0   | 0.0   |
|                | Total      | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0 |
| Marital status | Single     | 68  | 45.3  | 44  | 32.8  |
|                | Married    | 56  | 37.3  | 69  | 51.5  |
|                | Divorced   | 10  | 6.7   | 16  | 12    |
|                | Separated  | 13  | 8.7   | 4   | 3.0   |
|                | Widowed    | 3   | 2.0   | 1   | .75   |
|                | Others     | 0   | 0.0   | 0   | 0.0   |
|                | Total      | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0 |
| Education      | None       | 12  | 8.0   | 9   | 6.7   |
|                | Primary    | 22  | 14.7  | 7   | 5.2   |
|                | Secondary  | 81  | 54.0  | 48  | 35.8  |
|                | University | 32  | 21.3  | 68  | 50.7  |
|                | Others     | 3   | 2.1   | 2   | 1.5   |
|                | Total      | 150 | 92.1  | 81  | 96.9  |

**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

In Table 1, 52.8% of the respondents are inmates, while 47.2% are non-inmate respondents. The study sample is youth-dominated, 83.3% inmates are aged 18–42 years, and 76.9% non-inmates are aged 18–42 years. This category represents the subgroup of the population most likely to be in conflict with the law. Among the inmate respondents, 86% are male, 12.7% are female, and 76.1% of non-inmate respondents are male, 22.4% are female. Women are usually very careful in matters that concern corrections. Therefore, more than their male counterparts, women loathe incarceration. Igbo respondents who are inmates are 46%, and non-inmate respondents are 40.3%, which is more than the inmate and non-inmate respondents from other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the diverse ethnic mix is important for developing a balanced perspective on the adoption of agriculture as a custodial rehabilitative treatment in Nigeria.

Overall, Christian inmate respondents 63.3%, and Christian non-inmate respondents 69.4% are more than the adherents of other faiths in the study. Nevertheless, the level of religious diffusion reflects Nigeria’s multi-religious character, which drives agriculture-stimulated rehabilitative perceptions, inmates’ integration upon release, and the general expectation of forgiveness in the absence of true justice. The marital status, education, and residence of respondents are discussed. Inmate respondents who are single, 45.3%, are more than the inmate respondents, 37.3%, who are married, while non-inmate respondents, 51.5%, who are married, are more than non-inmate respondents, 32.8%, who are single. The marital distribution undergirds the criticality of family structures in the perception and management of post-release reentry and reintegration of ex-offenders in the context of culture-driven pressures. Non-inmate respondents who have school certificates and university degrees are 86.5%, compared to inmate respondents who have school certificates and university degrees, 75.3%. The overall literacy profile of the respondents suggests a sample that is intellectually active in articulating the implications of agricultural rehabilitation as a custodial element for stabilizing inmates upon release into society.

| Table 2: Residence, Income, Location of Correction, and Occupation |               |           |     |             |        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----|-------------|--------|
|                                                                    | Category      | INMATES   |     | NON-INMATES |        |
|                                                                    |               | Frequency | %   | Frequency   | %      |
| Residence                                                          | North East    | 7         | 4.7 | 6           | 4.47   |
|                                                                    | North West    | 11        | 7.3 | 41          | 30.586 |
|                                                                    | North Central | 7         | 4.7 | 16          | 11.936 |

|              |                |     |       |     |        |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------|-----|--------|
|              | South West     | 53  | 35.3  | 28  | 20.888 |
|              | South East     | 64  | 42.7  | 42  | 31.332 |
|              | South South    | 8   | 5.3   | 1   | .746   |
|              | Total          | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0  |
|              |                |     |       |     |        |
| Income       | No income      | 40  | 26.7  | 12  | 9.0    |
|              | Below 20,000   | 13  | 8.7   | 7   | 5.2    |
|              | 21,000-30,000  | 3   | 2.0   | 14  | 10.4   |
|              | 31,000-40,000  | 3   | 2.0   | 13  | 9.7    |
|              | 41,000-50,000  | 5   | 3.3   | 9   | 6.7    |
|              | 51,000& above  | 86  | 57.3  | 79  | 59.0   |
|              | Total          | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0  |
|              |                |     |       |     |        |
| Occupation   | Schooling      | 21  | 14    | 20  | 14.9   |
|              | Self-employed  | 79  | 52.7  | 48  | 35.8   |
|              | Public servant | 11  | 7.3   | 53  | 39.6   |
|              | Private worker | 24  | 16.0  | 7   | 5.2    |
|              | Applicant      | 14  | 9.3   | 5   | 3.7    |
|              | Others         | 1   | 0.7   | 1   | 0.7    |
|              | Total          | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0  |
|              |                |     |       |     |        |
| Correctional | North East     | 7   | 4.7   |     |        |
| Location     | North West     | 11  | 7.3   |     |        |
|              | North Central  | 7   | 4.7   |     |        |
|              | South West     | 53  | 35.3  |     |        |
|              | South East     | 64  | 42.7  |     |        |
|              | South South    | 8   | 5.3   |     |        |
|              | Total          | 150 | 100.0 |     |        |

*Source: Author's Field Survey 2025*

In Table 2, the highest number of inmate respondents resided in the South East 42.7% and South West, 35.3%, more than the South East non-inmate respondents, 31.3%, and South West, 20.9%. More respondents resided in the South East and South West, probably owing to the extent of insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria and sporadic threats in the South South. About 57.3% of inmate respondents received a monthly salary of 51,000 naira or more prior to conviction. This data suggests that the respondents have developed financial responsibility upon which only productive rehabilitation can build to facilitate a sustainable reentry and reintegration agenda. A simple majority, 39.6% of non-inmate respondents were public

servants, 35.8% were self-employed, and 52.7% of the inmate respondents were self-employed. The fact that the majority of the inmate respondents were self-employed before incarceration implies a likely correlation between their freedom from supervision and their commission of criminal acts. More inmate respondents, 42.7%, serve their terms in the South East, South-West 35.3%. Lower rates of incarceration in North West 7.3%, South South 5.3%, North East 4.7%, and North Central 4.7% suggest the impact of terrorism on incarceration and custodial rehabilitation. The majority of inmate respondents, 52.7%, were self-employed prior to conviction. Probably because of the fear of job insecurity, most non-inmate respondents avoided indicating that they are civil servants. How the study was structured, the researcher expected 100% non-inmate respondents to indicate that they are civil servants.

**Table 3: *Reasons for colonial custodial rehabilitation incapacity to prevent recidivism in Nigeria***

| Variables                                       | Category                | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Inmates’ duration in prison                     | less than 1 year        | 43         | 28.7           |
|                                                 | 2 to 6 years            | 75         | 50.0           |
|                                                 | 7 to 11 years           | 23         | 15.3           |
|                                                 | 12 years and more       | 9          | 6.0            |
|                                                 | <b>Total</b>            | <b>150</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |
|                                                 |                         |            |                |
| Colonial inmates reoffended after release       | Yes                     | 117        | 87.3           |
|                                                 | No                      | 16         | 11.9           |
|                                                 | Total                   | 134        | 100            |
|                                                 |                         |            |                |
| Reasons for the failure of colonial corrections | odd colonial ideas      | 52         | 38.8           |
|                                                 | prisons baffled inmates | 7          | 5.2            |
|                                                 | custodial reform failed | 54         | 40.3           |
|                                                 | no recreations          | 21         | 15.7           |
|                                                 | Total                   | 134        | 100.0          |
|                                                 |                         |            |                |
| Why colonial prisons                            | familiar                | 21         | 15.7           |

|                                                       |                            |     |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| failed to stop recidivism                             | customs                    |     |       |
|                                                       | painful to inmates         | 48  | 35.8  |
|                                                       | hated inmates              | 60  | 44.8  |
|                                                       | Language barrier           | 4   | 3.0   |
|                                                       | Others                     | 1   | .7    |
|                                                       | Total                      | 134 | 100.0 |
|                                                       |                            |     |       |
| Importance of colonial prisons to inmates             | Inmates can improve        | 32  | 23.9  |
|                                                       | No plan to help inmates    | 37  | 27.6  |
|                                                       | fake reform plan           | 9   | 6.7   |
|                                                       | Inmates are colonial tools | 56  | 41.8  |
|                                                       | Total                      | 134 | 100.0 |
|                                                       |                            |     |       |
| How colonial régime treated ex-inmates who reoffended | Anyhow                     | 16  | 11.9  |
|                                                       | provided jobs              | 10  | 7.5   |
|                                                       | criminalised shaming       | 7   | 5.2   |
|                                                       | improved economy           | 36  | 26.9  |
|                                                       | rearrested them            | 65  | 48.5  |
|                                                       | Total                      | 134 | 100.0 |

***Reasons for Custodial Rehabilitation Incapacity to Prevent Recidivism in Nigeria***

*Source: Author’s Field Survey 2025*

This section examines the reasons for the incapacity of colonial-template driven custodial rehabilitation to prevent recidivism in Nigeria. The data in Table 3 show that 50% of the inmate respondents said they have spent between 2 and 6 years behind bars, 15.3% said they have spent between 7 and 11 years, and 6% have spent 12 years or more behind bars. Since the duration of inmates’ incarceration complicates their integration into mainstream society (Goger et al., 2021), it has implications for social

order in society. Therefore, lengths of incarceration in this study convince inmates of their competence by experience to comment logically on issues concerning rehabilitation interventions that can facilitate inmates' exit from corrections as better or worse individuals.

Incompetence of custodial therapies to neutralize the original offences, inmates' failure to embrace rehabilitation, and the presence of socio-economic factors that triggered the original crimes during inmates' release are potential causes of re-offence. Similarly, inmates' rejection by significant others, anticipated humiliation, loss of livelihood, and shelter, triggering reintegration failure, often fertilize re-offense (Adelagun, 2024). New evidence from the qualitative strand of the study aligns with these empirical reasons for recidivism. A female correctional officer at the Ibite Olo Farm Centre in Enugu State further explained how the existing rehabilitation impacts the released inmates within and upon release from the facilities:

There is no marked difference between the colonial custodial policies of repression and hollow rehabilitation they offer and what the existing correctional rehabilitation presents to inmates. Just as post-release humiliation awaited colonial inmates, contemporary inmates face the same integration challenge upon release. A situation in which custodial officers undermine rehabilitation, are uncooperative with, and show no obvious empathy for inmates, does not prevent recidivism. (IDI/female/Enugu/36 Years/2025).

Moreover, research has observed that a positive prison atmosphere is helpful to program success (Harding, Wyse, Dobson, & Morenoff, 2014). Regrettably, this custodial luxury is alien to Nigeria's rehabilitation governance. In response to how colonial policy-driven corrections influenced inmates' behaviour, a simple majority, 41.8%, said the inmates were not helped to improve behaviourally because they are still treated as mere colonial tools. In what specific ways has the existing correction skillfully handled inmates, a small majority, 31.3% of non-inmate respondents, said the existing correction treated inmates as its enemies. The qualitative explanation resonates with the significant reasons that necessitate the failure of existing corrections in preventing recidivism in Nigeria. The submission of a male correctional staff participant represented the consensus of others' positions:

The colonial authority institutionalized the criminal justice system that regulates citizens' conduct, even in postcolonial Nigeria. Incapacitation application receives more attention than rehabilitation therapy. Behind the fierce-looking security personnel that usually welcome newcomers at correctional facilities, drugs still get smuggled in for inmates' consumption, which emboldens them to organize and execute jail breaks. (IDI/Male Kaduna/45 Years/2025).

Drug and theft offenses have been found to be the offense types mostly linked to the highest levels of recidivism after release from prison. Expectedly, recidivism rates are lower among older inmates than among the younger age groups (Kriminalvården, 2020). Yishau (2014) found that between 50 and 90 percent of youths constitute Nigeria's inmate population, with one third of ex-offenders re-offending. Going by this, it is predictable that youth re-offense will continue to suggest the weakness of the existing rehabilitative treatments to improve inmates' reintegration upon release in Nigeria. In this study, 83.3% of the inmate respondents are aged 18–42 years. Upon enquiry, 87.3% of inmate respondents acknowledged that inmates who experienced the existing custodial rehabilitative treatment reoffended upon release in Nigeria. A male correctional officer at Ogbomoso farm centre explained the reasons for this:

Youth constitute the major population of custodial facilities because they have the energy to commit crimes and reoffend more competently than the elderly. Therefore, they are more motivated by drugs to commit crimes. Custodial farming will reduce the lethargy caused by their confinement and channel their energies to productive farming for future economic self-reliance, if the government can invest maximally in the initiative. (IDI Ogbomoso/36 Years/2025)

Responding to how the colonial policy-driven correction treated ex-offenders who reoffended, a small majority of the respondents, 48.5%, insisted that the existing administration promptly rearrested and haphazardly rehabilitated them. The fact that the products of custodial correction recidivated points to the futile outcomes of their custodial intervention. In light of this, a male correctional officer at the maximum correctional facility stated:



The existing government feigns interest in the well-being of inmates. If the custodial authority meant well for inmates, its rehabilitation intervention would have elevated inmates' welfare, improved their diet, reduced congestion, and paid attention to their health. If all these had been put in place to complement custodial farming, rehabilitation would have been manifestly reformatory in preventing future recidivist tendencies of inmates upon release. (IDI Lagos/36 Years/2025).

The study investigated the specific reasons that respondents believed caused the existing custodial facilities to effectively prevent re-offence by ex-offenders. While 40.3% of the respondents noted that custodial rehabilitation failed to reform offenders due to faulty policy, 38.8% of the respondents contended that the rehabilitative content of the existing correctional system does not resonate with the local realities of Nigeria. However, a small majority, 40.3% of the respondents, agreed that the existing custodial rehabilitation failed to effectively reform criminals. As a panacea, the study asked non-inmate respondents the kind of help that the custodial correction lacked, which made it incapable of preventing its products from reoffending. About 44.8% of non-inmate respondents insisted that the existing correction showed hatred toward inmates. A female correctional officer participant at Kujama Farm Centre in Kaduna observed that:

The existing correctional governance overlooks the need to equip the facilities to widen the margin between inmates and recidivism upon release. Having captured the judiciary, the political class ignores the corrections because nothing will ever make them inmates despite their reputation for corruption and reckless wastage of collective patrimony. (IDI/Non-Inmate/Kaduna/50 Years/2025).

It should be noted that individual-level factors, including sex, age, marital status, mental health, criminal past, and drug use, can determine the effect of treatment plans (Visher et al., 2017) and the density of recidivism. Unless effective systemic intervention is articulated and consistently implemented, inmates' risk of being involved in a nasty series of futile social integration, re-offense, reconviction, and social rejection (UNODC, 2018) is predictable.

***The Strength of Agricultural Rehabilitation in Preventing Re-Offense in Nigeria***

In this section, this study presents the strength of agricultural rehabilitation in preventing ex-offenders from re-offending upon release. As the retributive justice system focuses on social order and accountability, it fails to address the fundamental causes of crime that fuel high rates of recidivism in society (Ifemeje & Ozuru, 2021). This failure offers a custodial agricultural rehabilitation alternative, an opportunity to be experimented with as a potent recidivism control initiative.

**Table 4: The strength of agricultural rehabilitation in preventing re-offense in Nigeria**

| Variables                                               | Category                  | Frequency | (%)   |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|-------|
| custodial farming activities can improve inmates        | Yes                       | 127       | 94.8  |
|                                                         | No                        | 6         | 4.5   |
|                                                         | Others                    | 1         | .7    |
|                                                         | Total                     | 134       | 100   |
| How custodial farming can cause inmates not to reoffend | facilitates accommodation | 75        | 56.0  |
|                                                         | community cooperation     | 9         | 6.7   |
|                                                         | social workers' closing   | 32        | 23.9  |
|                                                         | Total                     | 134       | 100.0 |
|                                                         | Excluded non-response     |           |       |

|                                   | Category | INMATES   |       | NON-INMATES |       |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------------|-------|
|                                   |          | Frequency | (%)   | Frequency   | (%)   |
| Correction has a farming plan     | Yes      | 134       | 89.3  | 99          | 73.9  |
|                                   | No       | 16        | 10.7  | 31          | 23.1  |
|                                   | Total    | 150       | 100.0 | 130         | 100.0 |
| Custodial farming changes inmates | Yes      | 145       | 96.7  | 132         | 98.5  |
|                                   | No       | 5         | 3.3   | 1           | .7    |
|                                   | Total    | 150       | 100.0 | 134         | 100.0 |

|                                              |                     |            |              |            |              |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Kind of farming actions in prison            | None                | 15         | 10.0         | 34         | 25.4         |
|                                              | vegs, cassava, etc  | 84         | 56.0         | 79         | 59.0         |
|                                              | pig farming         | 16         | 10.7         | 11         | 8.2          |
|                                              | Cattle rearing      | 23         | 15.3         | 4          | 3.0          |
|                                              | oil palm            | 12         | 8.0          | 5          | 3.7          |
|                                              | <b>Total</b>        | <b>150</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>134</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
|                                              |                     |            |              |            |              |
| How custodial farming affects inmates        | sure employment     | 76         | 50.7         | 80         | 59.7         |
|                                              | helps housing       | 24         | 16.0         | 7          | 5.2          |
|                                              | sure community help | 32         | 21.3         | 26         | 19.4         |
|                                              | social work ending  | 13         | 8.7          | 19         | 14.2         |
|                                              | <b>Total</b>        | <b>150</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>134</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
|                                              |                     |            |              |            |              |
| The ways custodial farming affects community | No impact           | 1          | .7           | 8          | 6.0          |
|                                              | self-employ         | 95         | 63.3         | 94         | 70.1         |
|                                              | help food security  | 29         | 19.3         | 10         | 7.5          |
|                                              | stop recidivism     | 8          | 5.3          | 11         | 8.2          |
|                                              | reduce labelling    | 15         | 10.0         | 11         | 8.2          |
|                                              | Others              | 2          | 1.3          | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>     |
|                                              | <b>Total</b>        | <b>150</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>134</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

*Source: Author's Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 4 shows that 94.8% of the respondents were positive that enriching the existing custodial content with inmates' farming activities can significantly improve the behaviour of inmates and prevent their involvement in repeated offending behaviour. Zonal evidence of agricultural investment abounds in custodial facilities across Nigeria. However, a male Igbo correctional officer noted:

The Ibite Olo Farm Centre in Enugu State was established in 1976 to hold 250 inmates, but currently has fewer than 100 inmates. It has a massive land space for farming and other agricultural activities. If the government equips this centre and others across Nigeria, inmates' improved agricultural training and consequent skills may stimulate investment to build inmates' productive capacities, strengthen their self-confidence, and reduce their predisposition to criminal activities upon release. (IDI/Male Enugu/42 Years/2025).

Attesting to the reality of the farming initiative in the North West senatorial zone, a Hausa male correctional officer observed:

Kujama Farm Centre in Kaduna is over 2500 hectares of land used mainly for training inmates in agricultural practices and development. Beyond the inmates' acquisition of agricultural skills, they are paid a stipend after each day's work to get something for themselves. This assures inmates of the hope of economic self-dependence upon release. Inmates who are passionate about avoiding stigma to determine their social integration may leverage farming as an advantage to stabilise and prevent recidivism upon release. (IDI/Kaduna/35 Years/2025).

A male Yoruba officer participant exemplified the actuality of agricultural involvement of inmates in the south-west zone when he observed:

Ogbomoso correctional farm facility has 76 male inmates. They are trained in the cultivation and processing of agricultural products. The management challenges the inmates with the thought that if they could expend as much time and energy as they do in the facility on their personal agricultural projects upon release, life of crime will be meaningless to them, as their families, communities, and Nigeria will be proud of their accomplishments. (IDI Ogbomoso/49 Years/2025)

If increased earnings are associated with a decreased incidence of crime (Alipoyo, 2022), the choice to commit a crime is less a function of receiving more money through legitimate occupations (Aliyu, Mustaffa, & Mohd, 2017). Certainly, the incomes for inmates upon release, as profits from agricultural skills acquired in custody, would be remarkable. On how

custodial agricultural rehabilitation can separate inmates from recidivist conduct upon release, 56% of the respondents claimed it will facilitate self-accommodation and successful social work closure. Qualitative evidence further explained how agricultural rehabilitation can impact the released inmates, when a female correction officer participant in the southeast explained:

The truly rehabilitated inmates who are passionate about agricultural investment need not fear incarceration-induced stereotypes and stigmatization. Their occupation will market their products, not their criminal past, which could be a result of a miscarriage of justice in a country where justice has become commodified. (IDI/female/Enugu/39 Years/2025).

Another female correctional officer participant from Lagos facility observed:

Upon release, ex-offenders will not need to sleep under a bridge even when society is expectedly reluctant to socially integrate them. With their custodial farming skills and readiness to apply them, they could work to feed and accommodate themselves. When ex-offenders live exemplary lives, members of the public who interact with them will not need to be compelled to appreciate their agricultural strength. (IDI/female Non-Inmate/Lagos/38 Years/2025)

The qualitative explanation of a male correctional staff participant clarifies the additions that the existing corrections made to the precolonial structures when he contended:

To some inmates, inclusion of members of the national youth service corps to custodial farming project may change the rehabilitative atmosphere of the daily experiences of inmates. Many inmates might have become tired of interacting with the same set of inmates and their officers since the beginning of their sentence, some inmates may consider the coming of the youth corps members as representing new blood in the system and seize the opportunity to revive their weakening spirits. For some other inmates, their youth-corps-member instructors are sources of better achievement orientation whose mentoring

could stimulate them to struggle for higher qualifications to enhance their future career progression. (IDI/Male Kaduna/45 Years/2025).

Following the downsizing trend in the economic corridor, a gap in the training and rehabilitation of inmates has resulted in a loss of experienced technical manpower (Aliyu, Mustaffa, & Nasir, 2017). Despite this, 89.3% of inmates and 73.9% of non-inmate respondents still believed that correctional facilities had agricultural rehabilitation components. Hopefully, 96.7% of inmate respondents and 98.5% non-inmate respondents admitted that custodial farming has a significant impact on inmates. A male correctional officer participant explained:

Inmates in the farm centres acknowledge the positive impacts of their acquisition of custodial agricultural skills. This acknowledgment would be nationwide if the government made the provision of equipment and resources available to the facilities. For agriculture to serve as a custodial rehabilitation component, public policy should readily replace the old mode of agricultural tools with modern technology, where planters and harvesters relieve farmers of the labour-intensive agricultural practices that are common in Nigeria. (IDI/male/ Enugu/36 Years/2025).

A female correctional officer participant observed:

Agricultural rehabilitation appears to be the most credible stereotype-resistant provision that any custodial intervention can help inmates regain their lost confidence in traditional communities, for inmates' struggles that do not depend on public opinion for survival. If public policy commits adequate funds to custodial agricultural rehabilitation, most ex-offenders who recidivate may be permanently recovered from criminal activities. (IDI/female Non-Inmate/Lagos/45 Years/2025)

Having a perspective that is a bit different from other participants, a male non-inmate participant contended:

The fact that most inmates were convicted of existential crimes sends a signal to national economic planners to embark on mechanized agriculture across the country. When food is available for unemployed citizens to eat, theft

will decline, and criminality and recidivist conduct induced by hunger will not overload the criminal justice system. (IDI/Male Kaduna/42 Years/2025).

On the specific agricultural products that the efforts of the inmates bring to life, 56% inmate respondents and 59% of non-inmate respondents identified vegetables, cassava, and maize farming as the predominant Nigerian products, respectively. Then, to what extent does farming serve as a rehabilitative catalyst to improve the conduct of inmates? In response, 50.7% of inmate respondents and 59.7% of non-inmate respondents identified the provision of guaranteed employment upon release. The study further investigated the implications of custodial farming for inmates' survival upon release, 63.3% of inmate respondents and 70.1% of non-inmate respondents testified that the provision of self-employment, upon release, drives the initiative. On how custodial agricultural rehabilitation can encourage inmates to avoid recidivist practices, upon release, 56% of non-inmate respondents said it facilitates self-accommodation.

The study inquired whether the use of inmates' custodial farming skills can stop recidivism upon release, 93.3% of inmate respondents said it can. Against the backdrop of a high criminality score on the Global Organized Crime Index about Nigeria, which implies that ex-offenders add to crime rates, thus raising doubts about the efficacy of rehabilitation programs (Mbah, 2021), data on the proposed custodial agricultural rehabilitation is hope-lifting. Therefore, it is exciting that 95.3% of inmate respondents and 88.1% of non-inmate respondents acknowledged that custodial agricultural rehabilitation can improve inmates' resistance to recidivism upon release, reversing the organized crime profile of Nigeria.

A male correctional officer participant observed:

We plant different kinds of agricultural seeds. While rice has been largely cultivated, we have embarked on beans and cassava, and we have now diversified into poultry farming. We have pigs, goats, fowls, and other animals in our farms. Through the ways we handle these animals, inmates learn all-around agricultural technology (IDI/Non-Inmate/Ogbomoso/52 Years/2025).

A male correctional officer participant noted:

Agriculture is the cheapest occupation that ex-offenders could comfortably embrace upon release. The land they



cultivate is readily available, and the crops to plant are readily obtainable from friends and relations. Ex-offenders are engrossed in agricultural activities so much that they have scant time to waste on practices that can take them back to custody. Feedback from ex-offenders shows that custodial farming is a rewarding-reintegration resource (IDI/male/Enugu/36 Years/2025).

A male non-inmate participant contended:

Ex-offenders now form cooperative associations of redeemed ex-offenders to set up agricultural sites for the production of all forms of crops. They invite experts to lecture them on topics such as "Is there life after correction?" There is also evidence that ex-offenders self-employ and self-accommodate themselves in ways that reduce recidivism. These kinds of efforts attempt to break the wall between ex-offenders and non-inmate members of the community to facilitate social reintegration of ex-offenders. (IDI/Male Kaduna/40 Years/2025).

### ***Agriculture as a Custodial Rehabilitative Resource to Disable Recidivism in Nigeria***

In this section, this study presents agriculture as a custodial rehabilitation resource to reduce recidivism among inmates in Nigeria upon release. Bentham (1843) once pictured correctional institutions as a veritable "mill for grinding rogues honest and idle men industrious" (p. 226). With this seeming wonderful competence of corrections, recidivism appears to have lost its customary source of fertility. In his work, Shajobi-Ibikunle (2014) quotes former Chief Justice of the United States, Warren Burger (1980) to have said that "to put people behind walls and bars and do little or nothing to change them is to win a battle but lose a war" (p. np). Burger's scenario is antithetical to Bentham's Eldorado of behaviour modification. In Nigeria, the wish to rescue ex-offenders from the strangleholds of recidivism may never translate into a verifiable reality unless agriculture becomes the hub of custodial rehabilitation. To this end, Part 1, Section 14, subsection (1) of the Nigerian Correctional Act (2019) has given a legal backing to the desire of making inmates modern farmers.

| Table 5: Agriculture as a custodial rehabilitative tool to disable recidivism in Nigeria |                                      |           |       |             |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Variables                                                                                | Category                             | INMATES   |       | NON-INMATES |       |
|                                                                                          |                                      | Frequency | (%)   | Frequency   | (%)   |
| .Communities can gain from Inmates farming skills                                        | Yes                                  | 146       | 97.3  | 132         | 98.5  |
|                                                                                          | No                                   | 3         | 2.0   | 1           | .7    |
|                                                                                          | Total                                | 150       | 100.0 | 134         | 100.0 |
| Institutional Collaboration can empower inmates                                          | Yes                                  | 146       | 97.3  | 131         | 97.8  |
|                                                                                          | No                                   | 4         | 2.7   | 2           | 1.5   |
|                                                                                          | Total                                | 150       | 100.0 | 134         | 100.0 |
| How lack of custodial farming skills affects inmates                                     | lack of employment                   | 138       | 92.0  | 118         | 88.1  |
|                                                                                          | lack of farm land                    | 3         | 2.0   | 3           | 2.2   |
|                                                                                          | tiny farming returns                 | 3         | 2.0   | 1           | .7    |
|                                                                                          | lack of housing                      | 6         | 4     | 11          | 8.2   |
|                                                                                          | Total                                | 150       | 100.0 | 134         | 100.0 |
|                                                                                          |                                      |           |       |             |       |
| Corpers can make inmates adopt auto farming                                              | corpers make inmates use mech farm   | 55        | 36.7  | 69          | 51.5  |
|                                                                                          | corpers promote inmates’ use of tech | 26        | 17.3  | 15          | 11.2  |
|                                                                                          | promote & sell inmates’ farm yields  | 50        | 33.3  | 37          | 27.6  |
|                                                                                          | Justify fertilizers                  | 19        | 12.7  | 13          | 9.7   |

|                                                    |                                     |     |       |     |       |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
|                                                    | to inmates                          |     |       |     |       |
|                                                    | Total                               | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0 |
|                                                    |                                     |     |       |     |       |
| Inmates' farming skills will benefit communities   | self-employment aided production    | 62  | 41.3  | 80  | 59.7  |
|                                                    | access to farmland                  | 10  | 6.7   | 7   | 5.2   |
|                                                    | access to agricultural loans        | 39  | 26.0  | 26  | 19.4  |
|                                                    | replace community loss of trust     | 35  | 23.3  | 19  | 14.2  |
|                                                    | Total                               | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0 |
|                                                    |                                     |     |       |     |       |
| Institutional collaboration can prevent recidivism | They cannot                         | 3   | 2.0   | 2   | 1.5   |
|                                                    | Corpers use tech to improve inmates | 49  | 32.7  | 67  | 50.0  |
|                                                    | Corpers can destroy stereotypes     | 33  | 22.0  | 13  | 9.7   |
|                                                    | give inmates new farming ideas      | 46  | 30.7  | 37  | 27.6  |
|                                                    | improve inmates farm harvests       | 19  | 12.7  | 15  | 11.2  |
|                                                    | Total                               | 150 | 100.0 | 134 | 100.0 |

*Source: Author's Field Survey, 2025*

This study investigated the possibility that inmates' custodial farming skills can benefit community members. Data in Table 5 indicate that

97.3% of inmate respondents and 98.5% of non-inmate respondents observed that the initiative will be remarkably beneficial to the community. In the context of collaboration, 97.3% of inmates and 97.8% of non-inmate respondents acknowledged that the proposed partnership of NCoS with the NUC, NYSC, and Nigerian Universities to enable graduates to drive inmates' productive enthusiasm for agriculture to be the true hub of custodial rehabilitation in Nigeria is commendable. Through this partnership, inmates' time will be primarily channeled into a productive economy. However, a female participant argued:

Custodial farming skills of inmates will significantly benefit community members. Custodial farming will, more than ever before, resonate with the local realities of Nigerians if it is anchored on institutional partnership driven by mechanized agriculture. (IDI/Non-Inmate/Enugu/42 Years/2025)

The transformational rehabilitative focus of the Nigerian Correctional Act (2019) has gained manifest expression as the partnership of the Nigerian Correctional Service with Hope Behind Bars Africa. This Non-Governmental Organisation has unfolded its plan to establish a Farming Justice Project at the Kuje Custodial Centre in Abuja in 2025. The initiative, which the European Union, through International IDEA, under the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Program bankrolls, is to make inmates gain life skills and contribute significantly to society during and after incarceration to reduce recidivism (Adeoye, 2025). The "... aim of rehabilitation and reformation of incarcerated inmates is to instill in them prosocial behavior..., and life skills... in the effort to reduce their re-incarceration risks" (Baffour, 2021, p.1175). These have been and remain the unassailable functions of corrections. Another non-inmate Yoruba participant from the south west argued:

Public policy should make agriculture compulsory for all inmates to ensure effective rehabilitation and successful reintegration. Also, it should encourage public-spirited individuals and non-governmental organizations to enter into institutional partnerships with the NCoS on the operational equipment of ex-offenders in Nigeria. Therefore, to complement these voluntary efforts, the federal government should establish a highly mechanized farm project in each of the six geopolitical zones to engage inmates who may not have the resources for independent

agricultural start-ups upon release. (IDI/Non-Inmate/Lagos/53 Years/2025)

Since some scholars have observed that penal responses to criminal acts cannot neutralize recidivism (Ogwezzy, 2016), the development of new alternatives is inevitable. Therefore, on the effects of the absence of custodial farming skills among inmates, 92% of inmate respondents and 88.1% non-inmate respondents identified lack of employment for ex-offenders as their most critical effect. About 36.7% of inmate respondents and 51.5% of non-inmate respondents acknowledged that youth corps members can productively intimate inmates with how the use of technology can make farming a rewarding occupation, 33.3% of inmate respondents and 27.6% of non-inmate respondents claimed that youth corps members can teach inmates how technology can help them promote and sell their farm yields with less stress upon release, 12.7% of inmate respondents and 9.7% of non-inmate respondents said youth corps members can introduce the triumphs of fertilizers to inmates for better harvest, cognizant of the inherent dangers of Genetically Modified Organism seeds (GMOs) upon release. Qualitative participants examined other areas in which the agricultural initiative could improve the community. A male correctional worker participant connected all the thoughts of other respondents into a seamless whole when he said:

For inmates to stop reoffending upon release, public policy should seriously fund agricultural rehabilitation because it will expedite smoother reentry and faster reintegration. Unemployment is probably the most acute cause of recidivism in Nigeria. When ex-offenders are released into the unemployment market, chances are that they may easily encounter deviant jobless peers who may influence them to join in the illegitimate adventures that may subsequently lead them to crime commission, re-arrest, and reconviction. Access of inmates to arable land, site security, and agricultural loans are conceivable barriers that the initiative may encounter. (IDI/Male Kaduna/48 Years/2025).

To give agriculture a shot in the arm as a profitable custodial rehabilitation, public policy should be cognizant of the lack of financial provision that has inhibited the upgrade of Nigerian corrections to an outstanding global standard (Ozuru, 2019). Despite this reality, the study asked the respondents if inmates can use their acquired farming skills in custody to benefit community members. About 41.3% of inmates and 59.7% of non-

inmate respondents said that inmates' acquired farming knowledge will provide self-employment that will enhance the productive economies of inmates, communities, and the country. Qualitative data present a consensus about the perceptions of other participants concerning the use to which inmates could put their acquired agricultural skills. However, a female non-inmate respondent summarized the consensus:

The acquired custodial farming skills of inmates can provide a rewarding service to the community by complementing their traditional exposure to agriculture. These new skills can distance inmates from their past criminal activities. They can also make their agricultural output impact other community members, including their victims, as part of a healing package for their misconduct. (IDI/Female Ogbomoso/43 Years/2025)

The study interrogated the possibility of institutional collaboration with the NCoS substantially and sustainably preventing recidivism in Nigeria, 32.7% of inmate respondents and 50% of non-inmate respondents stated that the inclusion of purpose trained youth corps members for instructional interaction with inmates can bring significant new technologies and their uses to bear on inmates' application of knowledge for better farming procedure and harvest, 30.7% of inmate respondents and 27.6% of non-inmate respondents expressed high hopes that the youth corps members will give inmates new farming ideas, 22% of inmates respondents and 9.7% of non-inmates expressed enthusiasm that youth corps members can destroy stereotypes and stigmatization that hold inmates down in society, while 12.7% of inmates and 11.2% of non-inmates respondents observed that the collaboration of youth corps members can give inmates innovative thoughts about better methods of agriculture harvesting. The views of the respondents reflected the criticality of integrating national youth corps members into the framework of making inmates agriculturally responsive to custodial skill acquisition for personal and national growth. However, the views of a female Igbo participant, who embraced the summary of other participants on this phenomenon, suggested:

Agriculture remains the traditional occupation of Nigerians. Given the experience at the Ibite Olo Farm Centre, the government should mechanize agriculture, recruit more skilled supervisors, and encourage the proposed initiative nationwide to make the agricultural rehabilitation revolution a resounding success in Nigeria. Also, it should

use the inclusion of youth corps members to dispel stereotypes and their traditional effects that undermine inmates’ integrity. (IDI/Female Enugu/32 Years/2025)

| Table 6 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PERCEPTION OF FARMING SKILLS ON RECIDIVISM |        |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------|
| Variable                                                                                 |        |                        |
| Age                                                                                      | N=140% | X <sup>2</sup> P-value |
| 18-22                                                                                    | 16.4   | .0228                  |
| 23-27                                                                                    | 22.1   |                        |
| 28-32                                                                                    | 16.4   |                        |
| 33-37                                                                                    | 20.0   |                        |
| 38-42                                                                                    | 10.0   |                        |
| 43 and above                                                                             | 15.0   |                        |
| Total                                                                                    | 100    |                        |
| Gender                                                                                   |        |                        |
| Male                                                                                     | 85.7   | .042                   |
| Female                                                                                   | 14.3   |                        |
| Total                                                                                    | 100    |                        |
| Religion                                                                                 |        |                        |
| Islam                                                                                    | 37.1   | .0348                  |
| Christianity                                                                             | 45.7   |                        |
| Traditional                                                                              | 15.0   |                        |
| Others                                                                                   | 2.1    |                        |
| Total                                                                                    | 100    |                        |
| Marital status                                                                           |        |                        |
| Single                                                                                   | 45.7   | .0256                  |
| Married                                                                                  | 37.1   |                        |
| Divorced                                                                                 | 7.1    |                        |
| Separated                                                                                | 7.9    |                        |
| Widowed                                                                                  | 2.1    |                        |
| Others                                                                                   | -      |                        |
| Total                                                                                    | 100    |                        |
| Education                                                                                |        |                        |
| None                                                                                     | 7.1    | .006                   |
| Primary                                                                                  | 15.7   |                        |
| Secondary                                                                                | 54.3   |                        |
| University                                                                               | 20.7   |                        |
| Others                                                                                   | 2.1    |                        |
| Total                                                                                    | 100    |                        |
| Occupation before Sentence                                                               |        |                        |

|                                          |      |      |
|------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Schooling                                | 14.3 | .657 |
| Self-employed                            | 52.9 |      |
| Government employed                      | 7.9  |      |
| Private sector employed                  | 15.7 |      |
| Applicant                                | 8.6  |      |
| Others                                   | 0.6  |      |
| Total                                    | 100  |      |
| Years Spent in the Correctional Facility |      |      |
| less than 1 year                         | 30.0 | .045 |
| 2 to 6 years                             | 48.6 |      |
| 7 to 11 years                            | 15.7 |      |
| 12 years and above                       | 5.7  |      |
| Others                                   | -    |      |
| Total                                    | 100  |      |

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025

Data in Table 6 indicate the bivariate analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of inmates and how perceptions of their acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills influence recidivism. Twenty-two percent of the inmates in the age group of 23-27years agreed that their acquired agro-custodial skills will be a useful resource to prevent a future re-offence upon release, while 85% who indicated that their acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills will be a useful resource are males. Concerning religious status, 45.7% of inmate respondents who believed that acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills would be a useful resource were Christians, while the least were other religions. Nearly forty-six percent of the inmate respondents who are single are convinced that acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills will be a useful resource to prevent recidivism among their counterparts upon release. The majority of those who agreed that acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills were a potent resource had secondary education (54.3%). The years spent at the correctional facility influenced inmate respondents’ perception of acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills on recidivism. Those who have spent over two years believe that the acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills will help inmate respondents to prevent recidivism upon release. Overall, the study established a significant relationship between age, gender, religion, education, years spent at the correctional facility, and acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills to prevent recidivism ( $P<.005$ )



**Table 7: Logistic regression Showing relationship existing between custodial rehabilitation and its outcomes for re-offense**

| Variable                                                     | $\beta$ | Exp $\beta$ | Class Interval @ 95% |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------|----------------------|
| Number of years been an inmate in this correctional facility | .354    | 1.424*      | .619-3.277           |
| Types of Agricultural activities learnt                      | -1.732  | .177*       | .047-.670            |
| Benefit of Farming Skills for better person                  | -.474   | .622*       | .286-1.453           |
| Law abiding reform from Agriculture                          | 1.904   | 6.711**     | .511-88.081          |
| Ways in which agricultural reform will avoid recidivism      | .317    | 1.373       | .632-2.984           |
| Constant                                                     | -3.508  | .030        |                      |

• P value <.005 \*\* P value<.01

*Source: Author's Field Survey, 2025*

Data in Table 7 reveal the logistic regression between existing custodial rehabilitation and its implications for recidivism. The table establishes a higher significant relationship between number of years spent by inmates and the use of agro-custodial rehabilitation to ensure behaviour modification that prevents re-offense in Nigeria (Exp  $\beta$ =1.424, P value <.05). Positive significant relationship was confirmed with the types of acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation skills and re-offense in the study area (Exp  $\beta$ =.177, P value <.05). Similarly, the benefit of acquired custodial agricultural rehabilitation reform to stimulate inmates into better persons was significantly related to re-offense among inmates in the study area (Exp  $\beta$ =.622, P value <.05). The high significant relationship between acquired custodial-agricultural-rehabilitation-induced law abiding reform and re-offense was ascertained among inmates (Exp  $\beta$ =6.711, Pvalue <.05). Ways in which agricultural reforms will prevent recidivism was found to be positively and significantly related to re-offense in the study area.

**Discussion**

The present study found that offenders who had been released from the existing corrections system, based on satisfaction that they had been rehabilitated, recidivated not too long after. However, the government promptly rearrested them, implying that any custodial rehabilitation fashioned after the existing template will fail to wholly refine the

criminals. This finding corroborates the observation of Latessa, Johnson & Koetzle (2020) that rehabilitation interventions targeting non-criminogenic creative competences have no significant control on criminal behaviour. The present study found the use of agriculture as a custodial rehabilitative component to be a welcome proactive initiative that will provide inmates with self-respect, self-employment, and cause a relatively permanent end to recidivism upon release, to corroborate Pealer's (2017) finding that the application of practical approaches, such as custodial agricultural rehabilitation, will increase public safety and decrease recidivism.

The finding that castigatory treatment of inmates in Nigerian correctional centres still persists is inconsistent with Alamu & Makinde's (2020) finding, which insists that for sustainable rehabilitation to occur, inmates must be managed with love rather than castigation. In addition to farming, the present study found that education and vocational training facilitate rehabilitation, in agreement with Baggio et al. (2020), who found that positive reinforcement in rehabilitation manifests in reduced criminal behaviours. In some of the farming centres that this study interrogated, it found that inmates produce what they eat to support Gilmore's (2014) earlier finding that inmates cultivated some of the food they ate in custody to preserve public funds and also offers them amnesty from incarceration. The earlier finding of Owonikoko (2022) that there is a widespread public lack of trust in inmates' rehabilitation is not consistent with the finding in the present study that inmates' agricultural investment upon release could replace community loss of trust to win the fight against recidivism in Nigeria.

This study found that agricultural orientation will take the ex-offenders in a relatively permanent manner away from criminality to support the finding of a qualitative study of the crime-control strength of the traditional justice system in Oshogbo, in which "once an offender is rescued from crime through customary practices, he or she never repeats the misconduct because '*aja ko gbudo pada s'ibi eebi re, ewo orisa ni*' - a dog never goes back to its vomit, it is a taboo endorsed by the gods" (Ayodele, 2017, p. 7). This study found storage facilities in the farming centres in Nigeria's correctional agricultural sites to be rather low-tech and obsolete, in obvious conflict with the finding of Dobberman & Nelson (2013), which states that harvest and postharvest expertise conserve labour, lessen grain spoilage, and enhance product value.

This study found stereotypes to be unhealthy for the effective reintegration of ex-offenders into society, which is complementary to the finding of Jo et al. (2020) that the community needs to forgive ex-offenders to achieve destigmatisation and completely undermine labelling. The present study found that the enrichment of the existing custodial realities with farming rehabilitation supports the position of Bullock & Bunce (2020) that the goals, processes, and structures of rehabilitation constantly transform in response to variations in the socio-political environment of a country or broader social space. If custodial agriculture rehabilitation ultimately fails, then one may agree that “Africa had not benefitted from corrections” (Orakwe, 2010, p. 2), and might never do. Therefore, the logic behind Wiafe’s (2021) argument that most correctional institutions, globally, have failed in their reformatory objectives justifies the combined use of Kuhn’s paradigm shift and the theory of social farming to imbue the custodial initiative with the explanatory strength to shape the core focus of this study. Kuhn’s paradigm shift framework applies to prevent further pathologies, while the social farming model helps inmates to learn useful skills for self-employment for future occupational stability (Borsotto et al., 2022).

This study has critical implications for policy and practice. As a result of high recidivism rates linked to barren custodial rehabilitation in Nigeria, custodial facilities should introduce a mandatory agricultural skill development training for all inmates upon incarceration to guarantee post-release economic reintegration. NCoS must prevent the weaponization of agro-custodial rehabilitation to enslave inmates. The Federal Government should pursue the establishment of a highly mechanized farm project in each of the six geopolitical zones to engage inmates who may not have the resources for independent agricultural start-ups upon release with vigour. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the NCoS should advocate a policy that proactively combats climate variability, genetically modified organism (GMO) seeds, and the genocidal greed of Nigeria’s elite class. NCoS should advocate a policy legislation that enables institutional partnerships with it to enable inmates embark on effective and sustainable mechanized farming to make agriculture the hub of custodial rehabilitative revolution in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The article examined how existing rehabilitation models failed to resonate with Nigeria’s local realities in rehabilitating inmates. It examined the structures and focus of precolonial custodial facilities in Nigeria. It also identified the significant new additions the colonial penal policy made to

correctional rehabilitation norms in Nigeria. It dwelt on the implications of the existing custodial realities for recidivism in Nigeria. Finally, it considered the realistic need-driven reforms that could enrich correctional rehabilitation in Nigeria. The article found a historical path for custodial rehabilitation of inmates in Nigeria. It underscored the institutional enrichment that colonial intervention brought to corrections as well as their intended or unintended operational dysfunctions. It considered the implications of all these for the evolution and sustenance of an enduring rehabilitative culture. The article anchored its explanation in Kuhn's Theory of Revolution and Social Farming Theory. It adopted a mixed-method to collect data. The quantitative part was analyzed at three levels, and its qualitative strand was analyzed in terms of content and theme. The article presented its results, which it exhaustively discussed before making some data-driven recommendations. Therefore, this article concludes that a paradigm shift from a barren rehabilitative norm to a productive custodial agricultural rehabilitation is desirable. Also, this article holds that the proposition of four agriculture-based structures to harness the transformative potential of custodial agricultural rehabilitation, enabling inmates, upon release, to develop self-confidence, confront inertia, and build safer communities in Nigeria is the most viable intervention to make. When these are harmonized, the transformation of correctional centres from barren custodial institutions into productive agricultural hubs will reverse the rate of recidivism and boost inmates' economic empowerment in Nigeria.

Based on the findings from the field, the following recommendations were made:

- Nigeria, being a typically agrarian economy, the role of tradition cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, public policy should prohibit stereotypes and stigmatization of inmates to enable their lasting integration in society.
- The Federal Government should establish a highly mechanized farm project in each of the six geopolitical zones to engage inmates who may not have the resources for independent agricultural start-ups upon release.
- Public policy should legislate a law enabling institutional partnership with NCoS to enable inmates to embark on effective and sustainable mechanized farming.
- NCoS should partner with institutional actors to make agriculture the hub of custodial rehabilitative revolution in Nigeria.
- Corrections must prevent the weaponization of agro-custodial rehabilitation to enslave inmates.

- Public policy should proactively combat climate variability, genetically modified organism (GMO) seeds, and the genocidal greed of Nigeria's elite class.
- Public policy should establish Nigeria Custodial Agricultural Rehabilitative Initiative (NCARI), Instant Post-Release Agricultural Engagement Opportunity (IPRAEO), and National Reentrants' Agricultural Service (NRAS) to agriculturally empower inmates' reintegration into communities.

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