

SHARI'AH COMPLIANCE IN GRAINS TRADING: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Grains are considered to be the most consumed food globally. Its farming, harvesting and trading form one of the major characteristics of the Nigerian economy. Islam has laid down strong foundation for trading in compliance with the Shari'ah which demonstrates the conduct of financial transactions in accordance with the Islamic economic provisions. In the Nigerian context enough emphases were not made on conducting grains trading in full compliance with the Shari'ah. This paper aims at identifying the defects of the Shari'ah compliance of grains trading in Nigeria and the way forward. The study, using descriptive method, discovers that for grains trading in Nigeria to be in accordance with Islamic economic injunctions, more awareness of the Islamic economic system should be made to the public generally and the traders particularly. It recommends that emphasis should be made on public awareness and certain modern Islamic financial products should be made available for the traders to utilize. However, the study implies that the authorities should emphasize providing regulatory bodies that would be planning, monitoring and implementing rules and regulations at different levels. Enough Islamic finance education institutions should also be established to accomplish the system in the country. Further studies on different aspects of grains trading from Islamic economic perspective and on other products in the country were suggested.

Keywords: *Grains Trading, Islamic finance, Shari'ah Compliance, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Grains are small, hard, dry seeds, with or without attached hulls or fruit layers, harvested for human or animal consumption (Babcock, P. G., ed. 1976). After being harvested, dry grains are more durable than other staple foods, such as starchy fruits (plantains, breadfruit, etc.) and tubers (sweet potatoes, cassava, and more). This durability has made grains well

suited to industrial agriculture, since they can be mechanically harvested, transported by rail or ship, stored for long periods in silos, and milled for flour or pressed for oil. Thus, major global commodity markets exist for canola, maize, rice, soybeans, wheat, and other grains. Most of these grains are consumed in large quantities in Nigeria out of which some are traded internationally.

According to Rufa'i (2014), there is gross paucity of the sources of literature on grain trading in western Hausa land both archaeological and written that deal with the emergence of the trade which weakens the analysis, argument and proper understanding of the topic. He mentions that the dominance of grains production and distribution in this area is what made some scholars to consider the region as "Grain Belt of West Africa". The economy of the region is also named as "Grain Economy". As such researches in the area on the topic should be encouraged.

Majority of Nigerians consume grains which are heavily concentrated in the Savanna North. The total grain production in Nigeria during 1980 accounted for about 80%. The demand for rice which was mostly imported increased dramatically during the affluent 1970s, but the rice import has been reducing since the foreign exchange shortages of the 1980s.

The U.S. Library of Congress records showed that groundnuts and a few other agricultural products were Nigeria's major exports until petroleum surpassed them in 1965. They were the principal export crops in the 1960s and early 1970s. Even though, Nigeria was the world's largest exporter of groundnuts in the early 1970s; groundnuts fell from the export list by the end of the 1970s as a result of the severe Sahel drought of 1972-74 and a viral disease in 1975. The devaluation of the naira and the abolition of agricultural marketing boards in FY 1986 were also intended to increase cash-crop output, but the

results were disappointing. The failure to significantly increase output was caused partly by the lack of incentives for producers to invest in maintenance.

It was also noted that in the late 1980s, Nigeria reduced the structural bias against agricultural activity by decontrolling farm prices, maintaining subsidies on fertilizer and farm exports, and maintaining import bans on some food items. Despite the fact that incentives to the domestic farming industry were increased, little was achieved due to inadequate transportation and power networks, lack of appropriate technology, and the ineffective application of rural credit.

Haron & Wan Azmi (2009) indicated that generally in the Muslim world, concepts of Islamic economics were not really made known and some were forgotten. Instead, Muslims were exposed to economic systems established and developed by non-Muslims, which resulted to the society being led or forced to learn about the economic system of the West, and consequently became more familiar with the conventional systems and only awareness could tackle that.

In the Nigerian context, there is lack of proper regulations and regulatory bodies that would regulate the conduct of businesses in accordance with the Islamic laws at different levels in the country (Sanusi, 2011).

However, it could be noticed that problems exist, and it is hoped that this study would be an attempt to provide an overview of the extent to

which grains trading is being conducted in accordance with the Islamic economic injunctions in Nigeria, and find out the defects therein. It is also hoped that, the study would recommend ways to improve the situation from the Islamic economic perspective.

Literature Review

According to Odozi and Omonona (2012), concerning the grain commodity flow in Nigeria, the food grain problem, grain exchange institutions; root causes of grain price instability and governance options should be a key policy issue. The food price problem can be seen from the angle of high rise in average level of prices and the fluctuations from year to year or season to season. The level of high food prices, most urban and rural markets are exhibiting historically high prices since 2007 and continued to worsen till date. Highly unstable prices of food can lead to inefficient agricultural production decisions, especially when markets for credit and risk are poorly developed. A particular governance strategy is not sufficient and given the much uncertainty in the twenty first century, a mix of strategies that are efficient as well as equity loving should be considered.

Grains constituted an important commodity of exchange amongst different communities of western Hausa land and their immediate neighbours. The dominance of grains production and distribution in this area was what made some scholars to consider the region as “Grain Belt of West Africa”. The economy of the region was also named as “Grain

Economy”. Little was known on the emergence and development of grains trade in this area. There were some silent issues that led to the evolution of the trade which were often ignored by economic historians. The trade started with the issue of grains exchange or barter, that later encouraged the emergence of some individuals who specialized in borrowing and lending of grains to people in need (Rufa’i, 2014).

Islamic economics refers to the rules of financial transacting that is accepted by the *shari’ah*. It refers to the economic activities conforming to the main sources of the Islamic law (*Qur’an* and *Sunna*). Islamic economic thought dealt with issues in terms of determining what is permissible or prohibited according to the Islamic law (*Shari’ah*), whether dealing with issues like property, money, employment, taxes, etc.

Chapra (2001) cited different definitions of Islamic economics by different scholars:

“Islamic economics is the knowledge and application of injunctions and rules of the Shari’ah that prevent injustice and the acquisition and disposal of material resources in order to provide satisfaction to human beings and enable them to perform their obligations to Allah and the society” (Hasanuzzaman, 1984, p.52).

“Islamic economics is a social science which studies the economic problems of a people imbued with the values of Islam.” (Mamman, 1986, p.18)

“Islamic economics is a systematic effort to try to understand the economic problem and man’s behavior in relation to that problem from an Islamic perspective.” (Ahmad, 1992, p. 19)

“Islamic economics is the Muslim thinkers’ response to the economic challenges of their times. In this endeavor they were aided by the Qur’an and Sunna as well as by reason and experience.” (Siddiqi, 1992, p. 69).

“Islamic economics aims at the study of human falah [well-being] achieved by organizing the resources of the earth on the basis of cooperation and participation.” (Khan, 1994, p. 33).

“Islamic economics is the representative Muslim’s behavior in typical Muslim society.” (Naqvi, 1994, p. 13)

However, he gathered that; Islamic economics may be defined as that branch of knowledge, which helps realize human well-being through an allocation and distribution of scarce resources that is in conformity with Islamic teachings without unduly curbing individual freedom or creating continued macroeconomics and ecological imbalances (Chapra, 2001b, p. 33).

Islamic Economics could preferably be defined as the knowledge and application of injunctions and rules of the *shariah* that prevent injustice in the acquisition and disposal of material resources in order to provide satisfaction to human beings and

enable them to perform their obligations to Allah and the society.

Siddiqi (1996 as cited in Haron and Wan Azmi, 2009) mentioned that efforts to instill Islamic ideas and values into the field of economics only started in the 1970’s. However, it was viewed that if this is accepted it may imply that Islamic economic system was not in existence before then. It could be observed that the expression was meant to point out that; Islamic economics has been introduced as an academic discipline in a number of institutions of higher learning throughout the Muslim world and in the West since 1970’s. Nevertheless, Islamic economic system had existed from the beginning of Islam. Perhaps he may be referring to re-actualization of the Islamic economic principles in the modern times.

An Islamic economy features centrally on; the “behavioural norms and moral foundations” derived from the *Qur’an* and *Sunna*, the collection of *zakat* and other Islamic taxes, and the prohibition of interest (*riba*).

A survey on literature review on Islamic economics over the past few decades reveals a reasonable degree of agreement on at least two important and fundamental issues; the first concerns what Islam itself is about: “Justice and Equity” as the focus of the “Prophetic message”. There is also reasonable basis for agreement that the sources for specification of the characteristics of “Islamic Paradigm” are: the *Qur’an*, the *Ahadeeth* of the Prophet (PBUH) and *Fiqh* (Mirakhar, 2007).

It may be seen that Islam emphasized on all the ingredients of human well-being, including the human self, faith, intellect, posterity and wealth, along with their corollaries, instead of just wealth. They are all interdependent and play the role of supporting each other with progress in ensuring the enrichment of all these ingredients, it may be possible for the five-point star of Islam to shine with its full brightness and help realize real human well-being. Only then will it be possible for the Muslim World to be a reflection of what the Qur'an says about the Prophet (PBUH): "We have sent you as blessing for mankind" (Qur'an, 21: 107) (Chapra, 2008).

Najeeb (2014), in his study "Trading in Islam: *Shari'ah* rules and contemporary applications in Islamic Financial transactions" comparatively highlighted the various Islamic laws and guidelines which govern contracts of exchange involving selling of goods and trading of debts. The study indicated that along the ages, Muslim jurists have conducted researches extensively, discussed and proposed in order to produce a comprehensive framework of principles that Muslims could adhere to in their financial transactions and contracts and trading of debts. The proposals were based on the rulings derived from the Quran and *Sunnah* and other secondary sources of Islamic law.

The study introduced various categories of exchange contracts and examined the elements which may render them valid or void along with details on the general conditions and prohibitions in Islam when it comes to trading. It also discussed the

contemporary applications of these contracts in the modern Islamic financial industry and the current *shari'ah* issues and challenges being faced by the Islamic financial institutions. Moreover, the study highlighted on some critical issues which the Islamic financial industry needs to overcome to sustain its development and came up with some recommendations on how to improve the practices of the industry in future.

Despite the fact that the study introduced various *shari'ah* compliant contracts and concepts, which are utilized by the modern Islamic financial industry to offer *shari'ah* compliant financial solutions, it did not cover all the *shari'ah* compliant contracts apart from not discussing grains trading in a Muslim dominated population which this particular study focuses on.

Al-Qaradawi (2001) in his prominent book "The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam" generally discusses the Islamic principles pertaining to the lawful and the prohibited, which is not a simple matter in the *shari'ah* that it is not for any human to decide what is lawful and what is prohibited. Likewise nobody has the authority to declare any food, drink, dress, or trade and business as lawful or prohibited. The only criterion for defining the *halal* or the *haram* is the Qur'anic injunctions revealed from Allah, the Creator, Who knows what is best for his creatures, as well as the authenticated Prophetic *Sunnah* which is based on divine revelation.

Abdull Mutalip and Kazombiaze, (2014) indicated that the legal and

shari'ah framework is a vital pillar in the sustainable development of Islamic finance which needs to address any elements that could result in a comparative disadvantage to the industry. More especially that the conventional practices and laws have dominated finance for a long time in the world, as such the features that are unique to the requirements of Islamic finance need to be taken into account to ensure neutrality of treatment.

The study also indicated that *shari'ah* and *Fiqh* principles are difficult to deduce. Even though, the Islamic intellectuals, Mujahidun, and *Fuqaha* struggled for centuries but they remain subject to various interpretations and differing expert opinion across the various *mazahibs* and among the prominent *shari'ah* scholars particularly to modern finance. The study using document analysis, discussed Islamic banking legislation, driver of the legislation, regulating authorities, evolution of the regulatory regimes in some Muslim countries and legal challenges in Islamic finance. It appears that the study gave emphasis to just laws and regulations on Islamic banking without taking into consideration trading process in other sectors that include the markets. This study is precisely being conducted on grains trading practice in accordance with the Islamic laws and regulations.

The study of Mikail, (2014) on regulatory framework on Islamic finance in Nigeria aimed to examine in brief the concept of regulation in juxtaposition with an Islamic approach to the regulation to extract the main intent behind the regulation.

It highlighted some areas in the existing laws of Nigeria that need to be reformed for a better operation of the Islamic finance industry. The study employed a library-based approach to collect relevant data and the documents were analyzed using document analysis method. The findings of the study highlighted on the main theories of regulation in a comparative context and discussed areas of propound importance that need reforming within the existing laws governing banking and finance in Nigeria. It also emphasizes the need for statutory recognition of Islamic finance in Nigeria by providing new enactment or amendment to the existing laws. However, the study gave emphasis on Islamic banking and finance in Nigeria, while this study is concerned with trading generally and grains trading specifically, there by recommending ways to improve the *shari'ah*-compliance of grains trading in the country.

Most of the studies conducted on *shari'ah* compliance in Nigeria were on the issues of Islamic banking and some Islamic finances that efforts are being made to instill the industry and its products into the economic system of the country. This study is a rare of its kind that attempts to discuss *shari'ah* compliance of trading and specifically on grains which would open the door for the evolution of such researches that are highly needed in order to make progress in the general compliance with *shari'ah* in the country.

Methodology

The study adopts a conceptual approach using document analysis

method to have an overview on grain trading in Nigeria from an Islamic economic perspective. Qualitative research method was employed to gain insight into the nature of *shari'ah* compliance in Islamic finance. Grain trading financial transactions was viewed as the central phenomenon that required exploration and understanding from an Islamic economic view point.

Documents instrument played an important role in obtaining and analyzing the data of this study, whereby document analysis was used in the literature review and precisely dominated the sources used in obtaining the findings which were highlighted upon in the discussions.

The methodology of the paper was by collecting the available data and analyzing relevant literature using document analysis to review and highlight how grains trading financial transaction are conducted in Nigeria and the need for it to be *shari'ah* compliant. The paper utilizes the secondary data generated through library materials for literature review. Relevant sources such as books, journal articles, proceedings and others were sourced for the study, from which the findings were obtained and discussed.

Discussions

Among the conditions in trading is that there exists offer and acceptance by words indicating each one of them has accepted or what stands in the place of words like the signs of the mute person. Writing is considered as speech, while practical trade like where the buyer takes the good and

pays the price such as buying bread, books, postal stamps and the like, is looked into. If it is a good with a well-known price in the market without bargaining therein then the action indicates offer and acceptance so it is considered trade and this is what is termed by the *fuqaha* as trade of mutual taking, but not otherwise. However, transactions must be in a form that prevents disputes.

Islam has taken great care to prevent the occurrence of the defects and fraudulent behavior in the transactions. Many verses and Prophetic traditions have called upon the producers to set their commodities in a well measurable manner; establishing and using an excellent measure and a just balance are strongly recommended. Such recommendations were included among the ten obligations mentioned in “Surah al-An’am”, where Allah (SWT) said: “...And use full measure, and a just balance. We will not impose a task on any soul beyond its ability” (al-An’am:152). Allah also said: “...And give full measure when you measure and weight with the straight balance; this will be better and best in the final determination” (al-Isra’a:35). That was the rule which is one of the pillars that all Prophets preached to their people as proclaimed by the Qur’an: “We verily sent our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the scripture and the balance, that mankind may abide by justice” (al-Hadid:25), “It is Allah who has sent down the Book in truth and the Balance” (al-Shura:17), Prophet Shu’aib (AS) said to his people: “Clear proof indeed has come to you from your Lord, so give full

measure and just weight and withhold not from the people the things that are their due. And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order” (al-A’raf:85), “Give just measure, and be not defrauders. And weight with an equal balance. And do not diminish people’s good nor do evil on the earth, acting corruptly” (al-Shu’ara’:181-183).

The Prophet (SAW) has given emphasis on avoiding such practices prohibited in the Qur’an. Ibn Abbas said to the owners of measurement and weight: “You have been certainly entrusted with two affairs about which the former nations before you were destroyed” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 3 No. 1217). Miqdam bn Ma’di reported that: “The Prophet (SAW) told them to weigh their weight for there was blessing for them in that” (al-Bukhari, 3 No. 3443). Usman bn Affan also reported that: “The Prophet (SAW) told him always to weigh and measure anything he bought or sold” (Bukhari, 4: 451).

Considering the rule of custom accepted by the shari’ah, the state has the right to fix in general use a standard measurement upon which commodities could be measured and weighed in the selling and buying process. A *mudd* (modious) used during the time of the Prophet (SAW) could now be equivalent to 510 grams. While four muds make one *sa’* which could be equivalent to 2040 grams (Al-Maqridhi, 2007: 76-77; as cited in: Murtala, 2012).

There is no fixed measurement to be used apart from *mudd* and *sa’* unless what the state recommends for its

people, which includes all that is to be used in wrapping and packaging the commodities, like sacks, plastic bags, bales and various things that may be used to measure or weigh the products. Nevertheless, the state should strictly supervise markets to ensure that proper measurements are used accordingly, as it was observed during the early days of Islam. The issue of weigh and measure in the grains markets in Nigeria face a lot of challenges that involve the instruments used and the way they are tempered with to give un-just measure.

Transaction is the act of conducting or carrying out (business, negotiations, and plans). Therefore, for a grain trading to be *shari’ah*-compliant, it should avoid all the acts prohibited by the *shari’ah*. That is; the transaction should be free of usury (*riba*) with all its types, be it *riba duyun*; which consist of *riba qard* and *riba jahiliyyah*, or *riba buyu’*; which consist of *riba fadhl* and *riba nasi’ah*. However, according to another classification it is just *riba al-fadhl* and *riba al-nasiah* which this study adopts and would be discussed. Uncertainty (*Gharar*) should be avoided, which is categorized to: minor (*yasir*) and major (*fahish*). Likewise gambling (*al-qimar/al-maysir*) should also be avoided in the transaction. Any kind of injustice (*al-zulm*) and dealing with haram goods in the gains would not be accepted, and who ever tries manipulating prices and/or interfering in the free market should be dealt with. Nevertheless, hoarding, exploitation and fraud or transacting on stolen grains must be avoided. The

transaction should be clean with full weigh and measures in a way that none of the transacting parties is cheated or offended, neither the buyer (consumer) nor the seller (supplier). All rights in accordance with the shari'ah should be protected. Moreover, there must be the fear of Allah in all undertakings.

Contract is an agreement between two or more parties, to perform a specific job or work order, often temporary or of fixed duration and usually governed by a written agreement. There are so many types of contracts recognized by the shari'ah, and relevant conditions regarding the agreements that should be abided by, which can be adopted in grains trading for it to be *shari'ah*-compliant. These contracts could include: the sale contracts out of which there are different types of cash based contracts such as; *bay' muqayadah*, *bay' mutlaq*, *bay' sarf*, *bay' salam*, *bay' istisna'* and *murabahah* sale contract. However, the grain trading contracts could be made on a debt (al-qard) format or lending (al-i'arah) which is regarded as *qard-hasan* (benevolent loan) to finance the business. Hiring/Leasing (al-ijarah) is also another means that could be utilized under *shari'ah* in effecting the grain trading business which needs shops and stores that not every trader owns one but can hire it in a way that is compliant to the shari'ah. Agency (wakalah) is also another shari'ah-compliant instrument needed in making agreements such as grain trading contracts, while some times the need might arise of making a mortgage (al-rahn) contract which could also be done in accordance with

the provisions of the shari'ah. Moreover, in order to have a stronger business capital joint venture could be helpful, as such a shari'ah-compliant grain trading business could be formed under a joint venture of two or more partners confirmative with the Islamic partnership (Musharakah) contract whereby profit and loss would be shared proportionally as agreed upon by the partners.

Another *shari'ah*-compliant contract that could be adopted in grains trading financial transactions which is also a form of investment partnership is *Mudharabah* contract partnership. In such a contract, capital is provided by the investor (the rabbul-Mal) to another party (the Mudharib) in order to undertake a business or investment activity. Profits are then shared in accordance with the pre-arranged proportions, but in the incidence of having loss on the investment it is born exclusively by the investor and the *mudharib* then loses just the expected income share.

Regulations are rules made by a government or any other authority in order to control the way something is done or the way people behave. Grain trading like any other business that is supposed to be in compliance with the *shari'ah* should be regulated, monitored and implemented. The regulations have to be made at different levels ranging from the Federal, the State, to the Local Government levels. This is due to the fact that the Federalism system, as in Nigeria which is a secular state, does not take cognizance of the *shari'ah* laws and all citizens must abide by the constitution of the country, the

Muslims should wisely bring up the required steps to continue drawing the attention of the Federal Government and its financial regulatory bodies to allow full implementation of the Islamic financial system and constitute relevant sections under the regulatory bodies to monitor the system.

The case with the States level especially the Muslim dominated states in the country could be easier. The State through its legislative authority could make laws that do not contradict with the Federal laws on how to regulate businesses especially grains trading at the State markets to make it fully *shari'ah*-compliant and provide a system that can monitor and implement the laws at the Local level in such a way that it would not contradict with the Federal laws.

However, for everything to be *shari'ah*-compliant in the process, the Islamic scholars (Council of Ulama) have a great role to play, not only propagation and having public lectures but also should offer guidance in making the laws at all levels, in order not to divert away from the *shari'ah* laws and guidance. The Muslim intellectuals acquainted with the knowledge of the country's laws should also be with them in order not to face contradictions with the constitution in making the laws at the States' level. Likewise, they should offer guidance in the planning, monitoring and implementation at the market. It is in such a way that grains trading business could successfully be fully *shari'ah*-compliant.

Nevertheless, Islamic finance education institutions should be established, being the main character of market player in the Islamic finance industry (Aziz, 2017). Such institutions are minimal in the country. However, there should be more collaboration to enhance the curriculum to meet the requirements of the field and produce skilled and competent graduates capable enough to play the role of nursing the system with good reputation. Nevertheless, the issue of filling the gap between the Islamic financiers and the Muslim scholars needs to be addressed.

In this discussion, the objectives of the study were achieved whereby all the research questions were addressed. It is suggested that further studies should be carried out specifically on the regulations that need to be reviewed and the constitutional bodies to be instituted and the legal backing to support it at different levels. Such studies could play an important role in progressing the system in the country.

It was also made clear in this study that Islamic financial institutions in Nigeria are important factors to the success of having a *shari'ah*-compliant grains trading. Despite the developments achieved, it is strongly suggested that more studies on such Islamic finance education institutions be carried out especially on its impact on compliance with *shari'ah* in all financial activities. There is also the need to look into the issue of establishing more Islamic banks and financial institutions in the country and how it would be accepted nationwide for it to contribute in the

general *shari'ah* compliance in the country.

Conclusion

Trade was defined literally and technically, referring to the Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic expressions on it. Financial transactions and trading in Islam was discussed considering its compliance with *shari'ah*, thereby expressing how the proposals were based on the rulings derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah and other secondary sources of Islamic law. The principles of *shari'ah*-compliant grains trading financial transactions were also discussed, pointing out the lawful and unlawful in the dealings and transactions as well as the laws stipulated on contracts. The study also discussed the issue of regulations and regulatory bodies on *shari'ah* compliance of grains trading in Nigeria, whereby some recommendations were offered.

The study focused on grains trading financial transactions in compliance with *shari'ah* as such the gap for further research is wide enough. It is hoped that the recommendations of the study would encourage the authorities, organizations and individuals to intensify efforts in implementing and developing the Islamic economic system in such a Muslim dominated society that should be conducting their businesses, especially grains trading which is popular in the area, in compliance with *shari'ah*. However, most of the studies previously conducted on the area were conventional; therefore, coming up with Islamic finance based studies on different issues that would

benefit the Muslim Ummah is vital and productive.

The study concludes that there is need for instilling the Islamic financial transactions laws and provisions into the present grains trading financial transactions in Nigeria, and proposed a *shari'ah*-compliant grains trading financial transactions method that contributes to the field.

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