

COSCHARIS ULTRA MODERN RICE PROCESSING MILL IN THE FOOD ECONOMY OF ANAMBRA STATE, 2014-2024

Dr. Innocent-Franklyn Ezeonwuka

Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
if.ezeonwuka@unizik.edu.ng
08033096134

&

Dr. Daniel Chukwuma Nzereogu

Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
dc.nzereogu@unizik.edu.ng
07066823400

&

Agubueze Onyekachi Cosmas

Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
bedoncedon@gmail.com
09154870943

ABSTRACT

The Establishment of the Coscharis Ultra-Modern Rice Processing Mill fundamentally altered the agricultural trajectory of Anambra State Nigeria from 2014 up to date. Prior to this, private sector investments; Anambra State was not considered a significant Rice producing region. Anambra State was heavily dependent on Imported rice and a backwardness in modernized cultivation and processing infrastructure. Utilizing a mixed method research design. The study analyses qualitative data from interviews with employees and consumers alongside quantitative data from government publications, statistical records, and industry webinars. Findings reveal that the integration of advanced innovative farming techniques, mechanized processing and an outgrower scheme has catalysed a remarkable shift, positioning Anambra as a major contributor to national rice production. Metrics would include enhanced food security through substantial import substitution, the generation of significant livelihood opportunities, and stimulated local economic growth. The mill's success demonstrates a potent model for regional agricultural transformation, bridging historical productivity gaps and positioning the state as an emerging hub for agro-industrialized rice farm. Recommendations include fostering sustained public-private partnerships, scaling investments in irrigation infrastructure, and strengthening extension services for smallholder farmers.

Keywords: Modernized, Food Security, Anambra State, Outgrower Schemes, Agro-industrialized, Private Sector Investments

Introduction

For long, Anambra state officially created as an extract of the old Anambra State has been a home where agriculture plays an important role in the state's economy, and crops like yams, oil palm products, rice, corn (maize), cassava, and citrus fruits are the principal crops. The state has large modern markets located in Onitsha and Nnewi, which evolved into the hub of the state's commerce and industry. The state also has a major bridge across the Niger River at Onitsha which provides a direct road link westward to Benin City and Lagos¹. Anambra state is rich in natural gas, crude oil, bauxite and ceramic. It has almost 100 percent arable soil. Anambra state has many other resources in terms of agro-based activities like fishery and farming, as well as land cultivated for pasturing and animal husbandry².

Anambra State is characterized by a mixture of rainforest vegetation and savannah. The vegetation cover plays an important role in agricultural practices and land suitability. The state is home to a diverse population. The demographic composition includes various ethnic groups, and the population density varies across different areas because the state is renowned for its diverse agro ecology which present a unique opportunity for rice cultivation. Agriculture is humanity's oldest industry that has evolved from the early days when everything was done manually. A period when animals were the only source of manpower and were used from sowing of seeds by hands to the use of plough and other mechanized implements. In the early communities, farming was not only a means of survival within families, but also a major source of trade, cultural identity and community development. Over times, agricultural practices evolved and certain crops began to stand out to their true potentials in support

of both livelihood and regional economies. Among these crops was Rice, a versatile and highly demanded grain crop grown in importance across Nigeria and her environs.

In Nigeria, rice has grown in importance due to a combination of factors, including rapid population expansion, urbanization, and shifting consumer preferences. Historically, traditional staples such as yam, cassava, and millet dominated the Nigerian agricultural landscape, while rice remained a minor crop cultivated in specific regions.³ However, economic and social transformations have led to a surge in rice consumption, making it one of the most widely consumed grains in the country today. The preference for rice can be attributed to its ease of preparation, long shelf life, and versatility in meal preparation, making it an attractive choice for households across different socio-economic classes⁴.

The growing demand for rice in Nigeria has resulted in increased efforts to boost local production. Government policies, private sector investments, and research initiatives have been directed toward enhancing rice production to reduce dependence on imports and achieve self-sufficiency. Despite these efforts, Nigeria remains one of the largest importers of rice in Africa, with a good amount of its domestic consumption met through imports.

Coscharis Group of Companies is a Nigerian conglomerate, located in southeastern Nigeria. It was established in 1977⁵. Initially focused on automobile sales, the company has diversified its operations to include agriculture, with investments in rice production. Recognizing the potential of the agricultural sector, the Coscharis Group has implemented innovative strategies to enhance productivity, increase yields, as well as supporting local farmers. The company's approach to rice production is centred on large-scale farming, mechanization, and advanced agricultural techniques. By integrating modern technology such as precision farming, irrigation systems, and improved seed varieties, the Coscharis Group has contributed to boosting rice output in the region. The company has engaged in strategic collaborations with local and international stakeholders, facilitating knowledge transfer, capacity building, and access to financial resources to contracted farmers. These efforts align with national initiatives aimed at reducing dependence on imported rice, improving local production, and strengthening food security, hence a milestone in ingenious rice entrepreneurship.

Southeastern Nigeria, has witnessed a surge in demand for locally produced rice due to changing consumer preferences and a push for food self-sufficiency. Yet, the region's rice production remains hindered by various factors, including outdated farming practices, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to financing, and vulnerability to environmental changes. Irked towards anchoring these palpable challenges, guided by vaulting vision and mission, The Coscharis Group of Companies, a key factor in the agricultural sector, has made considerable investments in rice production and has contributed to initiatives aimed at enhancing local supply. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these efforts in addressing the underlying challenges and their impact on Anambra State in particular, and the overall food economy of Southeast Nigeria remains inadequately explored. There is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the production trends, economic implications, and the role of private enterprises like Coscharis in shaping the rice industry. Furthermore, the persistent issues of fluctuating market prices, competition from imported rice, and the need for sustainable farming practices complicate the landscape for both producers and consumers. Without a thorough analysis of these problems and the contributions of stakeholders, including the Coscharis Group, it is challenging to develop effective strategies that could bolster rice production, enhance food security, and stimulate the local economy.

Conceptual Analysis

Understanding the term Food Economy elicits an in-depth explanation of food security viz a viz emergency planning. Food security and emergency planning has remained work motivated in large part by the need for information of practical use in responding to food shortages. The term 'food economy' was first used by SCF-UK (Save the Children Fund) early in the present decade, to describe the type of analysis and procedures being developed in the field by the agency's food security practitioners. At the heart of the food economy approach is the representation of typical rural households' everyday circumstances. Hence, the food economy practitioners are consistently seeking how people normally obtain access to food as this is an essential part of predicting how they will react to crisis⁶.

Food economy is a term used for a number of different purposes, including: Assessing of relief needs, Rationalizing of the use of food aid, Early warning of food crises, Understanding of how poor people make ends meet, Understanding reasons for rural-urban migration, Developing of policies against chronic hunger⁷. By implication, sovereign entities and organised human societies cannot thrive orderly devoid of food economy.

COSCHARIS: Entrepreneurship and Ingenuity in Evolutionary Rice Production

The traditional Igbo economy rested on three major sectors namely agriculture, non-agricultural production and trade. The manner the Igbo worked and controlled her economy over the centuries attracted comments about the character of the Igbo as a people.

This was aptly captured in Hugh Crow's comment;

*The Eboes (Igbo)... are a well formed people of the middle stature: many of their women are of remarkably symmetrical shape and if white would in Europe be deemed beautiful. This race is... of a more mild and engaging disposition than the other tribes particularly the Quaws... they are preferred in the West India colonies for their fidelity and utility as domestic servants, particularly if taken there when young as they then become the most industrious of any of the tribes in the colonies*⁸

This was an observation by a slave dealer about the Igbo, however, this should be adjudged for one or two reasons. First, he was not speaking to impress any Igbo leader or group whom he of course owed no compliment. Rather, one would perceive from this observation an advertorial on the character of slaves that should be exported to West Indian colonies for better service delivery.

In another account on the economic activities of the Igbo people from the earliest time, Olaudah Equiano talked about the economic activities engaged by his people and according to him, "agriculture is our chief employment; and everyone, even the children and women are engaged in it and our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance"⁹.

Buttressing the above, the Igbo people from time immemorial were traditionally known for being subsistence farmers and most of their staples were yams, and cassava. The other crops they grow include corn (maize), melons, okra, pumpkins, and beans. Among those still engaged in agriculture, men are chiefly responsible for yam cultivation, women for other crops and market incentives. Land is owned communally by kinship groups and is made available to individuals for farming and building. Building trading networks has also been one of the great attributes of the Igbo people in building economic significance from the earliest time because while agriculture was dominant, there were also existing local and regional trading activities that facilitated the exchange of agricultural produce, commodities and even finished goods.

The colonial administration was said to have recognized that there was a need for local food production outside what the Igbo people were used to (yam, cassava and palm fruit) cultivating, hence, the locals (the Igbo People) were actively encouraged to begin the cultivation of rice.

Rice which is also known as "Oryza Sativa" or "Oryza spp." is the seed of a monocot plant and one of the major sources of carbohydrate when relating it to the classes of food. This all-important crop has changed from being a ceremonial food to a staple food in Nigerian homes. Hence the place of rice in the food security consciousness of Nigerians cannot be over-emphasized¹⁰, because globally it is an important food which is increasingly preferred over many traditional foods such as sorghum, millet, and most root and tuber crops.

Rice was introduced in Southeastern Nigeria by the colonial department of Agriculture to the swampy areas of Abakaliki, Afikpo and Ohaozara in 1942¹¹. Other areas like Umumbo, Ogbakuba, and Ndikelionwu and other local government areas like Anambra West and Awka North were known as major rice cultivators too.

The cultivation of this food crop, was necessitated by the acute food shortage that came into existence during the Second World War, as foreign brands of rice could not get to Nigeria. Hence the workers from the colonial department of agriculture began to domesticate rice first in Abakaliki where they brought an Asian long-grain variety, *Oryza sativa* that originated from Guyana, and fortunately the Abakaliki soil which is the Savannah type became suitable for growing rice and from this point, this food plant was introduced to other parts of Igbo land¹², with Anambra being the second producer in southeast Nigeria. Hence, the study seeks to uncover the place of rice in the food economy of southeast Nigeria, and in so doing, beam a specific searchlight on Coscharis Modern Rice Processing Mill, an Anambra State rice investor, who has tenaciously been on the ground since 2014. While studying a major Anambra rice investor, the Coscharis Group, since 2014. The group's name itself (Coscharis) is a symbolic combination of the founder's first name, Cosmas, and his wife's name, Charity, reflecting the personal and family oriented approach that has characterized the business. Over time, Coscharis grew into a much bigger sector that involves manufacturing, information technology, medicals, real estate, and agriculture, aligning with national economic shifts and opportunities.

By the early 2010s, the Nigerian economy was undergoing significant transformations, especially in agriculture, with the government actively promoting food self-sufficiency through policies like the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA). Recognizing both the economic and social potentials of agriculture, Coscharis Group made a strategic decision to invest heavily in the sector and this led to the establishment of Coscharis Farms

Limited, an ambitious agribusiness venture designed to position the Group as a major player in Nigeria's agricultural value chain¹³.

It all started with Coscharis Farms Limited, a subsidiary of the Coscharis Group founded by Dr. Cosmas Maduka, is strategically located in Anaku, Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra State, and has developed a comprehensive, technology-driven approach to rice production¹⁴.

Coscharis Farms operates on approximately 2,500 hectares of arable land, with plans to expand to 5,000 hectares. The farm utilizes an irrigation system that enables multiple cropping cycles annually, ensuring year-round rice cultivation¹⁵.

In 2019, the company commissioned a state-of-the-art rice mill in Igbariam, Anambra State, with a processing capacity of 40,000 Metric Tons of paddy rice per annum. Additionally, a 25,000 metric-ton capacity silo complex supports efficient storage and management of harvested crops. In 2019, the company commissioned a state-of-the-art rice mill in Igbariam, Anambra State, with a processing capacity of 40,000 metric tons of paddy rice per annum. Additionally, a 25,000 metric-ton capacity silo complex supports efficient storage and management of harvested crops¹⁶.

In a pioneering move, Coscharis Farms launched a blockchain farming program aimed at democratizing access to agricultural resources for smallholder farmers. Through this initiative, farmers can lease parcels of land and receive comprehensive support throughout the farming cycle, including land preparation, provision of high-quality seeds, fertilizers, and crop protection chemicals. The program employs drone technology for precise application of inputs and satellite monitoring for real-time crop management. An in-house developed app allows farmers to track planting schedules, fertilization timelines, and overall crop health, enhancing transparency and efficiency¹⁷. Looking ahead, Coscharis Farms plans to expand its block chain farming initiative to other regions, including Cross River and Ebonyi States, thereby enhancing its contribution to Nigeria's agricultural sector and food security goals¹⁸.

The Coscharis Farms Ltd. since its operation within the Nigeria rice sector has actively engaged in the cultivation, processing, and distribution of rice across many regions of the country and the business also offers extension services to out-growers, supplies agricultural materials, and it ensures market access through contractual agreements with wholesalers and retailers. Sr. Emilia, who supplies rice to retailers across Lagos made an assertion to the above by stating that, "in the interstate economic ties between Southeast Nigeria and commercial cities, our warehouse in Lagos sources rice mainly from Ebonyi State. Many Lagos-based retailers rely on our network to meet urban demand, especially during festive seasons." This urban-retail dynamic thus underscores the influence of Southeast Nigeria's rice production on broader Nigerian food economies"¹⁹.

Mr. Paul Akwanya, also a major rice distributor though within a restricted jurisdiction, agreed with Sr. Emilia by highlighting in a personal interview how institutional buyers significantly shape regional rice trade. He stated that; "boarding schools maintain consistent rice demand throughout the year in Anambra state and as a bulk distributor, I ensure regular supply to over 20 schools monthly, which stabilizes income for millers and enhances rice availability."²⁰

By this response, his operation reflects a structured and organized distribution model that contributes to food security and economic resilience within educational institutions.

Sequel to the above, it is important to note that the success of this farm is remarkable and cannot be overly emphasized when there is a need to measure entrepreneur opportunities.

Coscharis Rice Processing Mill domiciled in Anambra State, in withstanding several local challenges has evolved into a hotly commanding height, hence stable enough to not only withstand the many intricate Nigerian government policies on Rice Production and Management, but equally key favourably into the National Rice Policy Initiative Programme.

Government Policies on Rice Production and Management

Rice is a food crop that has remained Nigeria's most consumed staple food, hence it forms a central part of the national diet and is an important contributor to food security. Over the past two decades, the Nigerian government has implemented a series of ambitious policies aimed at reducing the country's reliance on rice imports while stimulating domestic production, processing, and marketing. These interventions have included trade restrictions, financial incentives, institutional reforms, and national development strategies, all of which are aligned towards achieving self-sufficiency in rice production.

While exploring the evolution and impact of these government-led initiatives, and also critically examining how these policies have continued to influence the rice value chain, from smallholder farmers to millers and processors,

in Anambra State in particular, and Nigeria on the long run, this Study appears to succinctly unearth the peculiar entrepreneurship uniqueness embedded in the Coscharis farm vision.

Undoubtedly, Crops grown in Nigeria include beans, rice, sesame, cashew nuts, cassava, cocoa beans, groundnuts, gum Arabic, kolanut, cocoa, maize (corn), melon, millet, palm kernels, palm oil, plantains, rice, rubber, sorghum, soybeans, bananas, and yams. In the past, Nigeria was known for the export of some crops such as groundnut, palm kernel oil and rice. Over the years, it is worthy to note that the rate of exportation of these products has decreased because the government office responsible for agriculture development and transformation in Nigeria being the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development primarily funded by Nigeria's federal government, started supervising almost fifty parastatals operating as either departments or agencies across the country to boost agricultural development. Along this pedestal, the Ministry therefore delegated two of its major departments, namely the Technical and Service Departments which manages agriculture (trees and crops), fisheries, livestock, land resources, fertilizer, food reserve storage, and rural development and the Service Department which looks into the management of finance, human resources, procurement, PPAS (plan, policy, analysis and statistics), and co-operatives. The ministry was headed by Audu Ogbeh, who was appointed by President Muhammad Buhari on 12 November 2015, succeeding Akinwumi Adesina, who was elected to head Africa Development Bank. Buhari had also appointed Heineken Lokpobiri as the new Minister of State for Agriculture and Shehu Ahmad as the Permanent Secretary under the newly created Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.²¹ In 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu changed the name of the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security and appointed Senator Abubakar Kyari as the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security²².

Different governments at different points in time, made great efforts to boost the Nigeria agricultural sector and its structures in the best possible ways and through their different policies. By taking the cursor back to the time of President Jonathan's administration, it is imperative to note that there was almost nil action on the National Rice Policy Framework Initiative. However, early policies such as the launching of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda whose primary goal was to position agriculture as a profitable business, integrate the agricultural value chain, and establish agriculture as a primary driver of Nigeria's economic growth, which was overseen by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development as far back as 2011²³, wasn't just centred on rice farming, but then it was part of it, and this policy had the achievement agenda that included the enactment of new fiscal incentives to encourage domestic import substitution, removal of restrictions on areas of investment and maximum equity ownership in investment by foreign investors, Currency Exchange Controls such as free transfer of capital, profits, and dividends were put in place, including constitutional guarantees against nationalization expropriation of investments, zero percent (0%) duty on agricultural machinery and equipment imports, pioneer tax holiday for agricultural investments, duty waivers and other industry-related incentives based on the use of local raw materials, : export orientation were measures set in place to ensure a strong agricultural base for Nigeria²⁴.

In 2024, the Nigerian government temporarily banned import duties on essential agricultural commodities to combat food inflation and support local production. This policy looked to reducing food import costs at the same time, encouraging investment in local farming and food processing industries. Additionally, the government introduced financial and logistical support programs for farmers, including low-interest loans, subsidies for agricultural inputs, and investment in rural infrastructure.

In evaluating the National Rice Policy Framework Initiative (NRPFI), launched by the Nigerian government to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production, it is worthy of note that this framework provided a strong policy foundation that enabled large-scale agribusinesses like Coscharis Farms Ltd. to thrive because the NRPF created the favourable market conditions, regulatory support, and institutional incentives that allowed Coscharis to expand and sustain its rice farming operations. The policy also prioritized infrastructure development and the strengthening of the rice value chain. This enabled Coscharis to establish a modern rice mill, implement storage and logistics systems, and benefit from partnerships with research and extension services. Furthermore, public campaigns under the policy promoted the consumption of Nigerian rice, boosting brand visibility and market acceptance for Coscharis' locally milled products²⁵, since the Anambra State extant laws wholesomely towed the Federal Government. Several Supportive Programmes not only sprang up here and there, but were equally sustained to empower the investors and the consumers.

Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP)

That Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) came up as a platform and programme established to build capacity of banks in agricultural lending to farmers and entrepreneurs in the value chain, and reduce commodity importation. The Programmes initiative is targeted at reducing the level of poverty among small farm holders and

to create job opportunities, while assisting rural small farm holders to grow from subsistence to commercial production levels.

The programme was hinged on three pronged approach namely the out-grower support programme which centred on training of farmers, extension workers and banks and risk mitigation. The ABP was expected to extend to 26 states, though at the initial stage, the 14 states targeted at were Kebbi, Sokoto, Niger, Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Kano, Zamfara, Adamawa, Plateau, Lagos, Ogun, Cross-Rivers and Ebonyi for rice and wheat farmers to advance their status from small holder farmers to commercial or large growers.

Be that as it may in the Coscharis rice farming evaluation, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) contributed significantly to the growth of Coscharis Farms Ltd., positioning it as a key player in Nigeria's rice production sector, hence by implication, putting Anambra State's name forward. Coscharis gained access to low-interest credit, enabling large-scale cultivation, infrastructure development, and the acquisition of modern farm equipment essential for efficient rice farming through the ABP programme. Coscharis benefited also from subsidized inputs such as improved rice seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. These supported high-yield farming practices across thousands of hectares. The company also leveraged the ABP's outgrower model, partnering with hundreds of smallholder farmers who supplied paddy rice in exchange for input support and a guaranteed market. With these advantages, Coscharis established a state-of-the-art rice mill, boosting local rice processing capacity and contributing to Nigeria's rice self-sufficiency goals. The initiative also created thousands of jobs employment opportunities and stimulated rural economies, especially in Anambra State.

Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava. Cocoa is also the principal agricultural export, and one of the country's most significant non-petroleum products. Before the Nigerian Civil War and the oil boom, Nigeria was self-sufficient in food because agriculture used to be the principal foreign exchange earner of Nigeria, but then agriculture failed to keep pace with Nigeria's rapid population growth, and Nigeria turned to becoming reliant on food imports to sustain itself. It spends US\$6.7 billion yearly on food imports, four times more than revenues from food export²⁶. But from 2017-2018, Nigeria's agricultural boom took a new twist in rice production and the year above saw an increase in rice production that was valued at 5 million tonnes a year, but then the nation's production could hardly keep up with the increased demand in population. Rice imports therefore, remained constant at 2 million tonnes per year. In August 2019, Nigeria decided to close its border with Benin and other neighbouring countries to stop rice smuggling into the country as part of efforts to boost local production and by 2021, about 23.4% of Nigeria's GDP was contributed by agriculture, forestry and fishing combined²⁷.

Evaluation

An undoubted phenomenon appears to be the gallopy incremental need for rice in Anambra State, and by implications Nigeria as an entity. While the government policies, such as the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) and the Commercial Agriculture Credit Scheme (CACS), has contributed significantly to the growth of Nigeria's rice sector, they have also presented notable challenges. For rice-producing companies like Coscharis Farms, which operate as integrated private-sector partners, some of these policies, though well-intentioned, have created financial, operational, and systemic difficulties that affect productivity, profitability, and long-term sustainability. Some of this negative effect thus includes:

Policy Inconsistency and Market Distortion: One of the most critical issues affecting rice producers like Coscharis is the frequent policy reversals, especially concerning rice importation. For example, the Federal Government's decision in 2024 to temporarily waive import duties on rice was aimed at curbing food inflation, and the result was to ensure a sharp drop in local rice prices. While this benefited consumers in the short term, it undermined local producers like Coscharis, who had invested heavily in domestic production under the assumption of sustained trade.

Loan Default Crisis and Funding Sustainability: Although Coscharis Farms successfully accessed CACS and ABP funding, the overall mismanagement and high default rate in ABP (up to 52% among rice farmers) have led to growing scrutiny of the program. This situation threatens the credibility and future sustainability of government-backed agricultural finance. Legitimate agribusinesses like Coscharis may face more stringent lending conditions or reduced access to capital due to the sector's poor repayment culture, despite their good standing²⁸.

Weak Infrastructure and Institutional Bottlenecks: Despite government promises of enabling environments, rural infrastructure remains largely inadequate. Coscharis, for instance, has had to navigate poor road access, unreliable power supply, and inconsistent water management systems, especially during periods of flooding or drought. These infrastructural weaknesses reduce efficiency and increase operational costs.

Security Challenges in Rice-Producing Areas: Insecurity has remained the order of the day in Nigeria, and though the Coscharis farms operates primarily in the Southeast (Anambra State), it is still of paramount importance to recognize that broader national insecurity, especially in key rice belts like the Northwest and North-Central has disrupted the rice value chain and that includes sales and trading in these regions because inadequate security has continued to affect input availability, transportation, and market prices across the country. Coscharis Farm's records in Anambra State are dotted here and there with trending insecurity challenges.

Limited Technology Adoption Amongst Outgrowers: While Coscharis Farms engages in outgrower schemes under ABP, many smallholder farmers and employees lack the technical skills, literacy, and digital access to fully benefit from this training and extension services. This technological gap among these farmers and employees thus reduces the overall yield and quality of the paddy rice supplied to Coscharis.

Be that as it may, one may not deny certain accruing advantages emergent from the Government's policies on Rice Production and Management.

The Nigerian government, through the implementation of various policies and programmes ensure quality rice production and management, aimed at enhancing food security, improving rural livelihoods, and reducing the country's dependency on rice imports. Thus, the positive impacts of these policies includes;

Access to Affordable Agricultural Financing: One of the most significant benefits the Coscharis Farms has derived from government policy is access to affordable long-term capital through the CACS. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) provided a ₦2 billion facility to Coscharis under this program therefore allowing the company to invest in land development, irrigation systems, and modern farm machinery. This financing enabled Coscharis to establish fully mechanized hectares of rice farm in Anaku, Anambra State, supporting multiple harvests and increasing productivity.

Support for Industrial Processing Infrastructure: Government support was also instrumental in the establishment of a ₦12 billion integrated rice processing mill. With a production capacity of 40,000 metric tons per year. Thus, the Coscharis has a facility that includes advanced systems for all sectors including parboiling, drying, milling, polishing, and packaging. This vertical integration has allowed Coscharis to reduce post-harvest losses, improve quality control, and increase the competitiveness of locally produced rice in both regional and national markets.

Endorsement and Institutional Backing: The CBN and the Ministry of Agriculture have publicly endorsed Coscharis Farms as a model anchor firm under the ABP. High-profile visits from senior government officials, including the CBN governor, have raised the company's visibility and credibility, attracting further investment, thereby positioning Coscharis as a leader in Nigeria's rice value chain. This government recognition has also enhanced public trust in the company's operations, especially in host communities²⁹.

Job Creation and Economic Empowerment: Government initiatives aimed at boosting local agriculture have led to the creation of numerous direct and indirect jobs opportunities for farmers as well as other sectors within Coscharis Rice Farm operations.

Challenges

Illiteracy of the Field Workers: One of the persistent challenges facing the rice production and farm management within the Coscharis farms is the illiteracy of field workers, particularly among smallholder farmers and out-growers. Illiteracy not only limits the ability of farmers to adopt modern agricultural practices but also affects their participation in training programs, comprehension of input usage, and integration into digital or mechanized systems. For a high-tech agribusiness like Coscharis Farms, the success of its initiatives can be significantly hampered when frontline workers lack the basic literacy skills needed to understand, apply, or engage with new farming models and technologies. However, illiteracy has become the order of the day because most farmers often struggle to embrace new technologies and farming innovations due to poor comprehension of instructions. Most of these employees had remained fixed on subsistence level of farming and has not improved from small plots and reliance on manual tools. Sequel to this, the Coscharis group has continued to enlighten its farmers through seminars and orientations. These efforts are intended to bridge the literacy gap and improve productivity as well as supporting the transition from subsistence to commercial rice farming.

Environmental Hazard and Climate Change: The relevance of the farmer's ability to forecast production and profitability is, however, sometimes limited by the challenge of environmental hazards and climate change. Flood incidents have been a problem that has steadily affected rice farming in Anambra State from inception, and the case of the Coscharis rice being a crop that grows on mud is usually grown within three seasons and the rainy season farming is one of those seasons. The Coscharis farms Ltd. stated that during its early

stages 2015 to 2017 specifically, they had constantly had floods damaging their crops within Anaku in Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra State and even though they have a dyke that is 25 metres, the water level went above the dyke and it overflowed and this led to them proposing to raise the dyke to about 30 metres round the farm to nib this ugly situation to the bud because in the face of their loss, there was no insurance company that was willing to insure them. Climate change on the other hand is another challenge the Coscharis group has faced because humans across the globe have continued to do things that has continued to affect the eco-system and some includes burning of fossil fuels for energy, transportation, and industrial activities that releases large volumes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄) key greenhouse gases that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere.

Prospects

Rice is a cultural cornerstone, a primary source of sustenance, and a key driver of economic activity. As Nigeria's population continues to grow, the demand for locally produced rice outstrips supply, creating a significant and persistent deficit. This gap presents a powerful opportunity, and no region is better positioned to seize it than Anambra State. With its fertile lands, favourable climate, and a strategic private-sector anchor in Coscharis Farms Limited, Anambra State is on a clear path to becoming a major "Rice Food Basket" for Nigeria because the state and even the Coscharis farm are endowed with full potential that can help the farm achieve its goals.

The first prospect lies in the availability of promising landscape for Coscharis rice production; Anambra state being the home of this great farm, possesses vast tracts of fertile land, particularly in the Ayamelum Local Government Area, which is often called the "Rice Food Basket" of the state. These lowlands and inland valleys are ideal for rice cultivation, offering a strong foundation for both large- and small-scale farmers. Hence, the opportunity the environment availed was used by the Coscharis to strive in its rice cultivation, production and management business. The continuous economic empowerment that the farm enjoyed through the out-grower programs beyond its commercial farms is another key prospect. Coscharis has a robust out-grower program that extends its impact to local communities. The company provides smallholder farmers with essential inputs, training, and a guaranteed market for their paddy. An additional factor that has kept the Coscharis rice cultivation and production till the present time is the massive market demand that the farm has continued to enjoy within the state and outside the state, through the persistent demand that has provided a powerful incentive for farmers.

The Anambra State Government especially during the administration of His Excellency, Dr. Willie Obiano, seemingly tried its best in giving adequate supports to farmers in Anambra State. For instance, most of the above projects and programmes were able to exist and function well in Anambra State due to adequate supports from the government.

Conclusion

Coscharis Farms Limited exemplifies how private sector investments, technological adaptation and strategic interventions can transform localized rice farming into a modernized Agro-industrialized rice farm. By integrating largescale production, value added processing and inclusive outgrower schemes, Coscharis contributes to food security, employment generations and rural developments aligning closely with national policy goals.

The Coscharis Group's venture into rice farming has altered the landscape of agricultural productivity in Anambra State and set a precedent for private sector participation in Nigeria's food security goals. While the company faces substantial challenges; chiefly environmental risks, insecurity and farmer illiteracy, it continues to invest in sustainable infrastructure, digital agriculture, and farmer empowerment initiative to mitigate these risks. The state of rice production in Anambra, buoyed by natural advantages, private investments, and governmental support, suggests a promising future. To sustain and scale these gains, there is a pressing need to intensify literacy programs for field workers, improve climate-resilient infrastructure, and establishing insurance mechanisms for agricultural losses.

To enhance production capacity and resilience, it is imperative to address critical infrastructure to address deficits. A primary recommendation is the strategic investment in irrigation infrastructure to facilitate a transition from rain fed agriculture to all year round production. This would mitigate the risks associated with climatic variability and significantly boost yield volumes. Furthermore, the establishment of agricultural equipment hiring enterprises through public private partnerships is essential to democratize access to mechanization. such hubs would provide smallholder farmers with affordable access to tractors, planters, and harvesters thereby bridging the mechanization gap and improving efficiency across the value chain.

For Farmers themselves, stronger support systems are needed. This includes revitalizing agricultural extension programs to provide hands on training in modern farming techniques and formalizing the outgrower schemes with clear contracts that guarantee farmers receive seeds, fertilizers, and a fair price for their harvest. This reduces risk and encourages more people to participate.

The government must play a proactive role by maintaining policies that protect local rice farmers and processors from a flood of imported alternatives. They can also help by making it easier for agricultural businesses to access large parcels of land and by offering financial incentives for investments in processing machinery and other key technologies.

Finally, to ensure long term success, a strong “Anambra Rice” brand should be developed. This will help the product stand out in a competitive market and potentially allow it to be sold at a premium price. Exploring opportunities to export to neighbouring countries could also turn this local success story into a significant source of foreign revenue for the state.

Endnotes

1. Amy Mckenna, “Anambra”, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Anambra>, an internet source accessed July 15th 2025.
2. <https://southeast.ng/the-region/anambra-state/5/>, “Anambra” an internet source accessed July 15th 2025.
3. S. O. Akande, *An Overview of the Nigerian Rice Economy*. (Ibadan: Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) Publishers), 2002.
4. Kwabena Gyimah-Brempong, Michael Johnson, and Hiroyuki Takeshima, “The Nigerian Rice Economy Policy Options for Transforming Production, Marketing, and Trade”, *International Food Policy Research Institute*, <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4f17bf8b-2785-42ce-84f5-ddfed680e0f/content>, accessed on the 1st of April 2025.
5. S. A. Yusuf and D. O. Falusi, “Challenges and Opportunities in Nigerian Rice Production.” *A Journal of Development Studies*. Vol.45, No. 4, 2017
6. Tanya Boudreau, “The Food Economy Approach: A Framework for Understanding Rural Livelihoods”, <https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/1998/05/networkpaper026.pdf>, An Internet Source Accessed on April 1st, 2025.
7. W. B. Morgan, “Farming Practice, Settlement Pattern and Population Density in South-Eastern Nigeria.” *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 121, No. 3, 1955, Pp.320-333.
8. John Adams and Hugh Crow, “Two Late Eighteenth Century Accounts”, quoted in E. Isichei, *Igbo Worlds: An Anthropology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions*, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977. P 14.
9. Olauda Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olauda Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African: Eight Edition Enlarged* (Norwich: 1794) Pp 13-14.
10. Kelechi J. Ani, Gift Maxwell and Chinyere S. Ecoma “Rice Production and Food Security in Nigeria: A Synoptic History of the Ikwo Brand “, *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research [Arts, Humanities and Education]*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2017, p.2.
11. Uche U. Okonkwo, Victor Ukaogo, Daniel Kenekwku, Vitalis Nwanshindu, and George Okeagu “The Politics of Rice Production in Nigeria: The Abakaliki Example 1942-2020”, *Journal of Cogent Arts and Humanities*, Vol 8, No. 1, 2021, p.2.
12. Okonkwo, Ukaogo, Kenekwku, Nwanshindu and Okeagu “The Politics of Rice Production in Nigeria: ...”, p.2.
13. <https://westafricatradehub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Coscharis-Fact-Sheet.pdf>, Partners Fact Sheet. An Internet Source accessed April 26th 2025.
14. <https://coscharisgroup.net/cocharis-farms>, “The Coscharis Rice”, An Internet Source Accessed April 26th 2025.
15. “The Automated Coscharis Rice Mill, Igbariam, Anambra State” <https://www.nairaland.com/5413243/automated-coscharis-rice-mill-igbariam>, An Internet Source Accessed April 26th 2025.
16. Chinedu Nsofor, “Revolutionizing Agriculture: The Coscharis Farm’s Blockchain and Satellite Technology Initiative”, <https://thesun.ng/revolutionizing-agriculture-the-coscharis-farms-blockchain-and-satelite-technology-initiative/>, *The Sun Newspaper*, accessed April 26th 2025.
17. Nsofor, “Revolutionizing Agriculture: ...”,
18. J. A. Odutan, “Improving the Quality of Rice Production in Nigeria through Technology Transfer”, <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/277829/improving-the-quality-of-rice-production-in-nigeria-through.html>, *The Nigerian Voice*, An Internet Source Accessed April 26th 2025.
19. Emilia Odoh, C.40, a Rice Distributor, Interviewed by Hycienth Ejike at No. 15, Oyingbo, Lagos.
20. Paul Akwanya, C.53, a Rice Distributor to Boarding Schools in Anambra and Delta States, Interviewed in his shop at Ochanja Market, Onitsha.
21. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_In_Nigeria, “Agriculture in Nigeria”, an internet source accessed August 1st 2025.
22. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_In_Nigeria, “Agriculture in Nigeria”, an internet source accessed August 1st 2025.

23. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_In_Nigeria, “Agriculture in Nigeria”, an internet source accessed August 1st 2025.
24. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_In_Nigeria, “Agriculture in Nigeria”, an internet source accessed August 1st 2025.
25. Tochukwu Okafor, C. 45, a Coscharis Rice Field Supervisor, Interviewed in Igbariam, Anambra.
26. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_In_Nigeria, “Agriculture in Nigeria”, an internet source accessed August 1st 2025.
27. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_In_Nigeria, “Agriculture in Nigeria”, an internet source accessed August 1st 2025.
28. Gbenga Akinfenwa, “Rice Revolution: When Lean Harvest Contradicts Robust Policies”, https://guardian.ng/features/focus/rice-revolution-when-lean-harvest-contrradicts-robust-ies/?utm_source, August 3rd 2025.
29. Babajide Komolafe, “Anchor Borrowers’ Programmes: CBN, Coscharis Move to Reduce Forex on Food Import”, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/10/cbn-coscharis-move-to-reduce-forex-on-food-import/>, an Internet Source Accessed August 3rd 2025.