

# Constraints to Livelihood Diversification among Rural Migrants' Households in South-Western Nigeria

Ajiboye, A.J<sup>1</sup>, Ogunniyi, G<sup>2\*</sup>, Agunbiade, B.O<sup>3</sup>, Atoyebi, J.O<sup>4</sup>, Oladepo, D<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Agricultural Economics University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria.

<sup>2,5</sup>Department of Agriculture, University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

<sup>4</sup>Department of agricultural Technology, Osun State College of Technology, Esa-Oke, Osun State, Nigeria.

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

This study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of rural livelihoods among migrants' households in Southwestern Nigeria. A total of 413 migrants were selected for the study, using a multistage random sampling technique. Data pertinent to the study were gathered through structured questionnaire and subsequently analysed using appropriate statistical tools. Results of the study showed that farming was the main occupation for 44.25% of household heads, although they also engaged in various non-farm income generating activities. It was further revealed that more than half (53%) of the respondents engaged in farm activities as their major occupation, 27.75% chose non-farm as their major source of livelihood while 19.25% of the migrants' household were into off-farm activities as their major means of livelihood. On cumulative basis, 60% of the migrants had at most three (3) income outlets. The major barriers to effective livelihood diversification in term of weighted score (ranking) as perceived by the respondents are inadequate infrastructure and insufficient livelihood assets. Others are ineffective transportation system, poor marketing systems, credit system and irregular power supply. Amongst others, the study recommends that government and other policy makers should focus on creating enabling environment by establishing micro-financial institutions to tackle the challenges of access to various livelihood assets, skills training to rural inhabitants, and developing rural infrastructure including improved roads, electricity, and market facilities. These measures would enable rural households especially the migrants to participate in various livelihood activities in order to sustain their welfare throughout the year.

**Keywords:** Constraint, Livelihood participation, Rural Migrant, South western Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Majority of rural dwellers in Nigeria do not rely solely on agriculture as the source of income despite the agrarian nature of rural economy (Djibo and Shifaraw, 2018). The rural dwellers often combine various income generating activities to meet their needs and ensure their survival in their respective localities. This practice of engaging in various livelihood activities to earn a living is termed livelihood diversification. Livelihood diversification in this context is viewed as the process by which rural migrant households construct a diverse of portfolio of activities and assets to survive and raise their standard of living. Livelihood strategies are designed to suit the asset endowments of the households. Their strategies can reflect the joint decision making process by all members of the household and can also be a bargained outcome when household members pursue individual advantage (Samuel & Sylvia, 2019; Manase and Takunda, 2019).

In most cases, livelihood diversification is seen as a sign of success because it helps households to combat instability in income generation thereby increases the probability of improving household consumption expenditure. Engagement in many livelihood activities also contributes to sustainable rural livelihood because it improves long-term resilience in the face of adverse trends and income shocks. In general, higher level of diversity usually promotes flexibility which later gives rooms for substitution between income activities that are declining and those that are expanding. The word rural livelihood diversification is mostly used to describe expansion into non-farm and off-farm incomes because dependence on farm activities only has failed to guarantee sustainable livelihood for households in rural areas. Diversification as a rural livelihood strategy involves maintaining over a long time, a diversified portfolio of activities and a regular adjustment to contingencies for the purpose of increasing profit, spreading risks, reducing income shocks or achieving other household goals (Nguyen, Nguyen and Grote, 2022; Awotide, Awoyemi, Digne, Kinkingnihoun and Ojehomone, 2012; Murata and Miyazaki, 2014).

There are multiple motives that prompt migrants' households and individuals to diversify assets, income and activities. The first set of motives comprises what are traditionally known as "Push factors". Risk reduction, response to diminishing marginal returns in the use of family labour supply in the presence of land constraint caused by population explosion and fragmentation of land holdings, higher wage rate in non-farm activities, optimistic rural business environment, reaction to liquidity constraints and unbearable production costs that induce individuals and households to provision of several goods and services. The second set of motives comprise "pull factors" which include complementary roles played by activities such as livestock integration, crop processing and storage, transportation of farm produce and specialization induced by comparative advantage accorded by superior technologies, skills and endowments (Ellis, 2000).

The impacts of livelihood diversification on rural households have been extensively studied, providing a robust body of empirical evidence. One of the most significant impacts of livelihood diversification is its contribution to increased household income. Studies have consistently found that engaging in multiple income-generating activities leads to higher overall earnings (Slijper, 2021). This increased income allows households to meet their basic needs, invest in education, healthcare, and other productive assets, ultimately improving their overall standard of living (Rigg, Salamanca and Thompson, 2016). Studies in various regions provide evidence that livelihood diversification continues to be positively associated with increased household income (US Agency for International Development, 2023; Ayantoye, Amao, and Fanifosi, 2017).

Moreover, livelihood diversification has been found to reduce rural households' vulnerability to economic shocks. By diversifying their income sources, households are less exposed to risks associated with fluctuations in prices or markets for specific goods or services (Mudzielwana, 2022). For instance, a study conducted in rural Ethiopia showed that households engaged in diversified livelihoods combining crop production with livestock rearing were better able to withstand drought and enhance their food security (Zelege, Yousuf and Zemedu, 2017). Recent studies have similarly highlighted the resilience-building effects of livelihood diversification, revealing how it helps rural households cope with economic crises, natural disasters, and other unforeseen events (Abera, Yirgu and Uncha, 2021; Adegbite & Machethe, 2022).

Migration has been documented as one of the many strategies which rural households and individual employ to diversify their livelihoods (Awunbila, 2017; World Bank, 2017). This according to them is often combined with other livelihood activities such as agricultural intensification and local non-farm and off-farm activities. Migrants as conceptualized in this study are people who have left their homes or usual place of residence to a new location temporarily or permanently to reap social and economic benefits (Crocker, 2007; International Organization for Migration, 2019). The existence of inequalities and livelihood opportunities between rural areas in terms of access to economic resources and development is known to be a major cause of rural-rural or urban-rural migration (Chan, 2012; Ogunniyi, 2018; Bisseleua, Idrissou, Ogunniyi and Atta-Krah, 2018).

Despite the increased popularity of migration as a means of livelihood strategy among rural households, the contribution of migration decision in reducing poverty is equally complicated. It does not appear that migrants are better off and this has been attributed to several factors including household assets and access to assets that allow rural households to diversify among several activities (Adepoju and Obayelu, 2014; Tanle, 2015). Some reports including that of FAO (2018) have revealed that migrants in rural areas are sometimes restricted due to

a range of factors, including climate change, resource limitation, material uncertainties and land tenure systems prevalent in their various locations. Oftentimes, rural migrants are faced with the challenge of being accepted by host communities amongst others, hence the difficulties in communal integration, cultural practices, economic activities, social integration and other important issues. This situation put them at disadvantage position as they are confronted with many constraints in their bid to take up multiple income generating activities for their survival.

It is however worrisome that literature has only given scanty attention to the issue of livelihood income activities among rural migrants particularly in Southwestern Nigeria. It is therefore considered necessary to examine the constraints to participation in livelihood activities among the rural migrants in the study area in view of the aforementioned. The present study therefore is an attempt in this direction. It is believed that the findings of the study will offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by migrant households in rural areas, shedding light on their livelihood activities.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Area

The study was carried out in Nigeria's southwestern geopolitical zone, which spreads between latitudes 6°21' and 8°37' N and longitude 2°31'E and 2°31' (NBS, 2017). It has a land area of 114,271 square kilometers, representing 12% of the country's land mass. The zone's population was estimated to be 21,974,678 according to the 2006 Census (National Population Commission, 2006). This zone is made up of four different sub-ecologies, namely; derived savannah, moist and dry lowland, mangrove forests, and swamps. It comprises 6 states, namely; Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo are included in it. A large portion of Osun, Oyo, and Ekiti are covered with derived savannah while Lagos, Ondo, and Ogun states have a sizeable portion of their lands covered with tropical rainforests with swamps along the coastline zone.

The region is characterized by a tropical climate usually with distinct rainy and dry seasons and a main growing season lasting about 9 months. The average annual rainfall with peaks in July and September is 1480 mm. The shorelines of Lagos and Ogun states receive 2600 mm while the northern part gets about 700 mm of rainfall. Cold and dry winds from the north blow into the southern areas during the dry season. Throughout the dry season, the monthly temperature ranges from 18 to 24 degrees Celsius and 30-to-35-degree Celsius during rainy season.

The main source of income for the people living in this zone is rain-fed agriculture which is characterized by arable cropping with cassava, maize, and yam as the main crops. Tree crops like cocoa, cashew, oil palm, and kolanut are commonly grown. The zone is also well-known for business and trade in addition to farming, which is the main economic activity in rural villages. There are many micro, small, and medium-sized businesses in the area that are involved in production, manufacture, and agro-allied enterprises.

### Sample size and Sampling Procedure

A multistage random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study. Ekiti, Osun and Oyo states were randomly selected because their relatively low level of urbanization. Twenty percent of the rural LGAs were selected in the respective states. Ten percent of wards in each LGA were selected where sampling frame was created for migrant households from which 40% of households on the sampling frames were selected to arrive at 413 respondents.

### Data Collection

Structured questionnaire was used to collect data on respondents' socio-economic characteristics livelihood activities, constraints to livelihood diversification and other important variables relevant to the study.

## Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics which include frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-Economic characteristics of rural migrant households

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents (Table 1) show that the majority (72.25%) are male, whereas 27.25% were female. This indicates a higher occurrence of male-headed households in rural settings. Consequently, this gender imbalance is likely to affect the respondents' choices regarding diversifying their livelihoods. As men are frequently perceived as more active and motivated to improve the wellbeing of their household members, they may be more inclined to pursue additional income-generating activities. The average age of household heads, which is 49.97 years indicates that the age range of migrant household heads falls within the productive years. This aligns with previous research conducted by Fabusoro et al. (2010) and Oyesola and Ademola (2011) who reported that rural labor forces in the southwestern region of Nigeria generally range from 20 to 55 years old. Consequently, the household heads in this study are more likely to seek additional avenues for income generation.

The majority (85.25%) of the respondents are married while about 84.5% had access to formal education with the average year of formal education estimated at 7.81 years. The literature widely acknowledges a positive relationship between access to education and involvement in income-generating activities. Babatunde and Quaim (2009) emphasized that education significantly and positively influence the diversification into non-farm income. The level of literacy within rural farm households is vital for improving productivity, enhancing production efficiency, and ultimately increasing income, leading to a more diverse range of income sources for improved well-being. As household heads are typically responsible for decision-making within the household, their educational background greatly influences their choice of livelihood strategies.

The result further indicates that majority of respondents (73.50%) had a household size of 4 to 8 individuals, with an average household size of 8. This suggests a relatively large family size within migrant households. These results align with the research conducted by Aderinto (2012) and Fabusoro et al. (2010), which also found that relatively large household sizes are prevalent in rural areas. Consequently, in the study area, a larger household size implies that there is a higher likelihood of diversified income sources if all members of the household contribute to the overall welfare of the household (Adesope, 2007).

The results also show that majority (91.25%) of household heads was physically fit just as about 76.75% of them were first generation migrants while about 85% of the respondents have spent at least 15 years as migrants in their respective locations with the mean duration of stay estimated to be 29.51 years. Length of stay in location is an important determinant of migrants' welfare. Hendriks et al. (2018) is of the opinion that migration is often considered a long-term investment in one's future and that standard of living is expected to gradually improve over time after the initial challenges such as culture and environmental-related issues are overcome. Demivera (2019) also found out that most migrants experience more positive and significant impact of migration over time than negative ones. Some results have emerged from literature that length of stay of migrants is positively related to acquisition of assets and social integration (Borodak and Tichit, 2011; Mara and Landesmann, 2013).

The results further reveal that about 95.50% had access to electricity from the national grid less than 36 hours in a week while about 78.75% had at least one livestock unit. Power is a crucial element of rural infrastructure that plays a significant role in expanding non-farm opportunities in rural areas. It contributes to the establishment of rural enterprises, reduces operational costs, minimizes labor requirements for time-consuming tasks, and enables individuals to allocate more hours towards selected rural non-farm activities. Access to electricity and its reliability directly impact the income-generating activities of rural migrant households and encourage them to diversify their livelihood strategies.

Livestock provide income and employment for producers (Herrero, Grace, Njuki & Johnson, 2012). The respondents had various categories of livestock such as goat, sheep, cow, rabbits and chickens that are at various stages of development. The Tropical Livestock Unit (TLU) conversion index was used, depending on the type of livestock. About 73.00% of the respondents were membership of one or more social organizations. The level of participation in social organizations and decision-making of such organisations largely affects access to networks, credit information of cooperatives and other forms of social assets that enhance the economic strengths of rural dwellers for livelihood diversification.

Regarding the size of land holdings of respondents, 86.50% had at least 2ha with a mean of 11.29ha. About 92.25% of respondents covered at least 15km from their locations to urban center with mean distance of 18.37km. The household disposable asset of the majority (51.00%) was in the range of ₦ 1,000,000 to ₦ 2,000,000 while only 43.00% had access to credit. Disposable assets are those that can be used to pay off debts in a hurry and reduce the impact of income shocks. Having disposable assets also gives households quick access to cash when there is need to dabble into new business ventures. It is also important to taking care of current requirements as well as making long-term plans. By implication, the more the household's disposable assets, the more likely they are able to diversify their income sources.

Access to credit by households or individuals residing in rural areas is important because it helps to break the vicious circle of low capital, low productivity and low level of savings that usually characterize rural economy. Access to credit plays a crucial role in rural households as it aids in mitigating the negative effects of income fluctuations and enables the diversification of livelihood activities (Abraham, 2018). The rural economy can grow only if it has adequate flow of finance. Provision of credit facilities has been discovered to enable rural dwellers buy farm inputs and expand their businesses. Access to credit helps alleviate financial constraints and enhances the ability of households to initiate off-farm and non-farm enterprises (Oyinbo & Olaleye, 2016).

The result further reveals that majority (66.50%) of the household heads had not received special skills for specific jobs while 33.50 percent had vocational training. Vocational training refers to education and skill-based training that prepare people for specific jobs, trades or crafts. Migrants who have specialized training may likely engage in fewer livelihood activities.

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Rural Migrant Households**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Sex of Household Head</b>				
Female	109	27.25		
Male	291	72.75		
<b>Age of Household Head (years)</b>				
<30	6	1.50	49.97	10.25
30-40	80	20.00		
41-50	134	33.50		
51-60	102	25.50		
Above 60	78	19.50		
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	341	85.25		
Widow/Widower	37	9.25		
Divorced/Separated	22	5.50		
<b>Years of formal education</b>				
0	62	15.50	7.81	4.86
1-6	157	39.25		



7-12	129	32.25		
Above 12	52	13.00		
<b>Household Size (members)</b>				
<4	29	7.25	8	2.69
4-8	294	73.50		
9-12	59	14.75		
Above 12	18	4.50		
<b>Health status</b>				
Healthy	365	91.25		
Permanently ill	35	8.75		
<b>Generation of migrant</b>				
First generation	307	76.75		
Second generation	93	23.25		
<b>Duration of stay of household head (years)</b>				
<15	60	15.00	29.51	14.71
15-25	140	35.00		
26-35	67	16.75		
Above 35	133	33.25		
<b>Access to electricity from the grid per week (hrs)</b>				
0	111	27.75		
<15	23	5.75		
15-25	132	33.00		
26-35	116	29.00		
Above 35	18	4.50		
<b>Total Livestock Unit</b>				
< 1	85	21.25	12.95	27.77
1 – 2.5	156	39.00		
2.6 – 3.5	43	10.75		
Above 3.5	116	29.00		
<b>Number of Social organizations</b>				
0	106	26.50		
1	130	32.50		
2	111	27.75		
3	52	13.00		
4	1	0.25		
<b>Size of land holdings (ha)</b>				
<2	54	13.50	11.29	6.38
2-4	164	41.00		
4.1 -6	102	25.50		

Above 6	80	20.00		
<b>Distance to urban center (km)</b>				
< 5	31	7.75	18.37	8.73
5-15	129	32.25		
16-25	153	38.25		
Above 25	87	21.75		
<b>Household disposable assets (Naira)</b>				
<1,000,000	58	14.50	2,186,51	2,122.43
1,000,000-2,000,000	204	51.00		
2,000,001-3,000,000	83	20.75		
Above 3,000,000	55	13.75		
<b>Access to credit</b>				
No	220	55.00		
Yes	180	45.00		
<b>Vocational trainings</b>				
No	266	66.50		
Yes	134	33.50		

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

### Major source of income of household heads in the study area

Results in table 2 shows that more than half (53.00%) of the respondents engaged in farming as their major occupation, 27.75% chose non-farm as their major source of livelihood while 19.25% of the migrants' household were into off-farm activities as their major means of livelihood. Non-farm activities provide employment for the landless. Off-farm activities are agricultural related but occur beyond the farm. Examples of off-farm are extension services, processing, packaging, storage and transportation. Diversification of income sources into farm and non-farm enhance food security, increase agricultural production by smoothing capital constraints and also to better cope with environmental shocks

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on major source of income of household heads**

Major source of Income	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %.
Farm	212	53.00	53.00
Non-farm	111	27.75	80.75
Off-farm	77	19.25	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

### Primary occupation of household heads

The primary occupations of household heads are presented in Table 3. The table shows that majority (44.25%) of the respondents chose farming as their primary occupations. Those who chose teaching, commercial transporter, commercial motorcycle riding and retailing formed 13.00%, 11.00%, 6.00% and 6.00% of the rural migrants respectively. Others are blacksmithing, carpentry, hair plaiting, palm wine tapping, paid employment, tailoring and vulcanizing. It can be inferred from the findings that the rural areas have unique socio-economic dynamics, meaning that most rural dwellers make their living from their relationship with land-based activities.

**Table 3: Distribution of household heads on the basis of primary occupation**

Primary Occupation of Households	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %.
Blacksmithing	16	4.00	4.00
Carpentry	9	2.25	6.25
Farming	177	44.25	50.50
Hair Plaiting	18	4.50	55.00
Motorcycle Operator	24	6.00	61.00
Palm Wine Tapping	14	3.50	64.50
Paid employment	4	1.00	65.50
Retailing	24	6.00	71.50
Tailoring	16	4.00	75.50
Teaching	52	13.00	88.50
Transporter	44	11.00	99.50
Vulcanizing	2	0.50	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

**Source:** Field survey, 2023

### Number of income outlets of the respondents

This section presents livelihood diversity in the study area based on the number of income sources. Table 4 shows that 21.25% of the respondents had only one source of income while 24% relied on two income sources. Also, 20.75% of the respondents had three sources of income, 15.75% had four sources, 8.75% had five income outlets and 6.75% had 6 income outlets while 2.50% of them had 7 sources of income. On cumulative basis, 46.25% of the migrants had 1 to 2 income sources while 66.00% had between 1 and 3 income outlets.

**Table 4: Distribution of households based on number of income outlets**

Income source outlets	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %.
1	85	21.25	21.25
2	96	24.00	45.25
3	83	20.75	66.00
4	63	15.75	81.75
5	35	8.75	90.50
6	27	6.75	97.25
7	11	2.75	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

### Constraints faced by respondents in livelihoods diversification

Engaging in diversified livelihoods within rural households in the study area is not without some challenges. Table 5 illustrates that majority of the respondents perceived inadequate infrastructural facilities with a weighted score of 184.20 as a major barrier and it is ranked as first among the major constraints. The second



in rank in term of weighted score is insufficient livelihood assets which is a major constraint with weighted score of 171.20. The third, fourth, and fifth ranked constraints with the following weighted scores 156.10, 108.30, and 107.00 pointed out by the respondents are ineffective transportation system, poor marketing system and ineffective credit system respectively.

Irregular power supply from the grid which ranked sixth with a weighted score of 93.90; the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth ranked constraints with weighted scores of 85.60, 63.60, 62.50, and 43.40 as pointed out by the respondents are problem of land accessibility, inconsistent government policies, hostility by host community and lack of appropriate vocational skills respectively. Other constraints that ranked eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth with the weighted scores of 41.20, 27.10, 24.00, 21.90, 20.20 and 8.90 are lack of storage facilities, economic risk and uncertainty, environmental deterioration, inadequate information, inadequate farm input and problem of pest and diseases respectively

These findings suggest that many respondents are facing the challenges in diversifying into livelihood activities that depend on the availability and accessibility of basic rural infrastructure, adequate livelihood assets, credit, and marketing facilities. These findings align with the results of similar studies conducted by Fabusoro et al. (2010) and Adepoju and Obayelu (2013) in Ogun and Ondo States of Nigeria, highlighting these severe constraints impeding rural household livelihood diversification. The overall implication of this result is that the respondents' capacity for livelihood diversification may be restricted due to these high constraints.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents based on constraints to livelihood diversification**

S/N	Constraints	Not a Constraint	Mild Constraint	Severe Constraint	Weighted Score	Rank
1	Inadequate infrastructural facilities	6.70	2.40	90.90	184.20	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Insufficient livelihood assets	11.50	5.20	83.30	171.20	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Ineffective transportation system	10.30	23.30	66.40	156.10	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4.	Poor marketing systems	36.80	18.10	45.10	108.30	4 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Ineffective credit system	30.80	31.40	37.80	107.00	5 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Irregular power supply	36.80	32.50	30.70	93.90	6 <sup>th</sup>
7.	Problem of land accessibility	45.60	23.20	31.20	85.60	7 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Inconsistent government policies	52.80	30.80	16.40	63.60	8 <sup>th</sup>
9.	Hostility by host community	57.50	22.50	20.00	62.50	9 <sup>th</sup>
10.	Lack of appropriate vocational skills	66.60	19.40	12.00	43.40	10 <sup>th</sup>
11.	Lack of storage facilities	72.70	13.40	13.90	41.20	11 <sup>th</sup>
12.	Economic risk and uncertainty	79.60	13.70	6.70	27.10	12 <sup>th</sup>
13.	Environmental deterioration	83.50	9.00	7.50	24.00	13 <sup>th</sup>
14.	Inadequate Information	83.80	10.50	5.70	21.90	14 <sup>th</sup>
15.	Inadequate farm inputs	86.50	6.80	6.70	20.20	15 <sup>th</sup>
16.	Problem of Pest and diseases	93.10	4.90	2.00	8.90	16 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2023.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of rural livelihoods among migrants' households in Southwestern Nigeria. While farming is the main occupation for 44.25% of household heads, they however engaged in various non-farm income-generating activities, including local formal employment, migratory wage services, craftsmanship, retailing, tailoring, and vocational jobs. The major barriers to effective livelihood diversification in term of weighted score as perceived by the respondents are inadequate infrastructure and insufficient livelihood assets. Others are ineffective transportation system, poor marketing systems, credit system and irregular power supply. Amongst others, the study recommends that government and other policy makers should focus on creating conducive environment by establishing micro-financial institutions to tackle the challenges of access to various livelihood assets, offering training to rural inhabitants, and developing rural infrastructure, including improved roads, electricity, and market facilities. These measures would enable rural households especially the migrants to participate in various livelihood activities in order to sustain their welfare throughout the year.

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