



Women Participation in Agricultural Development: A Case Study of Ikole LGA, Ekiti State.

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Abstract

The study investigated how rural women contribute to agricultural growth in Ikole local government area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. A two-stage random sampling method was employed. Based on their degree of rurality, ten (10) rural settlements from Ikole Local Government Area were chosen at random for the first stage. To complete the sample size of hundred (100) respondents, ten (10) rural women were also randomly selected from the rural villages in the second stage. The study employed descriptive statistics like frequency distribution, percentages, and likert scale. Findings showed that 27.0% of the rural women were between the age ranges of 36 to 45 years with 78% of them being married. (23.0%) of the respondents had no formal education while 77.0% have had some form of level of education also 25% of the respondents have been on the farm for between 6-10 years. Furthermore, the rural women engaged in agricultural activities that made use of seeds, pesticides and fertilizer with mean scores of (4.47, 4.22 and 4.17) respectively. In terms of their perception of agricultural development majority of the respondents had access to credit and financial resources with a mean score of (4.56), which was viewed as crucial in enabling rural women to participate in agricultural operations also respondents viewed agriculture as profitable with a mean score of (4.38). Challenges faced by rural women included insufficient capital and safety concerns due to insecurity in the study area.

Keywords: Women, farmers, agricultural development, constraints.

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Introduction

Agriculture has existed for as long as humans. Since the beginning of time, it has been a part of the human race, because caring for the garden and all living things was the first noble task assigned to humanity after the universe was created, there is a connection between divinity and the practice of agriculture. All throughout history, people of all ages and eras have been actively involved in some aspect of agriculture. Currently, one of the factors propelling development worldwide, particularly in the majority of emerging nations, is agriculture. In developing nations, agriculture plays a major role in economic activity and development.

The primary method that agriculture increases food security is by producing more food and giving people the money to buy it. Although women make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce, they also view agriculture and its value chains as equally significant sources of advancement. Without a question, women play a crucial role in the advancement of agriculture. They are important to many aspects of agriculture, including fisheries, horticulture, animal rearing, and crop production. Around the world, women are essential to economic growth and agriculture. They are essential to farming and enhancing rural communities' quality of life (Nuhu, *et al*) 2014; (Prakash,

2003). Although women are responsible for half of global food production and produce 60–80% of food in most developing nations, their important roles as food producers and providers and their vital contributions to household food security are only now being acknowledged (Bolarin and Adamade, 2015). As stated in the global sustainable development goals (SDGs), women play a vital role in the agenda for global food security. When people always have physical and financial access to enough safe and nourishing food to satisfy their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, there is no question that food security has been achieved. Although women are frequently a vital resource in agriculture and the rural economy, they encounter obstacles that lower their output, which is one reason why the sector appears to be underperforming in many nations. Agriculture is nevertheless a significant driver of growth and the fight against poverty. Women's involvement in agricultural production spans a number of subsectors, including animal care, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, and marketing. In every developing nation, women play a vital role in the rural and agricultural economies. In many parts of the world, where economic and social pressures are reshaping the agricultural sector, their roles are changing quickly and vary greatly within and within regions. Rural women frequently oversee intricate homes and employ a variety of income-generating techniques. Producing agricultural products, caring for animals, processing and cooking food, working for pay in agricultural or other rural businesses, gathering fuel and water, trading and marketing, taking care of family members, and maintaining their dwellings are some of their usual tasks. Although many of these activities are crucial to rural households' well-being, they are not included as "economically active employment" in national accounts.

Nigerian women and men have coexisted in agriculture alongside one another, with a noticeable division of labor, as is the case throughout Africa. While women were active in planting seeds, especially food crops,

harvesting, transporting, processing, and selling farm products, men were responsible for felling trees, collecting and burning brush, and creating ridges. There are notable regional variations in the involvement of women in agriculture in Nigeria; for example, a survey of Nigerian women found that, on average, 40% of the rural women surveyed considered farming to be their primary vocation. According to Lawanson (2008), 89% of people in the east, 10% in the west, and 6% in the south considered agriculture to be their primary occupation. According to several studies on women's contributions to the nation's agricultural development, women may account for up to 40% of all farm work completed, according to Damisa *et al.* (2007).

Materials and Method

Study Area

The study was conducted in Ekiti State, Nigeria, which is largely an agricultural based State. The State is located at latitude 7° 40'N and longitude 5°15' and is mainly upland zone (250 meters above sea level). It lies on the south of Kwara and Kogi States, East of Osun State and bounded by Ondo State in the East and South.

Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

Rural women in the Ikole local government area of Ekiti State, Nigeria, were the study's target demographic. A two-phase random sampling method was applied. Based on their degree of rurality, ten (10) rural settlements from the Ikole Local Government Area were chosen at random for the first round. To complete the sample size of hundred (100) respondents, ten (10) rural women were also chosen from the rural villages in the second stage.

Source of Data

To accomplish the stated objectives of this study primary sources of data were employed. Rural women in the study area filled and validated a well-structured questionnaire and interview schedule used to extract the primary data from the respondents. Rural women were questioned pertinently about their involvement in agriculture and economic growth in order to gather this data. This contained details about

their accessibility, level of involvement in agriculture, the type of agriculture they are involved in, and their income from agriculture. Additionally, data on the socioeconomic attributes of the rural women in the study area, including age, sex, marital status, number of households, education, and credits, were gathered.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages and likert scale were used to analyze the objectives of the study namely; to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, determine the agricultural activities performed by the respondents, examine the perception of the respondents on agricultural development and identify the constraints encountered by the respondents on agricultural development. A five point likert scale was used to determine the agricultural activities performed by the respondents and to examine the perception of the respondents on agricultural development. To obtain the mean cut off point, the scored responses were multiplied by each weight and divided by the responses pooled together with the decision being $(5+4+3+2+1 = 15/5 = 3)$. Implying that any agricultural activity and perception of the respondents with mean score of 3.0 and above was a major agricultural activity and perception of the respondents on agricultural development while any mean score of less than 3.0 was not a major agricultural activity and perception on agricultural development in the study area.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

According to the findings in Table 1, the majority of respondents in the study area were between the ages of 36 and 45 years with (27.0%), closely followed by those between the ages of 25 and 35 years with (24.0%). Those between the ages of 46 and

55 years were just (19.0%), while those over 76 years made up just (10.0%) of the respondents. According to this result, women farmers in the study area are still comparatively active, gaining more production and management experience and skills, and so being able to adjust to more demanding production tasks.

According to Table 1 results, 5.0% of respondents in the study area were unmarried, 78.0% were married, 3.3% were divorced, 8.0% were widowed, and 3.0% were separated. This implies that since most of the respondents were married, they would contribute more labor to all of their farming activities. Table 1 also reveals that 62.0% of respondents had a household with 1 to 4 people, 23.0% had a family size with 5 to 7 people, and 15.0% had a household size of 8 to 10 persons. Given that most of them had smaller households, the result implies that the farmers might need to hire additional workers in order to function efficiently. However, because money may be diverted to consumption requirements, big families have a detrimental effect on resource allocation.

Table 1 also reveals that 8.0% of respondents had no formal education, 23.0% had only completed primary school, 9.0% had completed secondary school, 41.0% had earned an Ordinary National Diploma (OND), and another 19.0% had earned a Higher National Diploma (HND). These findings suggest that the respondents' high literacy levels made them more capable managers. The results are consistent with the findings of Amusa *et al.* (2022), who claimed that education is essential for growth management. Additionally, Table 1 revealed that 39.0% of the respondents had 1–5 years of experience in their agricultural field, 32.0% had 6–10 years of farming experience, and 25.0% of the women farmers had 11–15 years level of experience on the farm, and just 4.0% had been on the farm for 16–20 years.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Rural Women in Agriculture

Socioeconomic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
Age		
25-35	24	24.0
36-45	27	27.0
46-55	19	19.0
56-65	7	7.0
66-75	13	13.0
>76	10	10.0
Marital status		
Single	5	5.0
Married	78	78.0
Divorced	6	6.0
Widow	8	8.0
Separated	3	3.0
Household Size		
1-4	62	62.0
5-7	23	23.0
8-10	15	15.0
Education		
No Formal Education	8	8.0
Primary	23	23.0
Secondary	9	9.0
OND/NCE	41	41.0
HND/University	19	19.0
Years of farming		
1-5	39	39.0
6-10	32	32.0
11-15	25	25.0
16-20	4	4.0
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Agricultural Activities Performed by Respondents

As can be seen from Table 2, the majority of the rural women strongly agreed that they engaged in activities that made use of seeds as agricultural inputs in the study area ranking first with a mean score of (4.47). The results also indicated that the respondents engaged in activities that made use of pesticides as agricultural inputs, ranking second with a mean score of (4.22). With a mean score of (4.17) and a third-place ranking, respondents showed a clear preference for acquiring fertilizers for their farming activities. Crop rotation was ranked fourth with a mean score of (4.13), indicating

that it was a noteworthy farm strategy adopted by the respondents. With a mean score of (3.93) and a ranking of fifth, the respondents also showed a propensity to choose the chemical method for disease and pest control. Similarly, with a mean score of (3.91) and a sixth-place ranking, conservation tillage was widely accepted by the respondents as an agricultural strategy. With a mean score of (3.84), the usage of irrigation systems is ranked seventh; the belief that organic fertilizer is superior to inorganic fertilizer is listed eighth; gathering seeds from ADP is ranked ninth; and using family members for agricultural labor is ranked tenth.

Table 2: Agricultural Practices Performed by Respondents

Agricultural practices by respondents	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Ranking
Engaged in activities that made use of seeds as agricultural inputs on the farm	61	32	3	1	3	4.47	1 st
Engaged in activities that made use of fertilizers as agricultural inputs on the farm	34	56	6	1	3	4.17	3 rd
Engaged in activities that made use of pesticides as agricultural inputs on the farm	55	21	17	5	2	4.22	2 nd
Practice of crop rotation on the farm as farm technique	37	40	22	1		4.13	4 th
Practice of conservation tillage on the farm as agricultural technique	44	18	24	13	1	3.91	6 th
Use of organic fertilizer than inorganic fertilizer	41	21	22	10	6	3.81	8 th
Use of irrigation systems on the farm	36	32	17	10	5	3.84	7 th
Use of chemical methods to control pest and diseases on the farm	40	26	23	9	2	3.93	5 th
Use of family labor on the farm as a source of labor	32	23	24	17	4	3.62	10 th
Engaged in activities that sourced seeds from ADP	29	37	17	14	3	3.75	9 th

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Respondent's Perception/View on Agricultural Development

With a mean score of (4.56) and ranked top, Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents had access to credit and financial resources, which are viewed as crucial in enabling rural women to participate in agricultural operations. Furthermore, as indicated by their second-place ranking and with mean score of (4.38), the respondents strongly believed that agriculture is profitable in the study area, also with a mean score of (4.38) and ranked third, rural women's participation in agricultural activities is thought to have a favorable effect on overall output. With a mean score of (4.35), the conviction in the efficacy of customized

education and training for rural women to improve their contribution to agricultural development came in at number four. With a mean score of (4.26) and a ranking of sixth, the respondents recommended that the government offer the necessary incentives and support to promote rural women's involvement in agriculture. With a mean score of (3.94) and a ranking of eleventh, the results suggested that rural women are important to agricultural development. With a mean score of (3.83) and ranked the lowest at eleventh place, the recognition of the difficulties rural women encounter in obtaining resources in agriculture was evident in the study area by the women farmers interviewed.

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Table 3: Perception of Respondents on Agricultural Development

Perception questions on agricultural development	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Ranking
Do you think agriculture is profitable for women farmers	42	54	4	.	.	4.38	2 nd
Do you think agriculture has a place for women farmers	51	31	9	7	2	4.22	6 th
Do rural women farmers play a crucial role in the agricultural development	27	41	31	1	.	3.94	11 th
Does the involvement of rural women farmers in agricultural activities positively impact the overall productivity of the agricultural sector in the study area	1	50	36	2	1	4.38	3 rd
Do rural women farmers face significant challenges and barriers in accessing resources and opportunities in agriculture	29	29	39	2	1	3.83	12 th
Does providing education and training opportunities specifically tailored for rural women farmers enhance their contribution to agricultural development	59	20	18	3	.	4.35	4 th
Should the society recognize and appreciate the valuable contributions of rural women in agriculture	34	33	29	3	1	3.96	9 th
Is access to financial resources and credit a key factor in empowering rural women to engage in agricultural activities	67	24	7	2	.	4.56	1 st
Should the government provide targeted support and incentives to encourage the participation of rural women farmers in agriculture	35	56	9	.	.	4.26	5 th
Is policies and programs that promote gender equality in agriculture essential for the development of rural women	40	32	22	4	2	4.04	8 th
Should efforts be made to involve rural women farmers in decision making processes related to agricultural development	42	34	21	3	.	4.15	7 th
Should rural women farmers have the potential to significantly contribute to the sustainable development of the agricultural sector	41	31	12	3	3	3.94	10 th

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Constraints Rural Women Face in Agricultural Development

Findings in Table 4 illustrate the overall issue that rural women in the study area face when working in the field of agriculture. Given the current status of the economy in the study area, it was not surprising that one of the main restraints was capital. Every development program needs funding, but because commercial or even agricultural specialized banks charge exorbitant interest rates and require substantial collateral, it has become more and more difficult for farmers to obtain credits from these institutions.

Safety in rural areas is another major concern. The atmosphere is unsafe for people, particularly farmers, because of the murders committed by gunmen and herdsmen. The research that is currently available shows that the distribution of land ownership is significantly skewed toward men (FAO/World Bank, 2009), and that women typically do not own assets or property because, historically, only sons inherit family land. Women's access to agricultural inputs, inadequate road networks, and lack of expertise are viewed as lesser constraints to agricultural development and practices in the study area.

Table 4: Constraints Encountered by the Respondents

Constraints		Frequency	Percentage %
Lack of capital	Yes	70	70.0
	No	30	30.0
Lack of safety of rural areas	Yes	51	51.0
	No	49	49.0
Lack of good roads	Yes	32	32.0
	No	68	68.0
No Gender based programs	Yes	17	17.0
	No	83	83.0
Lack of training	Yes	38	38.0
	No	62	62.0
Access to agricultural inputs	Yes	16	16.0
	No	84	84.0
Access to land	Yes	64	64.0
	No	36	36.0
No Access to agricultural information	Yes	10	10.0
	No	90	90.0
Division of labor	Yes	29	29.0
	No	71	71.0
Total		100	100

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Conclusion

Educated, married women with a family size of 1 to 4 persons and a very good level of agricultural experience predominate among rural women involved in agricultural development in the study area. Seeds were obtained from a variety of sources, demonstrating a varied approach to procurement. Only 8% of people lacked formal schooling. Rural women were essential in the production, processing, storage, marketing, and distribution of food, but they were confronted by a number of obstacles, including lack of funds that make them borrow from relatives and cooperatives. Insecurity-related safety issues were major a problem, especially on the farms. Urbanization also made it more difficult to access agricultural land, which reduced the amount of land available for cultivation. If provided sufficient incentives and gender equality, women generally have considerable capacity to sustain agricultural productivity and family income despite all the obstacles and according to the women respondents, agriculture has been profitable in the study area.

Recommendation

It is advised to host seminars and workshops for women farmers to engage and deliberate with researchers and subject matter experts while discussing their unique technical difficulties. It is crucial to encourage women to pursue larger-scale farming beyond subsistence, especially in the areas of food crops, vegetables, fruits plantations, and fisheries. It is crucial to increase awareness of the crucial role that women play in the production of food and to lessen barriers by enacting laws protecting land rights, acknowledging unpaid work, and improving access to credit. Women can manage their finances for their entrepreneurial endeavors more efficiently if training programs and initiatives are established in rural places. It would be advantageous to provide easily accessible venues, such as drop-in sessions, for women to get guidance on farming methods and farm-firm administration. It is recommended that rural women form cooperative groups,

pool resources for mutual support, and provide marketing services, loans, and agricultural inputs.

Building rural storage facilities together would successfully stop their agricultural

produce from spoiling and wasting resources.

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