

## ROLE OF WOMEN FARMERS IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN JALINGO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OF TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

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*This research assesses the role of women in agricultural development and their challenges in Jalingo local government area Taraba State of, Nigeria. The method adopted include simple random sampling techniques used to select fifteen (15) villages from the L.G.A and 150 women farmers were sampled. Interview scheduled was to obtain information from the women, on their socio-economic characteristics, farm production and their challenges. Data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistic. The result revealed that 33.3% of the respondents' ages were within 31 – 40 years and their mean age was 39.0%; 60% of the respondents were Christians. 90.6% were married including widows and divorces, 9.3% single, however, 76.7% had formal education, 23.3% had no formal education; 20.6% had 10 year and above of farming experience, 32.7%; 46.7% for 1 – 5 years and 6 – 10 years respectively. Majority (57.3%) of the respondents were small-scale farmers having 0.1 – 1.5 hectare of farmland for cultivation of food crops. Majority of the women farmers acquire land for farming through rent/hire 45.3 and from their husband and relation (freehold) while others purchase it. The respondents' sources of income for farming were through cooperatives societies (42.7%) and previous farm output (28.0%) only few (13.3%) and (16.0%) were able to use their salaries and secure Bank loan. The average income of the respondents was ₦14,000. The result also showed that women were involved farm activities and as well employed the labour of others. They plant different crops, rear animals/ fishes and keep poultry. The women farmers challenges include mainly: lack of farm inputs like fertilizers and implements, lack of land for farming. Women farmers have contributed immensely, to food production. So, it is recommended that, serious attention should be paid to their constraints because women are the backbone of agricultural development and food security in Nigeria.*

### INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria women supply most of the needed labour in agricultural activities and this is the most important factor of production to farmers, as it is needed at the stages of agricultural production (Fabiya *et al.*, 2007). Rural women farmers play a vital role in food production and security. They account for about 80% of food producers (World Bank, 2003). About 100% of those who process basic food stuffs undertake 60 - 90% of agricultural marketing (World Bank, 2003). Women take part in processing of farm products in addition to their domestic and reproductive responsibilities. Majority of the women farmers operate at small subsistence level, a characteristic which is a common agriculture production system in Taraba State. A fraction of such agricultural output is about 1.0-3.0 hectares (CTA, 2000).

Household food and nutrition security relies heavily on women farmers which contribute substantially to poverty alleviation. Odurakwe, (2006) noted that in 1980s food production and agricultural income declined in many African countries as men withdrew their labour from agriculture resulting to diminishing capacity of agriculture to provide food for household and subsistence farming. Women are responsible for more than half of the world food production as they could produce up to 60 to 80% basic foodstuffs in Africa (FAO, 2000).

Women play a vital role in agriculture and in the rural society, fundamentally in agricultural and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, women produce 60-80% of the agricultural food in the country (C.T.A, 2000), in the same view Remain, (2008) noted that, more than 60% of the agricultural production is carried out by women in the Nigerian traditional setting. The agricultural activity goes beyond crop to other agricultural aspects like fisheries, rabbitry, poultry, sheep and goat rearing. According to FAO, (2000) women are responsible for about 70% of actual work population in Nigeria. The role women play and their position in meeting the challenges of agricultural production and development are quite dominant and prominent; their relevance therefore cannot be overemphasized. Remain, (2008) again observed that, female farmers generally are voiceless especially with respect to influencing agricultural policies which are aimed at increasing food security and food production. World Bank, (2003) reports that lack of separate land for women and inadequate contact with extension agents, women faced problems of farming in Nigeria, despite their serious involvement in agriculture, thus Land tenure system is largely by inheritance. The objective of the study therefore was to assess the role of women farmers in agricultural development in Jalingo Local Government Area, Taraba State, whilst seeking specifically to: determine the demographic characteristic of the respondents, their farming system and challenges, and sources of their income.

## METHODOLOGY

Jalingo local government area is located at latitude 11° E and 22° N and longitude 8° E and 54° N of about 195.071 km<sup>2</sup>. Jalingo being the political and administrative capital of Taraba state is an old settlement with very rich culture and history. Jalingo local government has eleven (11) political wards, with different tribes like: Fulani, Mumuye, Kona, and Jenjo to mention but few. A preliminary survey of the area was carried out. Sample random sampling technique was used for data collection in the study area. The instruments for data collection were through administration of structured questionnaire, personal interviews. A sampling intensity of 50% was applied to randomly select five wards out of eleven wards which include Mayo-Gwoi, Jauro Voto 1, Sintali 1, Barade and Kona in the study area. In each council ward, three (3) villages were randomly selected given a total of fifteen (15) villages. In each sampled village 10 women farmers were randomly selected as respondents. Thus, samples of 150 respondents were identified. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Frequencies, percentages and mean).

## RESULTS

The result on demographic characteristics of women farmers is presented in (Table 1). It shows that 33.3% of the respondents were within 31 – 40 years of age, 25.3% were 41 – 50 years, while 22.0% were 51 years and above and 19.3% were 20 – 30 years of age, thus the mean of their age is 39.0%. This means that majority of the women farmers were young and energetic. Majority (60.0%) of the respondents were Christians dominated, while 40.0% were Islam. Many of the women farmers were married (45.3%) among them were widows (25.3%), and those who were divorce (20.0%), while 9.3% were singles. Table 2 indicated the educational background, occupation and income of the respondents. The educational qualification among the women farmers shows that 76.7% had formal education; this means that there were high levels of education among them. Ninety percent (90.0%) of the respondents were mainly farmers, while 6.7% were business/women farmers and the least 3.3% were civil servants/women farmers. Women farmers' personal income is low, most of the respondents had low income, 45.3% had 10,000 – 15,000, 28.7% had 15,000 and above, while 22.7% had 6,000 – 10,000 and 33.3% had 1,000 – 5,000. Thus, the average income is ₦14,000. The highest proportion with 65.3% women farmers indicate that, they did not have farm land, while 34.7% were on different opinion. This means that most land acquired were through hired and purchase.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

| Variable       | Frequency | Percentages | Mean |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|------|
| Age            |           |             |      |
| 20 – 30        | 29        | 19.3        | 39.0 |
| 31 – 40        | 50        | 33.3        |      |
| 41 – 50        | 38        | 25.3        |      |
| 51 above       | 33        | 22.0        |      |
| Total          | 150       |             |      |
| Religion       |           |             |      |
| Christianity   | 90        | 60.0        |      |
| Islam          | 60        | 40.0        |      |
| Total          | 150       | 100.0       |      |
| Marital status |           |             |      |
| Single         | 4         | 9.3         |      |
| Married        | 68        | 45.3        |      |
| Divorce        | 30        | 20.0        |      |
| Widows         | 38        | 25.3        |      |
| Total          | 150       | 100.0       |      |

Source: field survey, (2015).

Table 2: Respondents educational background, occupation and income

| Variable                    | Frequency | Percentage | Income  |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|---------|
| Education                   |           |            |         |
| Former education            | 115       | 76.7       |         |
| Informer education          | 35        | 23.3       |         |
| Total                       | 150       | 100.0      |         |
| Occupation                  |           |            |         |
| Civil servant/women farmers | 5         | 3.3        |         |
| Farmers                     | 135       | 90.0       |         |
| Business/women Farmers      | 10        | 6.7        |         |
| Total                       | 150       | 100.0      |         |
| Personal income             |           |            |         |
| ₦1,000-5,000                | 5         | 3.3        | ₦14,000 |
| ₦6,000-10,000               | 34        | 22.7       |         |
| ₦10,000-15,000              | 68        | 45.3       |         |
| ₦15,000 and above           | 43        | 28.7       |         |
| Total                       | 150       | 100.0      |         |
| Farmland                    |           |            |         |
| Yes                         | 52        | 34.7       |         |
| No                          | 98        | 65.3       |         |
| Total                       | 150       | 100.0      |         |

Source: Field survey, (2015).

Table 3 depicts percentage distribution of women method of land acquisition for farming, size of land (ha), farming experience (years) and the type of crops cultivated. None of them had land by inheritance, 55.3% had by Rent/hired, 30.6% had by husband and relatives (freehold), 10.0% by communal (groups), while others paid for the land for farming. Women assess to land is limited, most of the respondents had small land for their personal farm, 57.3% had 0.1 – 1.5 hectares (ha) of land, 21.3% had 1.6 – 3.0ha, while 7.3% had 3.1 – 4.5 and 4.0% had

4.6 – 6.0ha for farming. Furthermore, majority (46.7%) had 6 – 10 years of farming experience, 32.7% had 1 – 5 years, while 20.6% had 10 years of farming experience and above. Based on crop cultivated; groundnut, soybeans and cowpea crops were dominated with 43.3%, followed by maize, sorghum and rice (26.7%), yams, cassava and millet (20.0%) and vegetable, okoro and sesame (10.0%) respectively. Table 4 shows percentage distribution of farming system in which women were involved, method employed and sources of implements; in agric crops/goats and sheep rearing (55.3%), in agric crops/goats and pigs rearing (26.7%). Agricultural crops and poultry production was 10.0% whereas agricultural crops and fish farming was 8.0%. This means that women crops/animals for subsistence and commercial purpose. Manual/ hired labour and Mechanized/ hired labour account for 80.0%, while only 20.0% Manual/ mechanized. Majority (42.0%) of the women acquired their implements through hired cooperative society, 33.3% inherited/purchase and 24.7% from government hiring unit. Table 5 shows sources of income for farming and type of problem faced during farming. Only 13.3% used their salaries, 16.0% were able to obtain Bank loan, 28.0% farm output and 42.7% obtain financial help from their cooperative societies. Hundred percent (100%) indicated that they face one problem of the other during the farming period. Lack of fertilizers ranked first (49.3%), land problem (24.0%) second, lack of tractors ranked third (20.0%), while other constraints was less than 20.0%.

Table 3: How women farmers acquired land for farming/crop cultivated

| Variable                       | Frequency | Percentage | Mean |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Land acquisition               |           |            |      |
| Inheritance                    | -         | -          |      |
| Rent (Hired)                   | 83        | 55.3       |      |
| Communal                       | 15        | 10.0       |      |
| Purchased                      | 6         | 4.0        |      |
| Freehold                       | 46        | 30.6       |      |
| Total                          | 150       | 100.0      |      |
| Size of land (ha)              |           |            | 2.1  |
| 0.1-1.5                        | 86        | 57.3       |      |
| 1.6-3.0                        | 32        | 21.3       |      |
| 3.1-4.5                        | 26        | 17.3       |      |
| 4.6-6.0                        | 6         | 4.0        |      |
| Total                          | 150       | 100.0      |      |
| Farming experience (years)     |           |            |      |
| 1-5                            | 49        | 32.7       |      |
| 6-10                           | 70        | 46.7       |      |
| 10 and above                   | 31        | 20.6       |      |
| Total                          | 150       | 100.0      |      |
| Types of crops cultivated      |           |            |      |
| Groundnut, soybeans and cowpea | 65        | 43.3       |      |
| Maize, sorghum and rice        | 40        | 26.7       |      |
| Vegetables, okro and sesame    | 15        | 10.0       |      |
| Yams, cassava and millet       | 30        | 20.0       |      |
| Total                          | 150       | 100        |      |

Source: Field survey, (2015).

Table 4: Respondents farming systems

| Variable                                      | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Mixed farming                                 |           |            |
| Agric crops/ fish farming                     | 12        | 8.0        |
| Agric crops/ goats and sheep rearing          | 83        | 55.3       |
| Agric crops/ poultry production               | 15        | 10.0       |
| Agric crops/goats and pigs                    | 40        | 26.7       |
| Total                                         | 150       | 100.0      |
| Farming methods                               |           |            |
| Manual/ hired labour                          | 60        | 40.0       |
| Mechanized/ hired labour                      | 60        | 40.0       |
| Manual/ mechanized                            | 30        | 20.0       |
| Total                                         | 150       | 100.0      |
| Sources of farm implement                     |           |            |
| Tractors hiring unit (T.H.U)                  | 37        | 24.7       |
| Hired (From individual/cooperative societies) | 63        | 42.0       |
| Inherited/purchase                            | 50        | 33.3       |
| Total                                         | 150       | 100.0      |

Source: Field survey, 2015.

## DISCUSSION

Women farmers play indispensable role in improving the quality of life in the rural areas in terms of farming activities. This is because nearly all the task connected with food production is performed by women aside other heavy physical labour logging activities (Fabiya *et al.*, 2007). Normally, farming work seems to be a hard job. Most young men do not want to take to farming. In the study area, majority of the women farmers were young and energetic with mean age of 39.0. This is an indication that most women were at their active stage of life. The respondents were Christians dominated. This agrees with the findings of Gideon and Othaniel (2014) that, some religion do not support women to participate in order activities. Most of the respondents were married (45.3%), thus they all have family to feed for. In this study the educational level of the respondents seemed to be high with 76.7%, this is also an advantage to the acquisition of knowledge on agricultural extension teaching, practice, participation and farming methods. This agrees with the research by Gideon (2015), that formal education promote awareness and participation level of individuals and communities on a particular concept. Women participated in almost all agricultural activities. In this study area women that were mainly farmers were dominant (90%) aside few that combined farming with other job, this indicate that they contribute significantly to food production in that area. This agrees with the findings of Mohammed (2006) that, women farmers contributes significantly to agricultural production and substantially to household welfare in terms of income earnings. It was

revealed that the income of women farmers from outputs was low with an average income of ₦14,000 which is below monthly minimum wage. This findings is in line with Gideon, (2015) that, when income earning of an individual falls below the monthly minimum wage of ₦18,000 of this country it therefore implies poverty among the populace. This situation calls for empowerment of women in the State by the Government, individuals and Non-Governmental agencies. The range of the sizes of farms of the respondents in the study area indicated dominance of small scale farming the mean being 2.1 hectare. This might probably be one of the reasons why the productivity is not much and thus reflected on their income. This is in accordance to the observation of Gueye (2013). Land is the most important aspect in agriculture; without adequate land for food production, this may result to hunger, malnutrition and poverty (Fabiya *et al.*, 2007). Land tenure system should be reviewed in Nigeria and women also should be made to enjoy land inheritance like men, since majority of women in rural areas are farmers. Land availability for women will bring about increase in food production, self-reliance, agriculture development and food security.

Table 5: Sources of respondents' capital for farming

| Sources of capital                  | Frequency | Percentage | Rank            |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| Cooperatives society                | 64        | 42.7       |                 |
| Income from Farm outputs            | 42        | 28.0       |                 |
| Bank loan                           | 16        | 16.0       |                 |
| Salaries                            | 20        | 13.3       |                 |
| Total                               | 150       | 100.0      |                 |
| Collateral for loan                 |           |            |                 |
| Yes                                 | 112       | 74.6       |                 |
| No                                  | 38        | 25.3       |                 |
| Total                               | 150       | 100.0      |                 |
| Faced with Problems during farming? |           |            |                 |
| Yes                                 | 150       | 100.0      |                 |
| No                                  | -         |            |                 |
| Total                               | 150       | 100.0      |                 |
| Types of problems faced with        |           |            |                 |
| Land problem                        | 36        | 24.0       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Lack of tractor                     | 30        | 20.0       | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Lack of fertilizers                 | 74        | 49.3       | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Pest/ disease attack                | 10        | 6.7        | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Total                               | 150       | 100.0      |                 |

Source: Filed Survey, 2015

In most of the developing countries, agriculture is an important sector and a significant proportion of the agricultural activities takes place in rural areas. In the study area women participated in almost all agricultural activities, they are heavily involved in food crop production, more than 40.0% of the respondent plant groundnut, soybeans and cowpea, about 26.7% plant maize, sorghum and rice. This indicates that women tend to produce crop for family consumption and commercial purpose. The activities of these women go beyond crop production to mixed agricultural farming like livestock, fish and poultry production. More than 50.0% were involved in agricultural crop production/goats and sheep rearing, about 26.7% produce sheep and pigs. In the study area not many women were in poultry and fish farming, this could be attributed to the fact that poultry and fish production is both labour and money intensive since most rural women farmers are of low income. Most of the respondents depend on manual/hired labour as well as mechanized/hired labour respectively.

The low economic status of women limits their opportunities for border participation in society and agricultural production (Fabiya *et al.*, 2007). In the study area majority of the women farmers have financial problem and have little access to capital and credits facilities. They do not have collateral, this probably is one of the reasons why it has traditionally been difficult for them to obtain Bank loan, only 16.0% were able as higher as 42.7% from their cooperative societies. Similarly, women have to hire (53.3%) and beg (30.6%) for farmlands from husband and relation. They also complained about farm inputs especially lack of fertilizers, lack of land and other farm implements.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the role of women in agricultural production and their challenges in Taraba State, Nigeria the involvement of women in agricultural activities and participation cannot be trivialized. Women in this area are more involved in farm activities apart from their legitimate roles as wives and mothers. The totality of food production cannot build on men alone without women. Therefore, there is the need to encourage women farmers, by making available all that is necessary for successful farming. The contribution of women to

agricultural and rural development should be maximized by implementing solutions to the specific problems they encounter. Land tenure system should be reviewed and changed to enhance full participation and landownership by women. Credit facilities and farm input should be made available through farmers' cooperative societies and families. More female extension workers should be trained and sent to help female farmers. It is necessary to particularly identify women as an integral part of the agricultural extension policy and develop gender-specific operational guidelines which will direct the extension activities of women farmers. Input should be sold to farmers at subsidized rate and on time to boost agricultural productivity and encourage full participation by the rural farmers.

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