

AN ASSESSMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES OWNED BY WOMEN FARMERS IN IKPOBA-OKHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

C. O. EDEOGHON AND M. T. AJAYI

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the agricultural enterprises owned by women farmers in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government, Edo State, Nigeria. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 60 randomly selected women farmers. Findings show that majority of the respondents were within the ages of 26-50 years (70%), 85% were married, 31.7% did not have any form of formal education while 46.7% had up to primary school education. The study revealed that 41.7% of the respondents had 4-6 children while 21.7% had 7-9 children. Findings also showed that majority (98.3%) of the respondents were engaged in cassava production enterprise while 55% were engaged in poultry production. Cassava was perceived to be the most profitable enterprise followed by poultry. Respondents also perceived these enterprises to have assisted them in taking care of children schools fees and improve their nutritional status thereby improving their standard of living. The result indicated that all the respondents had contact with extension agents in form of farm visits (twice weekly) and extension demonstration (every 6 months). However, the major constraints faced by the women farmers were poor produce prices (Mean, \bar{x} = 2.98), lack of credit (Mean \bar{x} = 2.97) and poor market outlet (Mean, \bar{x} = 2.77) for their produce. Respondents' age, ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$), number of children $r = 0.373$, $p < 0.05$) and business experience ($r = 0.435$, $p < 0.05$) had significant and positive relationship with respondents' derived benefits from their enterprises. It was therefore recommended that women association should be formed and organized into cooperatives so as to increase their access to extension, credit, input and marketing services.

KEY WORDS: Assessment, agricultural enterprises, owned, women farmers.

INTRODUCTION

Women are the backbone of the agricultural sector accounting for 70% of agricultural labour and being responsible for the bulk of agricultural production food processing and utilization in sub-Saharan Africa (Kabeer, 1994, Banmeke and Olowu, 2005). Sustainable agriculture and effective rural development cannot be pursued without explicit recognition of sustainable contribution of women (FAO, 1998). Rural women play a significant role in household food security such as agriculture production, providing economic access to food for household and ensuring nutritional standards for household members.

World Bank analysis of gender and investment in the agricultural sector concludes that in countries where half or more of all farming is done by women, neglect of the needs of female farmers in rural development programmes reduces total agricultural output by as much as 20% (Black den, and Bhanu-Chiatria, 1999). Augusta (2006) addressed agricultural enterprise as knowledge skill or labour applied to growing or raising plants or animals, harvesting plants or growing or obtaining plants or animal by-products. Also, forestry and aquaculture, production, storing, packaging or marketing are involved. Major agricultural enterprises are crop production, livestock production and food processing.

In crop production, women are involved in

almost all aspects with exceptions of land preparation and other mechanized and capital intensive activities. (FAO, 1995) however contended that women play a key role in seed selection and hence they have the responsibility for quality and quantity of crop produced. Women are largely responsible for food crop production while men are mainly responsible for cash crops such as rubber.

Women's role in livestock production is even greater, as they are often responsible for all aspects of animal husbandry, with the exception of herding and marketing. Hence they feed, water and care for small ruminants, rabbits and poultry. They also breed and select animals (FAO, 1995).

Processing such as converting cassava into garri, starch and fufu; guinea corn into kunu drink, soya bean into soya milk, maize into corn flour and akamu, oil palm into palm oil, native soap and vegetable processing have been mainly handled by women. However, despite their contribution to global food security, women farmers are frequently underestimated and overlooked in developing strategies (FAO, 1999b). Olawaoye (1989) also indicated that despite the significant role of women in agricultural production, extension services are directed to men farmers and only few women farmers are reached. For this reason, women find it more difficult than men to gain access to valuable resources (FAO, 1999b). Therefore, targeting women farmers will bring high returns because access to extension service make

women better informed and hence prepares them to become active partners in development activities (Verma, 2001). It is in this light that this study conceived to answer to the following questions: (a) what agricultural enterprises are women most involved in? (b) what are the roles of extension service to the women in agricultural production? (c) what are the problems women farmers face in their agricultural enterprises? The general objective of this study was to identify the types of agricultural enterprises owned by women farmers in Ikpoba-Okha local government area of Edo state, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- examine the socio-economic characteristics of women farmers in the study area;
- identify the types of agricultural enterprises women are involved in
- determine the women's perception of the profitability of their enterprises;
- assess the respondents' contact with agricultural extension service
- identify constraints faced by women farmers in running their agricultural enterprises.

Hypothesis:

- There is no significant difference between the socio-economic characteristics of women farmers and benefits derived from enterprise production.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Ikpoba-Okha local government area (LGA) of Edo State, Nigeria.. The local government area is bounded by Orhionwon LGA and in the North by Egor and Uhunmwunde LGAs. In the south, it shares boundary with Koko in Delta State. Various agricultural practices in the local government include crop production, lumbering, fishery, art and craft including wood works, brass making and general merchandise.

A population of 320 women farmers that registered with Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) was the sampling frame of this study. The women farmers were grouped by ADP into eight (8) with each group made up of 40 women farmers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 3 groups out of the 8 groups and from each of these 3 groups sampled, 20 women farmers were randomly selected. The 3 groups selected of women farmers were located in 3 villages: Obaretin, Uhie and Iyanomo. A total sample of 60 women farmers were therefore interviewed using a structured questionnaire.

The instrument was designed to include Likert-type scales with a four-point scale (1= no response, 2 = not profitable, 3 = moderately profitable and 4= highly profitable used to describe respondents' perception of profitability of their enterprises and a three point scale (1 =not severe, 2 = severe, 3= very severe, used to describe respondents' constraints in their enterprises.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, means and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected while correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents:

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents were within the ages of 26-50 years (70%). Only 10% of the respondents were within the ages of 60 and above. This indicates that the women farmers are more active in farming in their youthful age as Oyatoye (1991) confirms that age affects the productivity of the farmers. Among the respondents, 85% were married while 15% were widows. Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) (1999) stated that female-headed households are under capitalized by as much as 50% of the total value of farming equipment compared to male headed households.

Educational qualification of respondents indicated that 31.7% did not have any form of formal education and 46.7% had up to primary school education. The result also revealed that 41.7% of the respondents had 4-6 children while 21.7% had 7-9 children. It was also observed that 96.7% of the respondents had farming as their primary occupation while 56.7% of the respondents were involved in some non-farm activities as their secondary occupation such as trading and sewing. This is in line with Oyatoye (1991) who found out that those who regard themselves as traders deal mainly in farm produce.

It is surprising that none of the respondents belong to any organization. This is because this result is at variance to the findings of FAO (2003a) which reported that membership of cooperatives, farmers' organization, trade unions and other organizations represent one of the best ways for rural men and women to gain access to resources, opportunities and decision making. Women are however frequently deterred from joining because membership is often restricted to recognized land owners or heads of households. Farming experience of respondents as Table 1 shows that 28.3% have been into agricultural business for 6 – 10 years while 23.3 % have been into the business for more than 20 years.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents (n = 60).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years):		
26 – 40	24	40.0
41 – 50	18	30.0
51 – 60	12	20.0
Above 60	6	10.0
Marital Status:		
Married	51	85.0
Widowed	9	15.0
Educational Qualification:		
None	19	31.7
Did not Complete Primary School	1	1.7
Completed Primary School	28	46.7
Did not complete Secondary School	5	8.3
Completed Secondary School	5	8.3
Above Secondary School	2	3.3
Number of Children:		
None	1	1.7
1 – 3	12	20.7
4 – 6	25	41.7
7 – 9	13	21.7
Above 9	9	15.0
Major Occupation:		
Farming	58	96.7
Trading	1	1.7
Hand work	1	1.7
Non-Farm activity:		
Sewing	1	1.7
Trading	33	55.0
No Response	26	43.3
Membership of Organization		
Yes	-	-
No	60	100
Business Experience (Years)		
1 – 5	15	25.0
6 – 10	17	28.0
11 – 15	6	10.0
16 – 20	8	13.3
Above 20	14	23.3

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Types of agricultural enterprises owned by respondents:

Table 2 shows the types of agricultural enterprises owned by the women. The result reveals that as regards crop enterprise, majority (98.3%) of the respondents are engaged in cassava production enterprise while for livestock enterprise, majority (55%)

are engaged in poultry production. This result is not unexpected because of the publicity given to cassava production and processing currently in Nigeria. The result also supports the finding of Agbamu and Esegbue (2007) in Delta State, Nigeria that majority of cassava farmers in Isoko North Local Government area of Delta State were women.

Table 2: Types of agricultural enterprises owned by respondents

Agricultural Enterprises	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Crop Enterprise		
Cassava	59	98.3
Yam	34	56.7
Vegetable Production	29	48.3
Maize	29	48.3
Plantation	18	30.0
Fruit	6	10.0
Banana	1	1.7
Livestock Enterprise		
Poultry	33	55.0
Goat	13	21.7
Sheep	6	10.0
Rabbitery	1	1.7

Multiple Responses

Source: Field Survey, 2007.

Respondents' perception of the profitability of agricultural enterprises:

Table 3 shows that 50% of the women farmers perceived cassava to be the most profitable crop

enterprise followed by poultry in which 41.7% perceived to be also profitable. This must have been the major reason why many of the respondents were involved in cassava and poultry enterprises.

Table 3: Respondents' perception of the profitability of agricultural enterprises

Enterprise	High Profitability		Moderately Profitable		Not Profitable		No Response	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Cassava	30	50.0	22	36.7	6	10.0	2	3.3
Poultry	6	10.0	25	41.7	1	1.7	28	46.7
Goat	5	8.3	8	13.3	-	-	4.7	78.3
Plantain	4	6.7	16	26.7	-	-	40	66.7
Vegetable Production	2	3.3	22	36.7	3	5.0	33	55.0
Yam	2	3.3	32	53.3	-	-	26	43.3
Banana	1	1.7	1	1.7	-	-	58	96.7
Sheep	1	1.7	6	10.0	-	-	53	88.3
Fruit	-	-	5	8.3	-	-	55	91.7
Oil Palm	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0
Maize	-	-	29	48.3	1	1.7	30	50.0
Melon	-	-	28	46.7	-	-	32	53.3
Fishery	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0
Piggery	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0
Rabbitery	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0
Grass	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0
Cutter	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Respondents' Derived Benefits from enterprises:

Respondents' derived benefits from running their enterprises are shown in Table 4. The result shows that the most important benefits for respondents include better schooling for children (98.3%), ability to afford 3 meals per day (98.3%), improved food consumption/

nutrition (91.7%) and better medical treatment. These results support FAO (1999b) which recognized the empowerment of women as key to raising levels of nutrition, improving the production and distribution of agricultural products and enhancing the living conditions of rural population.

Table 4: Respondents' derived benefits from agricultural enterprises

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage %
Better Schooling for Children	59	98.3
Ability to afford 3 meals a day	59	98.3
Improved Food Consumption/Nutrition	55	91.7
Better Medical Treatment	51	85.0
Better clothing	49	81.7
Better Housing	25	41.7
Furnished House	11	18.3
Built a House	4	6.7
Bought Electronics	3	5.0
Bought Car	1	1.7
Installed Borehole	-	-

Multiple Responses

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Forms and frequency of respondents' contact with extension agents:

Results in Table 5 show that all the respondents (100%) have had contact with the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) in form of farm visits (twice weekly) and extension demonstration (every 6 months).

The respondents also claimed to have received support services in forms of provision of planting materials and better farming techniques. This result indicates that farmers will be informed about new technologies and plant varieties and this would enhance their production.

Table 5: Forms and frequency of respondents' contact with extension agents

Form of Contact	Twice Weekly		Once a Month		Every 3 Months	Every 6 months		Once a Year		Not at All	
	Freq	%	Freq	%		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Field days	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100
Farm Visits	60	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Training	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	100
Extension demonstrations	-	-	-	-	-	60	100	-	-	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Constraints faced by respondents in their enterprises

Table 6 shows constraints faced by respondents in their enterprises. The major constraints faced by respondents were poor produce prices (98.3%), lack of credit (96.7%) and poor market outlet for produce

(85.0%) The result on lack of credit is similar to the observation of Baudi and deBruijen (1993) in southern Africa that married women that have knowledge, ability and time to engage in large scale business activities face difficulties in obtaining loans.

Table 6: Constraints faced by respondents face in running their agricultural enterprises.

	Very Severe		Severe		Not Severe		Total Mean	Std. Dev.
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Produce Price	59	98.3	1	1.7	-	-	2.98	0.13
Lack of Finance/ Credit	58	96.7	2	3.3	-	-	2.97	0.18
Market Outlet for Produce	51	85.0	4	6.7	5	8.3	2.77	0.59
Pest	23	38.3	33	55.0	4	6.7	2.32	0.60
Disease	14	23.3	34	56.7	12	20.0	2.03	0.66
Transportation	15	25.0	32	53.3	13	21.7	2.03	0.69
Environmental Factors	3	5.0	4	6.7	53	88.3	1.17	0.49
Attitude of Financial bodies towards women farmers	-	-	-	-	60	100.0	1.00	-
Extension Agents' Attitude towards Women	-	-	-	-	60	100.0	1.00	-

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Relationship between respondents' socio-economic characteristics and derived benefits from enterprises:

Table 7 shows that the age ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$), number of children ($r = 0.373$, $p < 0.05$), business experience ($r = 0.435$, $p < 0.05$) had significant and positive relationship with respondents' derived benefits from their enterprises. As for age, this means the older

farmers derive more benefits from enterprise production. For number of children, positive correlation means that households with larger number of children derive more benefits from enterprise production which may be that children assist their parents in the farming activities.

As for business experience, positive correlation indicates that longer farming experience increases benefits derived from enterprise.

Table 7: Relationship between respondents' socio-economic characteristics and benefits derived from enterprises

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	P-level
Age	0.412*	0.001
Educational Qualification	0.140	0.086
Number of Children	0.373*	0.004
Number of Crop Enterprise	0.180	0.085
Total livestock Enterprise	0.159	0.123
Farm Size (Hectare)	0.111	0.076
Business Experience	0.435*	0.001

* Significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level

Source: Field Survey, 2007

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has established that women farmers owned agricultural enterprises just like their male counterparts especially cassava and poultry enterprises. The study also established that the enterprises have assisted women farmers to alleviate poverty but they need assistance in pricing of their produce, access to credit and marketing of their produce. Based on the findings: the following recommendations are made:

- 1 Women association in the village should be formed and organized into cooperatives so as to increase their access to extension, credit, input and marketing services.
- 2 There is a need for extension service to organize training activities for the women so as to further empower them.
- 3 Government and individuals should make available better transportation services in the rural areas for easy evacuation of goods from the farm gate to the market.

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