SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN IN FOOD PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT: *Women grow a substantial amount of food eaten by families, yet they still have less access to knowledge, technology, credit and land than men. Despite these data, there is still lack of sufficient data and information particularly on specific states in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to identify the socioeconomic characteristics of women farmers in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State and to determine the relationship between those socio-economic characteristics and food production. Six villages were purposively selected. Eighty percent of the women were randomly selected in each of the villages. Two hundred women were selected and administered with a structured questionnaire. Descriptive Statistics, correlation and Regression Analysis were used to analyze results. The results show that the respondents are still active, mean age was 40. Thirty five percent have no formal education at all, sixty nine percent were members of cooperative, fifty four percent had no (mining, sixty three percent had extension contacts. Wealth status mean (mean N45,856) amount of food produced (mean N27,000), income mean (N21,378) amount of credit received (mean N75.856). Correlation results revealed income (r=0.6708), inputs (r=0.3646), farm size (r-0.2797), wealth status (r=0.2475) and training (r=0.2256) have positive and strong relationships with food production. Results of stepwise analysis indicated income contributed 39%, training 3% farm size 2%, costs of inputs 2% and wealth status 2% to food production at 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of women and food production was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. On the bass of these findings, it is recommended that women should be empowered through the provision of loans. The amount should be substantial and the loans disbursed on time. The interest rate and cost of insurance charged should be low. There is also the need to improve upon the level of education of the women and also to train them on additional source of income generation.*

KEYWORDS: Socio-Economics, Food Production, Women, Level of Education

INTRODUCTION

Women produce between 60 – 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world's food production. In sub – Sahara, for example, women play a crucial role in many aspects of crop production. Women specialize in weeding, transplanting, post-harvest work and in some areas land preparation. Moreover, sub – Saharan and Near Eastern countries play a major role in house – animal production enterprises. They tend to have primary responsibility for the husbandry of small animals and ruminants and also take care of large animal systems – herding, providing water and feed, clearing stalls and milking. In all types of animal production systems women have a predominant role in processing particularly milk products and are commonly responsible for marketing. In many countries women are responsible for fishing in shallow waters and in coastal lagoons.

Women in rural Africa play a central role in food production. The Nigerian Hausa women are actively involved in food processing and Keeping of livestock. Even the nomadic Fulani women contribute to the sustenance of their families; they thresh, winnow and store the grains. They are also involved in cattle management. Yoruba women of western Nigeria regard marketing of agricultural produce as their main occupation (Ingawa, 1999). African rural women must supplement household agricultural production with income earned through non-agricultural activities such as making handicrafts and brewing. Because they operate at the lowest strata of the informal sector, most women are trapped in a vicious cycle of low income and low productivity despite long hours of toil.

In Nigeria many rural development projects and programmes which are gender specific have been introduced to take care of women's needs in the rural areas of the country. These programmes include; Better Life Programme, Women in Agriculture, Family Support Programme, Family Economic Advancement Programme and those introduced by international agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF and vision-child survival programme. All these programmes are aimed at achieving women empowerment. However, women are still faced with many challenges. Though development policy makers and planners are becoming increasingly aware of the crucial contributions of women farmers to agricultural production and food security. Nevertheless, agricultural policies on the whole still do not address the needs of the needs of women farmers adequately. Where the roles and needs of women farmers are recognized in policy, these tend not to be adequately translated into practice in agricultural development programmes and planning. Agricultural research too gives inadequate attention to women farmers and their needs. Despite an increasing supply of gender disaggregated data and studies of women's role in agricultural production and food security there is lack of sufficient data and information. This paper examined the socioeconomic characteristics of women involved in food production and determined the relationship between these socioeconomic characteristics and food production. This study will bring to light socio – economic factors affecting women in food production and contribute to the knowledge base which is needed on women.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study was to determine the socioeconomic factors affecting the performance of women in food production. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- identify the socio-economic characteristics of women involved in food production.
- determine the relationship between these socioeconomic characteristics and food production.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of women and food production.

METHODOLOGY

Chikun Local Government Area was purposively selected because of proximity and cost. Six villages were purposively selected because the women in these villages were known for their

farming activities and have been registered with the Local Government Council. These villages are Gonigora, Janruwa, Kakau/Kagurna, SabonTasha and Udawa. Eighty percent of the women were selected in each of the villages as shown in Appendix 1 below. Two hundred structured questionnaires were administered but only 171 questionnaires were analyzable.

Measurement of variables

The demographic characteristics were measured at nominal level. The money realized from sales of farm produce and off farm activities during the period of study measured the independent variable income. Wealth status was measured by converting to Naira value anything of value the respondents possessed. Cost of inputs was measured as the total cost of inputs used in Naira. Credit was measured as the total amount of money received from banks during the period understudy. Farm size was measured in hectares. The dependent variable food production was measured by the amount of different crops produced in bags and converted to the Naira value.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages and means were used to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Also multiple regression models were fitted for selected variables to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the study show the mean age of the respondents to be 40. This is in consonance with the findings of Yahaya (1995) and Adereti (2005) who validated that the mean age of women farmers is 40. At this age, they are most active in agricultural practices. The table further shows that all women farmers are married. This has been posited by Yahaya (1995), Ekong (2000), Fakoya (2000), Banmeke and Olowu (2005).

Table 1 also indicates that 34% of the women had no formal education at all, 19% have adult education, 24% primary education, 12% secondary and 11% postsecondary education. Banmeke and Olowu (2005), Quisumbing and Meinzen Dick (2001), posited that many poor countries, notably sub-saharan Africa have low level of education and that improving their education would probably increase agricultural productivity and reduce poverty.

The results in Table 1 further reveal that 37% of the women had no extension contacts and about 54% of them had not attended any form of training. This was validated by Akingbile and Ndaghu (2005) that farmers have low contact level with extension agent. This has the tendency of affecting the farmers' level of productivity which will in turn affect their income.

The amount of credit received by the women from Unity Bank in Table 1 ranged from N1, 300 - N70, 000. The mean amount N15, 856. This is in consonance with the results of Alfred (2005) that the mean amount of credit received by beneficiaries of Agricultural loans in Ondo state

was N19, 909. The study further revealed that the average annual income earned by the women is N21, 378 and the average value of wealth status N15, 854.

Others

The Table further revealed that a high proportion of the respondents (59%) are involved in petty trading. Half of them are Gbagyi while sixty nine percent are members of cooperative societies and they are all Christians.

TABLE 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN INVOLVED IN FOOD PRODUCTION

VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Age Yrs		
1-20	2	1.2
21 -40	105	61.4
41-60	64	37.4
Mean = 40 years		
Education		
No formal education	58	34
Adult education	33	19
Primary	41	24
Secondary	20	12
Post-secondary	19	11
Extension visits No. of times		
0	63	37
1-8	84	49
>8	24	14
Training No. of times		
0	92	53.8
1	23	13.5
2	22	12.9
3	29	17.0
4	4	2.3
5	1	0.6
Farm Size ha		
1-20	135	79
2.1 -4.0	28	16
5-11	8	5
Mean 1.67 ha		
Income Amount (#)		
<20,000	100	60
20,000-40,000	34	20
40,000-60,000	37	20
Estimate mean #21,378		
Wealth Status (#)		
<10,000	77	45.02

10,001-30,000	66	38.6
30,001 -60,000	21	12.3
60,001-90,000	11	4.1
Estimated mean #15,854		
Credit Amount (#)		
<10,000	103	60
10,001-30,000	38	22
30,001-60,000	30	18
Estimated mean #15,856		
Cost of Input (#)		
1-5,000	101	59.06
5,001-10,000	49	8.65
10,001-15,000	0	0
15,001 -20,000	21	12.28
Quantity of food produced (#)		
1-10,000	40	23.4
10,001-20,000	72	42.11
30,001 -40,000	37	21. 6
40,001-50,000	7	4.1
50,001-60,000	4	2.9
60,001 -70,000	1	0.6
70,001-80,000	0	0
80,001-90,000	0	0
90,001 -100,000	10	5.3
Mean #27,000		

Relationship between Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents and Food Production
The results of correlation analysis between food production and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in Table 2 reveal that seven out of the eleven variables have positive relationship with food production. These variables are income, inputs, farm size, wealth status, training, credit and education. This suggests that as the quantity of these variables increase food production also increases.

Statistical analysis revealed that income $r = 0.6708$ has a strong relationship followed by amount of inputs used $r = 0.346$. Other variables are farm-size $r = 0.2797$, wealth status 0.2475, training 0.2257. Credit 0.0907 and education 0.0292 have positive but weak relationship. While household size, extension visit, age and membership of organization have negative relationships with food production.

TABLE 2: Results of correlation analysis between food production and socio-economic characteristics of women

VARIABLES	CORRELATION
Coefficient	
Income	0.6708*
Cost of inputs	0.3646*
Farm size	0.2797*
Wealth status	0.2476*
Training	0.2257*
Credit	0.0907
Education	0.0292
Household size	-0.0892
Extension visit	-0.839
Age	-0.045
Membership of cooperative	-0.0012
*Significant at 5% level	

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Result of multiple regression analysis in Table 3 shows that some socioeconomic variables of the respondents contributed to food production. These variables contributed about 51 percent in explaining the variation in food production. These variables are income, training, farm size, amount of inputs used and wealth status.

TABLE 3: Results of multiple regression analysis of food production and selected variables

S/N	Variables	Significant
1.	Income	0.0000*
2.	Training	0.0004*
3.	Farm size	0.0164*
4.	Cost of inputs	0.0310*
5.	Wealth status	0.0450*
6.	Household size	0.1396
7.	Education	0.4281
8.	Credit	0.4689
9.	Membership of cooperative	0.7122
10.	Age	0.8213
11.	Extension visit	0.8799

Multiple Regression   = 7149
R^2 =   0.5110
Adjusted R^2 = 4638
*   = Significant at 0.05 level of probability.

Results of Stepwise Regression Table 4 further reveal that income made a contribution of 39%, training 3%, farm size 2%, cost of inputs 2% and wealth status 2% at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the study hypothesis there is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics and food production is rejected; the alternative hypothesis there is a significant relationship between food production and socioeconomic characteristics of women is accepted.

TABLE 4:   Results of stepwise regression analysis of food production and some selected socio-economic variables.

S/N	Variables	Significant
1.	Income	039117
2.	Training	0.02787
3.	Farm size	0.02032
4	Cost of inputs	0.1731
5.	Wealth status	0.01606

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the socio-economic characteristics of women in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The results showed that the women are still active and have low level education. Therefore, they cannot be employed in he formal sector. This explains why most of them are engaged in farming and petty trading. The respondents do not own credit worthy assets. This is why only a few had access to credit, inputs and training. The farm size of the respondents is small, consequently income generated is low and poor, low socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

The socio-economic characteristics income, inputs, farm size, training and wealth, status were found to be positively related to food produced by women. The association is statistically significant. Regression Analysis revealed that these variables also contributed significantly to food production. The alternative hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of women and food production is accepted.

Based on the findings the following solutions are proffered:

1. There is the need to improve upon the level of education of respondents. This is necessary, as they will use the opportunity to explore the avenues that may open to them in getting out of poverty.
2. Government should gear all her efforts towards making loans available to the respondents at the correct amount and time. Interest rate and insurance cost should be low.
3. There is the need to source for additional income generating activities such as candle, pomade and soap making, groundnut oil extraction and bee keeping which will eventually enable them to have additional income in this present unfavourable condition.

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APPENDIX

Composition of the sample

S/N	Village	Farmers	Sample size
1.	Goningora	120	80
2,	Janruwa	36	29
3.	Kaguma/Kakau	36	29
4.	Kujama	20	16
5.	Sabon Tasha	38	30
6.	Udawa	20	16
	Total	**270**	**200**