

## CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING WOMEN FARMER'S PRODUCTIVITY IN ABIA STATE

Odoemelam, L. E., Osahon, E. & Nwokocha, E. S.  
Department of Rural Sociology and Extension  
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike

### ABSTRACT

This study examined constraints affecting women agricultural productivity in Abia State. Specifically the study examined the socio-economic characteristics of the women farmers, estimated farm size, identify estimated production level of the women and identified factors influencing their agricultural productivity. Five communities were chosen randomly and from each of these communities, thirty women farmers were randomly chosen, bringing the total to 150 respondents. Data were collected, collated and analyzed using relevant techniques such as means, and percentage distribution. The results showed that 42% of the women farmers cultivates between 0.5 – 0.9 hectares of land while only 8% cultivates between 4.0 – 4.9 hectares. It was also revealed that the laws of inheritance and increase in population led to the subdivision and fragmentation of existing farm land in such a manner that the farm size affects production. The result further revealed the production level of the women within the last 12 months. About 19% of the respondents produced upto 1000kg while only 2% produces up to 10000kg. On factors influencing their productivity, land was the major factor 27%, followed by inadequate extension and credit facilities 21%. Therefore, the study recommends the formulation of women cooperatives and imperative in farm land consolidation of the scattered farm holdings into economic size to encourage large scale operation and bulk input sourcing and procurement.

**Keywords:** Agricultural productivity, women farmers and farm size.

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains the dominant sector in the rural areas of Nigeria and provides two-third of Nigerians who are low in income. While the Northern part can guarantee the production of cereals, the middle Belt and the South have the potential to produce root tubers (Abdulahi, 2003). It provides employment for about 60% of the work force (CBN, 2006). Climate change which is taking place at a time of increasing demand for food, feed fiber and fuel, has the potential to irreversibly damage the natural resources base on which agriculture depends. But the climate conditions, the richness of soil types and water resources, and the high population density still provides great potentials for crops, animals, fish and tree production.

Despite this rich agricultural resources endowment, however the growing at a very low rate, less than 50% of the country's cultivable agricultural land is under cultivation.

Even then, small holder and traditional farmers who use rudimentary production techniques, with resultant low yields, cultivate most of the land since the collapse of the oil boom of the 1970s, there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and severity of poverty in Nigeria, arising in part from the dwindling performance of the agricultural sector where a preponderant majority of the poor are employed.

In response to the dwindling performance of agriculture in the country, government have over the decades, initiated numerous policies and programmes aimed at restoring the agricultural sector to its pride of place in the economy. But as well be the evident research, no significant success has been achieved due to several constraints inhabiting the performance of the sector (Ugwu *et al* 2013). According to its findings, Food and Agricultural Organization (2010) cited that women comprise an average of 45% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 60% of employed women work in agricultural sector and most of them are small-holders practicing mixed crop-livestock family on small farms less than one acre and keeping one or two goals.

Odoemelam *et al* 2014) shows that there are differences in yield between male and female farmers, not because the female farmers are less skilled than their male counterpart but because they are constrained by lack of access to agricultural inputs and resources.

According to Weisfeld, 2008, people over all access to food are very dependent on the work of rural women. Women farmers produce majority of the food, ensuring that their family basic needs are met.

World Bank (2008) argued that the failure to realize women potential in agriculture as one of the contributing factor to the low rate led-agriculture and food security as it is observed that majority of the small holder farmers are women. Despite the critical role they play in food production and management of natural resources they have only 1 percent of land. Lack of access to and control over land has intensified women difficulties, their access to credit technical assistance and participation. Unless gender is addressed comprehensively, the global community will not achieve the target by 1996 World Food survival and United National Millennium.

Development Goals (World Bank, 2003). The ascertain constraints affecting women's agricultural production, with the following specific objectives to;

1. identify the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents
2. ascertain the farm size of the respondents.
3. identify the production level of the respondents.
4. analyze the factors affecting their agricultural productivity in the area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Multi-stage sampling procedures was used in the selection of the sample size. Abia State is made up of 3 Agricultural zones, namely Aba, Umuahia and Ohafia respectively. Out of the three Agricultural zones, Umuahia zone was randomly selected, from this zone Ikwuano Local Government Area was purposively selected.

Ikwuano Local Government Area is blessed with abundant fertile land that yields many agricultural products like cassava, yam, oil palm, cocoyam and a lot vegetables and fruits. Ikwuano Local Government Area is made up of 8 communities, from this 8 communities, 5 communities were selected with 30 female headed-households bringing the total to 150 respondents. Data were collected through the use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and participatory observation. Data collected were analyzed with the use of simple descriptive statistics like frequency distribution and means.

Objective 1- 4 were analyzed with simple descriptive statistics.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Selected Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Ages</b>		
25 – 30	18	120
35 – 40	29	20
45 – 50	39	26
55 – 60	45	30
60+	20	14
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Non Formal	51	34
Primary	62	42
Secondary	34	23
Tertiary	14	10
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	109	73.0
Separated/Divorced	41	28.0
<b>Household Size</b>		
1 – 3	25	16.6
4 – 6	46	30.6
7 – 10	58	38.6
2 – 11	21	14.0

Results on Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The result shows that majority of the respondents were elderly farmers (56-60 years of age). Ages within this range are usually the age at which the women are no longer active and the land given to them by husbands, are relinquished to their male children through inheritance which lead to land fragmentation. About 66% of the respondents had formal education while 34% of them had no formal education.

The results suggest that some of the women farmers do not have adequate educational background. Ejirbi (2009) noted that education will enable women to breakdown behaviours to socialization factors, giving rise to division of labour. The more educated women are the more venture into spheres traditionally considered male areas. Two-third of the respondents were married and the mean household size was seven.

This implies that there exists free cheap labour. But unfortunately the women faces labours constraints, because most of the time they were engaged by other people to get some money in order to sustain the family.

Marriage is an institution that has great control on influence on family matters. Being in one type of marriage on the other may provide opportunities or constraints in trying to make a living.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondent Based on Farm Size (Ha)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
0.5 – 0.9	62	92
1.0 – 1.9	28	19
2.0 – 2.9	32	22
3.0 - 3.9	17	12
4.0 – 4.9	11	8
5.0 – 5.99	-	-

Land constitute the major inputs used in production by an overwhelming majority of rural women farmers who cultivate between 0.10 – 5.99 hectares. Farm size is greatly influenced by the system of land tenure prevalent in the study area. Results on Table 2 shows that about 42% of the women owned just less than 1 hectare of fragmented lands, 22% had between 2.0 – 2.9 hectares, 19% had between 1.0 – 1.9 hectares, 12% had between 3.0 -3.9 hectares and just about 8% of the women had access to between 4.0 -4.9 hectares of land. It could be deduced that large expense of land was not available to the majority of the women, thus extremely limiting commercialization and adoption of innovation.

According to the respondent, under the individual tenure system and inheritance methods of land acquisition fellow length periods are either reduced or no more practiced. Some of the women also stated that population growth and enforcement of land tenure system, fragmentation of land has become so rampant and its effect has been reduction in farm size holdings and thus reduces agricultural productivity.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondent based on output level in last 12 months**

Variable	Frequency	percentage
1000kg	28	19.00
2000kg	23	16.00
3000kg	16	11.00
4000kg	22	15.00
51000kg	10	7.00
6000kg	11	8.00
7000kg	13	9.00
8000kg	14	10.00
9000kg	11	8.00
10000kg	3	2.00

Results on table 3, show respondent productive level within the last 12 months in the study area. The women were into a lot of agricultural production like vegetable, fruits etc. but cassava was the major cropped and so was used to determine the output. The results proved that the women are not “bench warming” spectator but contributes to the national agricultural output (Brown *et al.*, 2001).

Despite their lack of access to and control over productive resources limiting their participation in economic activities, 19% of the women were able to produce about 1000kg of processed garri and brought to the market for sale while about 2% of them were able to produce 10,000kg of processed garri. The result shows that despite the tenure system and method of land inheritance the women were able to manage their resource well to generate income for the household.

**Table 4: Perceive Factors Influencing Women Agricultural Productivity in the Study Area.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Delay in date of Planting	18	4.43
Diminishing support by Government for Women Farmers	48	11.8
Pest/disease Infestation	14	3.45
Limited access to education	36	8.9
Inadequate Extension Services/ Credit	84	20.7
High cost of labour	64	15.8
Farm Size	108	26.6

Results on table 4 shows perceived factors influencing women agricultural productivity in the study area. About 4.4% of the respondents complained about delay in date of planting. Their husbands take upper hand in when to plant and what type of crop to plant causing delay in planting date and low productive due to time of planting. According to FAO (2011) economic activities of women in rural areas is increasing but not their access to resources and participation in decision making.

About 11.8 % of the women complained about government support for their farm business. They cannot qualify for loans because they lack the collateral or because their farm business is small. Lack of assistance will still keep them at the subsistence of operation.

Some of the women 3.45% complained of pest/disease infestation as one of the constraints affecting their productivity. Women access to credit and agricultural extension services shows that about 21% of the respondents have little access to credit and agricultural extension services. It is generally acknowledged that women in Africa have generally face major difficulties getting credit facilities and other forms of financial assistance (James *et al.*, 2002).

Effective extension services appear to be lacking in the study area despite the presence of the University of Agriculture and the Roots Crop Research Institute in the area. This is a serious constraint facing the women in their efforts to reduce poverty through increased agricultural production.

About 16% of the women complained about labour constraint, because most of the time they are engaged by other farmers for wages so as to sustain the family up keep. Also 27% of the state that farm size for cultivation is influenced by the system of land tenure prevalent in the area. They further explained that under the individual tenure system and inheritance method of land acquisition large scale cropping are difficult for the women to practice because lands own by women tends to consists of small, less valuable plots that are frequently over looked in statistics.

About 9% of the women complained about limited access to formal education, this implies that farm information concerning production and management should be limited because education widen information horizons of an individual.

The situation calls for ensuring constant availability of these inputs to rural women. Tenure innovation should also be implemented. It will enhance the ability of the women to adopt modern technologies in order to improve their agricultural productivity.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed that the major livelihood activities of the women was farming with cassava as their major crop, with scattered plots size of between 0.5 – 4.9 with 42% of the respondents having between 0.5 – 0.9 hectares of land. The major constraints faced by the women farmers were, land tenure system ownership of land, access to extension service, high cost of inputs. Therefore, the paper recommends that extension package should be backed with adequate input supplies and government should subsidized the cost of such inputs. Land tenure innovation should be properly implemented in rural areas.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, M. (2001). Tenure security, livelihood and sustainable land use in South Africa. Paper presented at the conference on land reform and poverty alleviation in South Africa, covered by the South African Regional Poverty Netidok, Human Science Research Council, Pretoria.
- Brown, L. R., Feldstein, H. H., Penanc, L. and Quisumbig, A. (2001). Women as producers gate keepers and shock absorbers. In: *The Unified Agenda Perspective on Overcoming Hunger, Poverty and Environmental Degradation*.
- Central Bank of Nigeria (2006). CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account Lagos, Nigeria in Nwogu F. C. *Prospect and Pitfalls of Agriculture Production in Nigeria*. Federal College of Animal Health and Production, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Egwu, D. S. ad Ihechitupa, O. K. (2012). Effect of agricultural reforms on agricultural sector in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*. Vol. (2). P 51. <http://www.academicjournals.org/JASD>.
- Konkwo, S. O. (2010). Land tenure system, farm size and agricultural productivity in Ihitte/Uboma L.G.A of Imo State, Nigeria. An unpublished B.Sc project submitted to the school of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology Federal University of Technology, Owerri.
- Mundlak, Y. (2007). Agricultural production and economic policies concepts and measurements' OECD Working Paper, No. 75 OECD Development Centre.
- Odoemelam, L. E., Alamba, C. and Lekan-Akomolate, C. N. (2014). Evaluation of Women Access and Rights to Land and Its Implications on Rural Household Food Security in Selected Rural Communities, Abia State, Nigeria.
- World Bank (2003). Nigeria: Women in Agriculture in; Sharing Experience Examples of Participating Approaches. The World bank: Participating Source Book. Washington, D.C. <http://www.worldbank.org./nobi/publication.html>.