

WOMEN IN IRRIGATED VEGETABLE PRODUCTION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES (CASE STUDY OF FARMERS IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA)

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated female farmers in resource utilization, efficiency and profitability of irrigated vegetable farming in Plateau State. The broad objective was to determine the challenges faced by female irrigated vegetable farmers in Plateau State. Primary data for the study were collected using structured questionnaire, administered to 195 female vegetable farmers during 2013-2014 production seasons using two stage sampling technique in selecting the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study identified inaccessibility to land; lack of access to water lifting equipment; inadequate technical know-how; poor access to fund and high cost of inputs were the major challenges faced by female vegetable farmers in the State. The study concludes that the yield level in vegetable production among female farmers can be raised if the female farmers were given title to land ownership, have access funds to owned water lifting equipment and given periodic training in irrigation farming. The study also revealed that vegetable production is a profitable enterprise to increase farmers' income in the State. The study therefore strongly recommends that extension agents working with the Plateau Agricultural Development Project should conduct periodic visit to the vegetable farmers in the project areas to enable the farmers have adequate access to information on vegetable production innovations and that the official definition of a farmer in Nigeria which has been corrected to be gender neutral, as in most other countries, should be strictly adhere to, to avoid gender bias in agricultural circles.

Keywords: Credit facilities, female farmers, gender, irrigation, land ownership, vegetable farming.