

Challenges Confronting Urban-women Participation in Agriculture in Makurdi Metropolis

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Abstract

The study examined the challenges confronting urban-women participation in agriculture in Markudi metropolis, Benue state, Nigeria. Three objectives guided the study. The population for the study consisted 150 registered members of women in agriculture (WIA) in the state. The data was collected through the use of validated structured questionnaire with reliability index of 0.87. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and correlation analysis. The study found that there is a relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and the participation of the urban women in agriculture, with a positive high correlation coefficient of 0.874. The study also established that there is high level of urban women participation in agricultural activities with mean of 2.85 representing 71.3%. Furthermore, the study established that socioeconomic characteristics have improved family life, food sufficiency and living standard. The challenges confronting urban women participating in agricultural activities had the mean of 3.06 representing 76.5% of urban women face some form of agricultural challenges. It was concluded that Socio-economics characteristics such as food sufficiency, improved standard of living and economic stability of urban women could be stable through effective agricultural practices. The study recommended among others that Women should be encouraged to participate more in agricultural practices most especially urban women due to the demand of family life, this will eventually improve their socioeconomic life towards improved standard of living.

Key words: Subsistence farming, Socio-economic level, Agricultural production , Agriculture activities and Living Standard.

Introduction

Agricultural production activities are any activity directly related to the production of crops, poultry or livestock for initial commercial sale or as a principal means of personal subsistence (Wakungu, 2010 in Bareja, 2014). Such include any activity directly related to fish farming, cultivation and harvesting of trees. Agriculture is trending and gaining prominence especially in developing economies because it has been discovered to be a viable poverty intervention strategy. The presence and potential of agricultural production activities in Nigeria, especially in big cities, is not in doubt. Agriculture is practiced in almost all metropolitan areas in both developing

and developed countries. The popularity of agriculture has increased considerably in the last few years as concerns about the environment have combined with increased interest in health and community issues, giving rise to support for food systems in even in metropolitan areas as an integral part of a sustainable development for cities (World Bank, 2007). In the time past, agriculture was predominantly practiced in the rural areas with the involvement of both men and women in specific gender related farming practices.

The involvement of women in agriculture has attracted greater attention in recent years. The need to develop a

suitable extension service that is gender specific cannot be overemphasized. This is a recognition that women play significant roles in Nigeria's agricultural production, processing and utilization (Nnadozie and Ibe 2000). On average, women contribute 43 % of the agricultural labor force in developing countries, ranging from about 20 % in Latin America to almost 50 % in East and South-east Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. GFRAS (2012), opined that African countries up to 80 % of farm labor is done by women. This necessitates their integration into planning, policies and programs for effective and sustainable development of a nation. Hence, the role of women in agricultural production in developing nations cannot be overlooked (Damisa, Samndi and Yohanna, 2007).

Nigerian women have always played a key role in the economy. In fact, women perform multiple roles which include; mother (child-bearer), producer of agricultural crops, home manager, community organizer and social, cultural and political activity (Nwosu, 2012). (Adedeji, Ogunjimi, Yusuf, Obaniyi & Mbonu, (2012) opined that the role men and women perform in society, especially in traditional society, is based on mere assumptions or perceptions of their skills and abilities as culturally constructed and determined by that society. Meanwhile, increasing population in urban centers as a result of rural-urban migration and natural growth rate has led to the need to feed more mouths. Hence, there is the need to increase food productivity and increase food security since food produced in rural areas cannot sustain the growing population. In order to attempt to solve the food insecurity problem, women have become the backbone of urban agriculture.

Urban agriculture (UA) refers to any processes that produce traditional subsistence, nutritional, or commercially

profitable food, or other grown or raised products, cultivated within an urban area or in its surrounding urban regions (Ugboh, 2006). Urban agriculture may be a relatively new concept in development policy and planning, but it is well established as a practice of agricultural production in urban centers (Tologbonse, Jibrin, Auta and Danmaisa, 2013). National Bureau of Statistics, (2012), estimates that approximately 800 million urban residents are engaged in agricultural production either commercial or subsistence in the mid-1990s (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). During the 1980s and 1990s, there was wide- spread and significant increases in the cultivation of food crops in both public and private open spaces in urban areas throughout the developing world. A variety of reasons may account for this rapid increase such as economic recession, structural adjustment programs and the crises of the 1980s and 1990s (Ovwigbo and Ifies, 2014).

The history of urban agriculture in Africa emerged from the colonial era, when urban farming catered to the consumption needs of bureaucrats, settlers, and other elites. This contrasts significantly with present day UA that is becoming an increasingly significant source of household food security for vulnerable urban households as a result of neoliberal economic restructuring and rapid urbanization, (Madukwe, 2008). A study by Hertz, Winter, Dela, Quinones, Azzari, Davis & Zezza, (2009) reports that urban-women in developing countries are clustered in low-paying jobs; in extreme situations they are culturally not permitted to engage in waged labor. This situation disadvantages women relative to their male counterparts in terms of income generation (SOFA Team and Doss, 2011).

Lack of access to land remains a major constraint for urban-women in agriculture in Benue State and land reform programs have led almost exclusively to the transfer of land rights to male heads of households. Sreekumar (2001) added that even in countries where ownership and inheritance laws have been reformed in favor of women, In practice women do not necessarily have more rights to land, as local customs and lack of information act as barriers. In the same vein, as land holdings, women have less access to credit than men. Urban-women receive as low as 5% of agricultural loans in Benue State. Ogunlela & Mukhtar (2009) reports that women's status and problems have shown that gender discrimination exists throughout the world but that its intensity is felt more in the daily lives of women and children in developing countries. Oladoja Akinbile & Adisa (2004), observed that aside from equity, the most important benefit of gender-sensitive agriculture development is that it will ensure higher levels of beneficiary participation, greater impact and sustainability. Challenges facing urban-women in agricultural production vary from farmer to farmer and location to location. This study shows some identified problems confronting urban-women agriculture in Makurdi metropolis.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following:

1. To explore the relationship between socio-economic characteristics of urban women and their participation in agricultural production activities in Makurdi metropolis.
2. To examine the level of participation of urban women in agricultural production activities in Makurdi metropolis.

3. To identify the constraints faced by urban women participating in agricultural production activities in Makurdi metropolis

Research hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics and participation of urban women participating in agricultural activities?

Methodology

Research Design

The design used for this study was descriptive survey research design. The survey research design was used to gather information on level of participation and on agricultural activities engaged in by urban women. The results of the study can be generalized to a wider population, this makes the survey research design critical to this study.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. Benue State is the food basket of the nation and it has rich natural resources, indeed, Benue state is popular with its' agricultural activities and food crops such as yams, cassava, rice, millet, corn, fruits and vegetables. The state is an agrarian state and the farming activities are both for subsistence and commercial export purposes. Both men and women are involved in gender specific activities with the women well represented in both commercial and subsistence farming.

Population of the Study

Population for this study was 150 registered women agriculturalist (WIA) in Makurdi metropolis. WIA is a registered society of women who are involved in agricultural activities and are able to source for loans and government support for their farming activities.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The entire population of 150 registered women agricultural farmers who are also entrepreneurs in Makurdi metropolis were used. The entire population was used since it is small and can be handled effectively.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire titled "Women Participation in Agricultural Activities (WPAC). **The questionnaire** was validated by two experts from the Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, University of Agriculture Makurdi. Both content and face validation of the instrument was done. Reliability of the instrument was carried out using 30 staff of Ministry of agriculture Makurdi. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used for the analysis and the score of 0.879 was entered. A 2.50 decision point was used to determine the acceptance and rejection to each item of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics precisely mean and Correlation analysis.

Results and discussion

The research found that the socioeconomic characteristics of the urban women participating in agriculture found that 68% of urban women live on the agricultural produce from their farm land. 44% of the respondents revealed that their educational background assist in facilitating their productivity in farming, 66% of the respondents have little or no educational background which tend to affect their productivity in farming activities.

The study revealed that 55% of urban women participating in agriculture have sufficient food at home while 45% lack sufficient food. 78% of the urban women feel a sense of belonging to their community, while 22% feel less sense of belonging. The study also found that 72% of the urban women are stable through engagement in agricultural activities while 28% had less stability economically as they engage in agricultural practices. The study also revealed that 77% of the urban women are influenced by family size both positive and negative as they participate in agricultural activities. The study further revealed that 62% of the urban women had improved living standard, while, 38% had less improved living standard even when participating in agricultural activities.

Table 1: The Level of Urban Women Participation in Agricultural Production Activities

S/No	Level of Participation of urban women in agriculture	Yes (%)	No (%)	D	SD	Mean	Decision point
1	I participate in farming activities extensively	82	18	20	30	3.01	Accepted
2	Am involved in all the farming processes from planting to harvesting farming activities	22	60	25	43	2.41	Rejected
3	The farm land is owned for the purpose of farming activities only	25	45	45	30	2.36	Rejected
4	The land for the farming activities was on lease or rented by me	80	20	24	26	3.02	Accepted
4	Participation in farming activities is a income daily occupation	66	44	18	32	3.09	Accepted
5	The agricultural produce is mainly for family consumption	70	30	25	20	2.93	Accepted
6	Part of agricultural produce are for commercial purposes	60	40	24	26	2.89	Accepted
7	Participation in agricultural activities is to complement family needs	80	20	34	16	3.09	Accepted
	Overall mean					2.85 (71.3%)	

The table presents the level of urban women participation in agricultural activities in Makurdi metropolis. Seven (7) item questions were presented to the respondents, five (5) of the questions were accepted based on the 2.50 decision point set. Some of the accepted questions were participating in agricultural activities

extensively, lands were rented or leased to the farmers. Two questions were rejected which are, the farm land is up to 2 hectares, ownership of land for farming purposes. The overall mean was 2.85 representing 71.3%, this implies that the participation of urban women in agricultural activities was high.

Table 2: Constraints Faced by Urban Women Participating in Agricultural Production Activities?

S/No	Constraints faced by urban women participating in agriculture	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision point
1	Inadequate farm inputs to facilitate agricultural activities	85	25	20	15	3.01	Accepted
2	Lack of technological know-how involve in agricultural practices	98	22	15	15	3.35	Accepted
3	High rate of illiteracy affects the participating urban women in agricultural activities	68	32	30	20	2.98	Accepted
4	Poor implementation of agricultural policies to encourage people's participation	88	12	22	28	3.07	Accepted
5	Inadequate finances for farming activities	92	28	20	10	3.34	Accepted
6	Lack of land and ownership right of the available land	94	36	5	5	3.32	Accepted
7	Poor marketing strategies in selling of the agricultural product	88	12	20	30	3.05	Accepted
8	Drought and flood related problems affects your farm produce	68	32	40	10	3.05	Accepted
9	Prevalence of pest and diseases beyond the farmers control	78	22	36	14	3.09	Accepted
10	Lack of an improved seeds for high production	38	30	40	43	2.43	Rejected
	Overall Mean					3.06 (76.5%)	

The table presents the frequency and mean on the constraints faced by urban women participating in agricultural activities. Ten (10) question items were responded to nine (9) of the question items were accepted based on 2.50 decision point. The accepted question items were lack of technology know how,

illiteracy level, poor implementation of agricultural policies among others. The only rejected question item was lack of improved seedlings. The overall mean was 3.06 representing 76.5%, this revealed the level at which the listed constraint militate against the participation of urban women in agricultural activities.

Research hypothesis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficient on the Relationship Between Socioeconomics Characteristic of Urban Women and Their Participation in Agricultural Activities

Correlation	Df	Correlation coefficient
Pearson Correlation	1	.874*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
N	7	7

In order to determine the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics and the level of participation of urban women in agricultural activities, a correlation analysis was carried out at the 0.05 significance level. The result shows a high correlation between the socioeconomic characteristic and participation of urban women in agricultural activities. The correlation coefficient was found to high at 0.87 and it was significant since the p-value 0.010 obtained was less than 0.05 significant level. The result indicates that participation of the urban women in agriculture has a significant relationship with their socioeconomic life such as food sufficiency, and stable living standard.

Discussion

These problems include lack of credit facilities, land ownership problem, farm inputs, poor accessibility to extension services and agents, lack of formal education and middlemen problem in marketing. Others include poor road network, poor storage facilities, marketing problem and the problem of cattle disturbances.

Inadequate capital could interfere with the adoption of improved agricultural technologies transferred. However, the challenges can be overcome if the following measures are taken; Education empowerment through extension services for the women participating in farming, Economic empowerment through interest free loans and credit facilities. Easy and adequate provisions of land for

agricultural purposes and capacity building on the technical knowledge of farming equipment for effective production. Provision of farm implements to facilitate farming activities, adequate storage facilities to avoid wastage of the farm produce and Provision of drugs for pest and diseases control.

On the whole the research on the challenges of urban women participating in agricultural activities found that high level of illiteracy is still prevalent among women participating in agriculture which hinders their level of participation and productivity. Okoye (2002) in Ajibefun & Aderinola (2004) concurred that educated farmers are more likely to be responsive to improved farming techniques compared to those with low education. This further explained the strive for food security in every home is important. The UNIFEM, (2003) report support this that the attainment of food security in any country is usually an insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which slow down economic development. Therefore, to increase in food production women most especially urban women should be encouraged to participate in agricultural activities

Furthermore, the research found that there is relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the urban women participating in agricultural activities and their level of participation which tend to be improved. This was in agreement with Oladoja Akinbile and Adisa (2004), who observed that aside

from equity, the most important benefit of gender-sensitive agriculture development is that it will ensure higher levels of beneficiary participation, greater impact and sustainability. In doing so, they contribute to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security. However, the study x-rays some constraints faced by urban women participating in agricultural activities this includes poor farm input, inadequate farm land this was in agreement with the submission of Sreekumar (2001) where he added that even where land had been reformed in favor of women in practice women do not necessarily have more rights to land.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To improve socio-economics life of the urban women the level of their participation in agricultural activities should be improved since there is high relationship between socio-economic life and level of participation of urban women in agricultural activities. Socio-economics characteristic such as food sufficiency, improved standard of living and economic stability of the urban women could be stable through effective agricultural practices.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made.

1. Government and NGOS through Women-In-Agricultural groups should re-organized and target in ensuring that necessary inputs such as fertilizers, tractors, credit facilities, good seeds, weed/ pest control facilities are channeled to women farmers directly.
2. Participation of the urban women in agriculture has a significant relationship with their socio-economic life and will lead to food sufficiency, and stable living standard. Income, illiteracy,

inadequate finance and other such problems that serve as a constraint for women in agriculture can be eliminated by the government will power being translated through policies and programs.

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