

Degree of Esan Women's Involvement in Farm Labour: Implication for Food Security

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Abstract—Drive towards women empowerment is gaining momentum in recent years. Despite the obvious success recorded among women generally, the case of rural women farmers in particular remains controversial. Some studies have reported increase in women's access to agricultural productive resources such as land, farm technologies and credit facilities. But the extent to which women continue to engage in farm labour remains scarcely studied. Understanding the current degree to which women engage in farm labour is important for the future of women empowerment and food security. This study was conducted among Esan rural women farmers in Edo State, Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 457 women and the survey questionnaire was used to elicit responses from them on their level of involvement in farm labour. Also, the qualitative method of data collection involving focus group discussion was adopted. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics. Result showed that women engage in every facet of food production from the point of land preparation to distribution, although at different degrees. The paper recommends among others, that women empowerment efforts should be intensified among rural women farmers to enable them contribute maximally to food security.

Keywords—Agriculture, Esan rural women, Food security, Nigeria, Women Empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

In the study of women's involvement in agricultural production in Northern Nigeria, Yahaya [1] identified 10 aspects of farming and examined the extent to which women were involved in all of them. These aspects are: i. Land clearing; ii. Ridge-making; iii. Planting; iv. Thinking; v. Fertilizer application; vi. Weeding; vii. Harvesting; viii. Storage; ix. Processing; and x. Distribution. Findings from the study showed that the task for which the women involved most was planting. However, a related study has not been conducted in Western Nigeria. It is expected that this study will fill that gap. This paper identifies nine aspects of farming and examines the extent to which women farmers are involved in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State. These aspects of farming include: Land preparation, Ridge-making, Planting, Fertilizer application, Weeding, Harvesting, Storage, Processing, and Marketing.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that the degree to which women are involved in farm work can generate both positive and negatives outcomes for food security [2].

Rural women farmers are supposed to enjoy the support of their children, husband, and other relatives in carrying out their supposed duty of food production [3]. Where this is lacking, low returns can result which will ultimately impact on the goal of achieving food security. The level of women's involvement

in farm labour has been conducted in Northern Nigeria and so it is anticipated that this help bridge the obvious gap in Western Nigeria regarding the extent to which women are involved in farm work.

II. STUDY AREA

This study was conducted among rural women farmers in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State. The area known as Esan exist within one of the agricultural zones in Nigeria. It has a fertile soil for agricultural purposes and the weather is also favourable for farming [4]. Cassava is the main crop cultivated by the women farmers in Esan West Local Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

III. METHOD OF THE STUDY

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were adopted in data collection. The sample of 457 for the study was calculated with the use of the standard formula designed by Babalola [5] for obtaining a sample from a population that has more than ten thousand objects. Data processing was done with the use of the IBM SPSS package and analysis was done with descriptive statistical techniques.

IV. FINDINGS

Findings show that: i. 5% of the women prepare their land for farming by themselves; ii. ridge-making 6.6%; iii. planting 18.4%; iv. fertilizer application 1.5%; v. weeding 35.9%; vi. harvesting 48.4%; vii. Processing; viii. storage 99.3%; and ix. marketing 95.8%.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A major finding of this study is that women continue to engage in all aspects of farming because they are highly involved in subsistence agriculture. This poses a huge limitation on their ability to contribute maximally to food security. Consequently, efforts to empower women farmers from engaging heavily in all aspects farming to the detriment of their health and food security in general must be comprehensive and direct. Such strategies should involve affording them necessary support to expand their farms, attend agricultural extension training, access new farm technologies and sufficient time-effective credit facilities.

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