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WOMEN FARMERS' PERCEPTION OF CONSTRAINTS TO INCREASED CROP PRODUCTION IN OYO STATE

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ABSTRACT

Women farmers have taken dominant roles in primary agricultural production in Nigeria.
The study investigated the perception of women farmers about constraints to increased crop production in Oyo State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 150 women farmers who were interviewed.124 women farmers out of these actually completed the interview schedule. Thus actual sample size used was 124. Frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient were used to analyze the data collected. Most of the respondents (85.5%) were between 20 and 49 years of age and 79.8% of them were married. 61.3% of respondents had farm sizes of less than 3 hectares. The results corroborate the findings of previous studies that most rural women were small-scale farmers who are confronted with problems, the most serious of which they ranked as high cost of labour. Also, correlation analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between selected characteristics of the women farmers and their perception of the problems facing crop production. The study concluded that most of the selected characteristics were not significantly related to the perception of these women to constraints, owing to the small sizes of their farms. However, the study recommends that efforts should be made to encourage rural women farmers to form cooperatives so as to be able to secure farm input, especially machinery to reduce labour costs and overcome other financial constraints.

Key words: Perception, constraints, women, crop production.

INTRODUCTION

African agriculture is characterized by smallholder farms and most smallholders do not produce enough food. Studies show that they purchase forty percent of the food needed by their own households. Thus they are far from feeding themselves and the rest of the population (Kefema, 2004). In the same vein, the most pressing challenge of Nigerian agriculture in the new millennium is how it can meet the food need of an ever-increasing population in the face of myriads of social, cultural and economic problems. (Fakoya et al., 2007). Consequently, the Nigerian Government, through the various agricultural agencies has made attempts at assisting farmers so that they can improve their levels of crop production. Women farmers have taken dominant roles in primary agricultural production in Nigeria. Their pivotal roles in environmental resources har-

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vesting and utilization is also focused, considering their mediatory roles in rural households' decision-making process (World Bank, 1997, Fakoya et al., 2002). Environment refers to our surroundings and all that are in them. That is, man and the natural resources around him. However, efforts at increasing productivity in small-scale crop farming especially by women have not yielded much (Olawoye, 1999). According to OYSADEP (1995) despite favourable cropping conditions, crop production in Oyo State has not been optimum. Different reasons or views have been expressed by these farmers as being responsible.

The way we see and feel things should be, as well as our approach to such things generally describe our perception of them. Hilgard et al. (1983) described perceptions as experiences that are the result of complex patterns of stimulation plus past experiences and present attitude. The way people hold the environment and regard environmental resources and systems will in the long run, determine their attitude towards environmental changes and action. (NEST 1991, Adekoya, 1997). Judd et al. (1999) and Fishben and Ajzen (2002) all pointed to the fact that perception and attitude shape human behaviour. That is, farmers' experiences of the past, present prevailing situations and attitudes all result in their views and behaviours. The basic need strategy has defined family survival as the most urgent concern for planning for the future and has recognized the importance of women in this context. Studies conducted during the United Nations debates for the women, have brought to light the full extent of women's contribution to the economy. They have pointed out women's key roles in food, water and energy supply for the survival of their families and majority of people in the third world countries. Women produce between sixty and eighty percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world food production. (FAO, 1995).

Nigeria has been ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty is more severe in rural areas where most of the people are farmers. Further analysis showed that women farmers are even poorer than their male counterparts as a result of certain traditions and norms that post problems to their crop production efforts. There is need to find out what the women's perception of these problems are with a bid to tackling them and making effort at reducing poverty. Thus, if the desired increased production of crops is to be attained, then the views and expressions of the women farmers resulting from their experiences as to the problems they face must be of great concern to everyone. In line with this therefore, this study investigated women farmers' perception of constraints to increased crop production in Oyo State. Specifically the study:

1. described the socio-economic characteristics of the women farmers interviewed;
2. identified problems facing women small-scale crop farmers in the area;
3. ascertained the perception of women farmers to the constraints to increasing crop production among small-scale crop farmers.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Oyo State. The state is located in the southwest part of

Nigeria. The vegetation is mainly rainforest with derived savanna in the northern part. The area enjoys tropical climate with two distinct seasons: the raining season and the dry season. The set-up of the study area is basically rural and the people are pre-dominantly farmers. The people grow tree crops prominent among which are cocoa, kola nut, oil palm, oranges and mango as well as food crops like yam, cassava, plantain, banana, maize and cowpea.

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents. Six Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected by simple random sampling out of the 33 Local Government Areas that make up the state. The LGAs selected are; Ido, Akinyele, Oyo-East, Ogo- Oluwa, Ogbomoso North, and Afijio. Five villages were selected from each of the LGAs and five women from each of the villages were then interviewed on chance selection. Thus a total of one hundred and fifty women were selected. However, only 124 interview schedules were found to have been properly completed.

From available literature and previous interviews with farmers, a list of constraints that affect crop production was made. The women farmers were then requested to tick those that applied to them. All the 17 factors hereby listed were indicated as being constraints by different women. However, the women differed in their views as to the seriousness of such constraints. Based on this premise, the women were asked to rank the constraints in order of seriousness.

Primary data were collected from the respondents using structured questionnaire administered by enumerators. Variables studied included socio-economic characteristics of respondents, constraints to increase in crop production and the women farmers' perception of the constraints. Descriptive statistical tools were used to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the two hypotheses in the study. They are: There is no significant relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics (such as age, marital status, family size and level of education) of women small-scale farmers and their perception to constraints to crop production.

There is no significant relationship between problems facing women small-scale farmers and their perception to constraints to crop production in the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio economic characteristics of respondents

Findings as indicated in Table 1 showed that 79.8% of the women farmers are married with a mean age of 34.7 years. 80.6% of them are Christians and only 25.8% of them had no formal education. 70.2% of the women owned land while the mean family size was 8 persons. 65.35% of these women farmers have farm sizes of below three hectares while only 11.3% of them had farm areas above 6 hectares and these were in scattered locations. Thus the women were mainly small-scale farmers who engaged in other non-farm activities as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20 - 29	25	20.2
30 - 39	50	40.3
40 - 49	30	25.0
50 and above	18	14.5
Total	**124**	**100.00**
Marital status		
Single	15	12.1
Married	99	79.8
Divorced	2	2.6
Widowed	8	6.5
Total	**124**	**100.00**
Educational level		
No formal Education	32	25.8
Adult Education	29	23.4
Did not finish Primary school	13	10.5
Primary school	20	16.1
Secondary School	13	10.5
Post Secondary School	17	13.7
Total	**124**	**100.00**
Family size		
0 – 5	34	27.5
6 – 10	81	65.3
11 – 15	7	5.6
16 and Above	2	1.6
Total	**124**	**100.00**
Religion		
Christianity	100	80.6
Islam	20	16.2
Traditional	3	2.4
Others	1	0.8
Total	**124**	**100.00**
Land ownership types		
Purchase	21	16.9
Inheritance	58	46.8
Gift	16	12.9
Lease	18	14.5
Others	11	8.9
Total	**124**	**100.00**
Farm size		
< 1ha	21	16.9
1 – 3 ha	55	44.4
4 – 6ha	34	27.4
7 – 9ha	9	7.3
10 and above	5	4.0
Total	**124**	**100.00**

Source: Field Survey

Non-farming activities of respondents

Non-farming activities are important as they provide extra sources of income to the women. They serve as household livelihood security and can be described as coping strategies for the women (Carney, 1999).

Table 2: Non-farming activities

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Weaving	14	11.3
Sewing	26	21.0
Hair Dressing	19	15.3
Crop Processing	35	28.2
Marketing of Produce	20	16.1
Sale of Food/Snack	5	4.0
Others	5	4.0
Total	**124**	**100.00**

Source: Field Survey

Constraints to increase in crop production

Respondents differed in their ranking of constraints. To arrive at the overall ranking of constraints in order of seriousness therefore, each constraint was weighted by getting the sum of the products of the frequency of each rank and score attached to the rank. The constraint with the highest total score ranks most serious (Table 3). From the Table, it can be seen that the women farmers ranked high cost of labour as being their most serious constraint. It is followed by lack of credit facilities.

Most women farmers cannot do most of the activities involved in crop production by themselves. As such, they rely on extra labour whether in form of help from members of their family or as hired labour. However, since help or family and communal labour are now hard to come by due to schooling or migration by youth among other factors, hired labour is the only option and this has become very expensive.

Table 3: Respondents' ranking of constraints according to perceived seriousness

Perceived Constraints	1st (10)	2nd (9)	3rd (8)	4th (7)	5th (6)	6th (5)	Total Score	Final Rank of Constraint
			Frequency of Response					
Age Limitations (old age)	18	12	5	4	3	8	414	8th
Demands of Household chores	15	13	10	10	8	16	545	6th
Lack of awareness of appropri-								
Poor farming skills	4	7	10	2	4	15	296	11th
Lack of appropriate farming	15	17	13	9	21	9	641	3rd
Lack of credit facilities	19	18	20	15	6	8	693	2nd
High cost of Labour	12	35	13	17	11	3	739	1st
High cost of farming materials	8	9	22	20	16	5	598	4th
Poor storage facilities	2	6	5	19	13	25	450	7th
High pest/diseases infestation	8	8	15	18	18	18	596	5th
Lack of incentives (e.g. Loan, Input) from Government to women farmers	9	6	4	14	7	11	357	10th

Source: Field Survey

In addition, women farmers who would have used money to hire labour and purchase inputs run into problems because they cannot secure loans, or other credit facilities. Hence, the seriousness attached to this factor.

Perception of women to constraints to crop production

Apart from the women farmers' perception of the seriousness of the constraints as was found out through their ranking, their perception of some of the constraints was again obtained through their response to eleven perception statements on a five-point Likert-type scale as shown in Table 4.

From the means computed for each of the perceptions statements, the major constraints are "getting access to more land to farm is difficult" "clearing of farmland is tedious" 'money and other forms of farm inputs are not available".

Table 4: Frequency distribution of women farmers' perception of constraints to crop production

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS	S A		A		U		D		SD		Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	
Getting access to more land to farm is difficult.	59	47.6	45	36.3	15	12.1	3	2.4	2	1.6	4.3
Clearing of farmland is tedious	44	35.5	72	58.1	5	4.0	2	1.6	1	0.8	4.3
Planting and weeding of large farm is tedious.	28	22.6	64	51.6	23	18.5	9	7.3	0	0	3.0
Hired labour is very difficult to come-by	33	26.6	67	54	13	10.5	11	8.9	0	0	4.0
There is a lack of farm inputs like improved seeds, fertilizer, pesticides	38	30.6	67	54	13	10.6	6	4.6	0	0	4.1
Money and other forms of farm inputs like improved seeds, fertilities are not available.	54	43.5	57	46	9	7.3	3	2.4	1	0.8	4.3
Extension services to women farmers are inadequate	38	30,6	65	52.4	13	10.5	3	2.4	5	4.0	4.0
Transportation of products to urban areas/market is very difficult leading to spoilage of perishable crops.	31	25	64	51.6	18	14.5	9	7.3	2	1.6	3.9
Demands of household chores make crops farming very difficult.	35	28.2	64	51.6	17	13.7	3	2.4	5	4.0	4.0
More women are getting involved in crop processing and not crop farming (e.g. Gari, elubo) because of provision of processing equipment by various support programmes	49	39.5	38	30.6	21	16.9	9	7.3	7	5.6	3.9
Crops yields by women farmers can be increased if they have access to adequate input.	62	50.0	30	24.2	22	17.7	5	4.0	5	4.0	4.1
More women will remain in crop farming if they are given adequate incentives (support).	60	48.4	35	28.2	12	9.7	6	4.8	11	8.9	4.0

Source: Field Survey

83.9% of the women agreed that getting access to more land to farm is a problem while 93.6% of them perceived clearing of farm land as a constraint to reckon with. Thus, labour is again revealed as a major constraint.

Results of Tested Hypotheses

Table 5: Correlation analysis result of relationship between some demographic variables and perception of women to constraints to crop production

Independent variables i.e. Demographic and other characteristics	Dependent variable i.e. Perception of women to constraints to crop production	
	Correlation coefficients (r)	Significant level (p)
Lack of Credit facilities	0.01	0.93
High cost of labour	-0.15	0.04*
Lack of appropriate farming tools	0.39	0.67
Demands of household chores	-0.014	0.12
High pest and disease infestation	-0.11	0.01*
High cost of farming materials	0.09	0.34
Poor storage facilities	0.01	0.90

* Significant $P < 0.05$

The correlation analysis (table 5) revealed that most of the variables had no significant relationship with the perception of women to constraints to increased crop production. high cost of labour and high pest and disease infestation were significant at 0.05 level.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most rural women farmers are small-scale farmers who face many problems, some of which affect increase in their crop production. The study revealed that the women farmers' perception of these problems has no significant relationship with increase in their crop production. This is probably due to the overlap of other basic inherent constraints, usually associated with small-scale farming. In addition, the women farmers' perception of their constraints is attributable to ignorance on their part as majority of them are not aware of government interventions, methods of sourcing modern inputs and even the utilization of such inputs. Their present level of finance and knowledge does not support the technicalities of improved crop production practices. Based on these findings therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. To increase crop production through the involvement of women farmers, Government policies on agricultural modernization should be small-scale farmer oriented. Innovations and improved packages should be such that small-scale farmers can adopt and practise.
2. Increase in crop production requires good funding. Effort should be made to encourage women to form cooperatives, so as to be able to enjoy financial assistance through the financial institutions established by Government and also secure farm inputs more effectively.

Policy makers should recognize and give due considerations to people's perception of programmes or policies as this influences the adoption of such programmes.

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