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WOMEN FARMERS AND THE CHALLENGES OF FOOD-CROP FARMING IN GIREI, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the main economic activity in many rural communities and women who make up the majority of the rural dwellers play a focal role in the sector. Despite the efforts aimed at promoting women's rights, some researches have shown that women are still marginalized and have less access to productive resources needed for effective agricultural production.This study therefore evaluates the challenges facing women farmers in Girei Local Government Area of Adamawa state. The data for the study were obtained from primary source, through administration of 300 copies of structured questionnaire using systematic random sampling methods. Simple frequency distributionin form of cross tabulation using SPSS 20.0was used to analyze the data.The study revealedthat the major challenges facing women farmers includes, difficulty in accessing land, difficulty in accessing credit facilities, limited access to agricultural inputs and long distance to extension training sites. It was also observed that, low level of education and low usage of fertilizer have lowered their output and effected their active participation in agricultural production.Against this background, it was recommended that, extension services and timely deliverance of credit facilities should be made priority by the government authorities and extended to the women farmers in Girei local government area. In addition,new advancement in agricultural technology should be made available to women farmers and cooperative society formulation should also be encouraged.

Key-words: *Women, Farmers, Challenges, Food-crop*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture contributes immensely to the African economy in various ways; namely, in the provision of food for the increasing population; supply of raw materials to a growing industrial sector; a major source of employment; generation of foreign exchange earnings; and, provision of a market for the products of the industrial sector among others (Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon., 2012). Women play vital roles in agricultural production in all parts of the world. In Nigeria, they are actively involved in farming activities. Women constitute about 60-80% of the labour in such farming activities as planting, weeding, transportation, processing, marketing and storage of products, they also account for two-thirds of food crops produced in Nigeria (United Nations, 2011).Women farmers contribute immensely to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security. The involvement of women in agriculture in Nigeria has attracted much attention in recent years their role cannot be overemphasized (Brown et al, 2011).According to the United Nations

findings (2016) four of ten agricultural workers in the world are women. According to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, in 2008, women accounted for 75% of the farming population in Nigeria, working as farm managers and suppliers of labour. Though, women constitute a large portion of the farming population, women their possibilities in agriculture are hindered by formal and traditional rules. Hence the extent of women involvement in agricultural production varies across ethnic groups in Nigeria.In Adamawa State where subsistence farming is predominant with primary method of crop production, women perform nearly all tasks associated with subsistence food production.

According to Castillo (2012), being engaged in agriculture is therefore, not necessarily a choice on rural women, but is often a consequence of lack of alternatives. Banji and Okunade (2011), noted that women are found working all the year-round producing food crops, while men perform only replanting tasks that occupy a small part of the agricultural year. The International Labour Organization (ILO., 2009) estimated that 78% of women in Africa are active in agricultural production compared to only 64% of the men. Ayioko (2016) noted that; African women, especially Nigerians, cater for about 60-80% of agricultural products and Farid et al. (2012) noted that over 90 percent of economical active women engage in one form or other of agricultural production they have account for about 70% of food production, 100% of those who process basic food stuffs and 90% in marketing agricultural produce. Furthermore, Damisa and Yohanna (2007) and Bhat *et al.,* (2012) reported that uneducated and the poor were the ones mostly involved in agriculture but barely involved in decision-making. Generally, women have been found to contribute immensely to food security in Nigeria but these women were owned only 1% of farm assets leading to the marginalization and tradition, such challenges arethe bottlenecks to women farmers. It is against this background that two objectives were set;

i. To examine the influence of women's socioeconomic characteristics on their farming activities and output
ii. To examine the constraint/factors affecting women farming activities and output

Study Area

Girei is located between latitude 9°32'16'' to latitude 9°32'49'' North and longitude 12 ° 32'16'' to longitude 12°44'16'' East of Greenwich meridianas shown in Figure 1. The total landmass of the area is about 2,186sq.km. Girei is boarded by Song in the north, Fufore in the east, River Benue to the south and Demsa in the west;(Adamu, 2019).The population of Girei is approximately 129,995 people (NPC 2007). The general topography or relief profile is characterized by a gentle undulating flood plain, rising between 154.2m to 213.4m above the Benue River bed (Opeloye and Dio, 2009). Soil distribution in the area is in orderly pattern relative to the geology, land forms, climates, relief and the natural vegetation of the area. The relative distribution of soils varies from places to place, with ferruginous tropical soils, ferralitic soils, vertisols, hydromorphic soils, and rock debris found in different parts of the area. Around the River Benue it contains fluvial soil (aluvium) and a mixture of sand-loamy soils (rigosols) (Ray, 2020). The

climate is made up of distinct dry and wet season with temperature, precipitation and humidity varying with seasons. The wet or rainy season is between May and October. It is characterized by single maxima in August. The area has an average of 62 rainy days while the average annual rainfall recorded in the area is 972mm (Adebayo, 2020). The dry season is between December and March. The period is characterized by dry, dusty, and hazy north east trade winds that blow over the area from Sahara-desert.

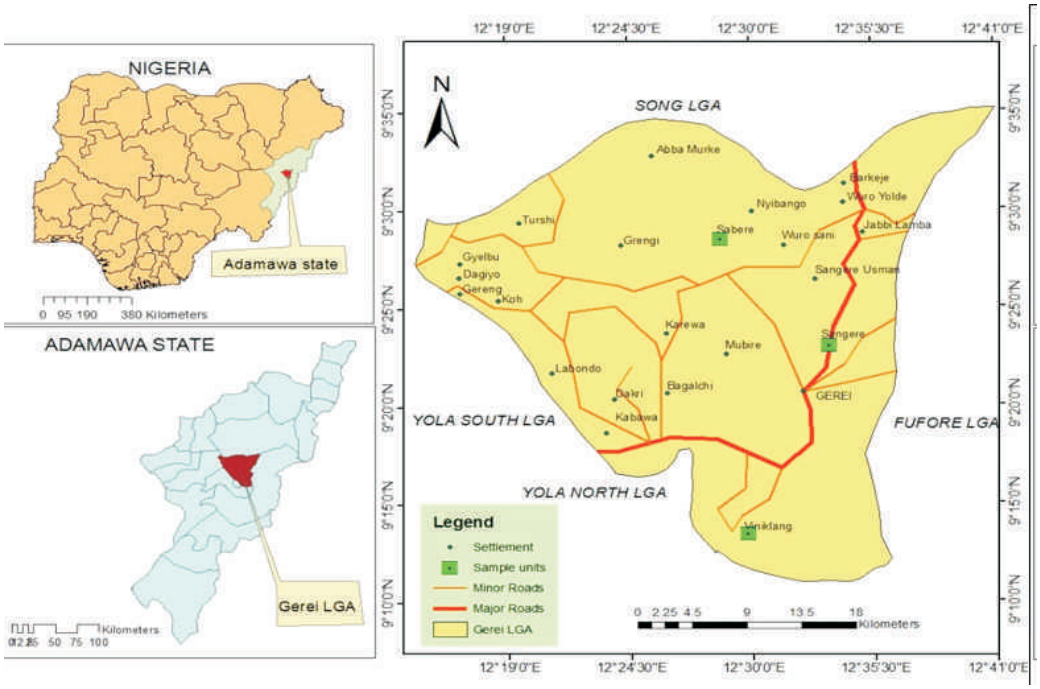


Figure1: Map of the study area
Source: Zemba, Tukur and Ezra (2020)

METHODOLOGY

The study used primary source of information. The primary source involved administration of 300copies of structured questionnaire as well as conducting interview. These methods were used to generate information on the challenges that impede smooth agricultural operation by the women farmers. Purposive and systematic random sampling techniques which is suitable and appeared to be the best option for sampling in this study were used. The number of towns selected for questionnaire administration was based on purposive sampling method, simply because the number of population of the towns differs greatly. The first household sampled was selected randomly in each of the town while systematic sampling was used to select every fourth household in a town for the subsequent sampling. Data collected, were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS version 20.0. The descriptive statistics includes frequency counts in percentages where results are presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effects of Socioeconomic characteristics of women on farming activities and output

Table 1: Influence of Socioeconomic characteristics of women on agricultural Activities

		Factors constrain participation in farming						
		Time Constrain	Water Shortage	No own Land	Financial Constraint	Limited Agricultural Input	Distance Extension training sites	Total
Marital status	Single	0	0	11	2	19	13	45
	Married	2	1	21	20	31	18	93
	Divorce	2	0	18	20	15	9	64
	Widow	0	3	15	13	10	7	48
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Education status	Primary	1	0	17	17	16	13	64
	Secondary	1	4	16	24	31	11	87
	Tertiary	0	0	4	1	3	5	13
	No formal	2	0	28	13	25	18	86
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Dependents	None	0	0	9	3	8	6	26
	1 to 5	3	2	29	38	28	16	116
	6 to 10	1	1	24	12	22	15	75
	>10	0	1	3	2	17	10	33
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Years in farming	< 1 year	0	0	8	3	4	7	22
	1-5 years	0	0	12	13	24	8	57
	6-10 years	1	1	27	18	29	19	95
	> 10 years	3	3	18	21	18	13	76
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 2: Influence of Socioeconomic characteristics of women on agricultural output

		Factors affecting output				
		Finance	Land	Agricultural Input	Labor	Total
Marital status	Single	16	7	18	4	45
	Married	36	13	37	7	93
	Divorce	13	9	34	8	64
	Widow	12	3	30	3	48
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Education status	Primary	19	5	30	10	64
	Secondary	22	15	44	6	87
	Tertiary	4	1	6	2	13
	No formal	32	11	39	4	86
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Dependents	None	5	2	18	1	26
	1 to 5	40	22	48	6	116
	6 to 10	25	5	34	11	75
	>10	7	3	19	4	33
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Years in farming	< 1 year	7	4	11	0	22
	1-5 years	14	6	32	5	57
	6-10 years	35	10	41	9	95
	> 10 years	21	12	35	8	76
Total		77	32	119	22	250

Source: Field work (2020)

Table1 and 2 shows the influence of women's socioeconomic characteristics on farming participation and the output obtained from the farming activities. Based on the results obtained, it was clear that, limited agricultural input and land ownership are the key challenges to women who engage in agricultural activities. It was observed based on the marital status of the respondents that majority of the married women were the farmers, with highest respondents in terms of limited agricultural input, while majority of the divorce admitted that finance is their major challenge. This result clearly explained that majority of the respondents who are engaged in farming in the area are married women and their major challenge is limited agricultural input for their farming operation. It was also observed that majority of the women have only secondary school background, while followed by those that have no formal education background. Following the result presented, it is clear and evident that only few women farmers are educated and these affect their agricultural practices and output as also documented by Farid *et al*., (2012).

Constraints of women Participation in farming activities and output

Table 3: Factors constraining women participation in farming

		Factors constraining participation in farming						
		Time Constrain	Water Shortage	No own Land	Financial Constraint	Limited Agricultural Input	Distance Extension training sites	Total
Type of farming	Subsistence	3	1	42	20	29	12	107
	Commercial	0	0	8	12	19	15	54
	Irrigation	0	1	7	8	12	6	34
	Mixed	1	2	8	15	15	14	55
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Obtaining Land	Buy	0	1	6	5	7	5	24
	Rent	1	0	28	21	34	27	111
	Relatives	2	2	23	24	30	13	94
	Group own	1	1	8	5	4	2	21
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Received Farming Inputs	Yes	1	2	25	12	21	20	81
	No	3	2	40	43	54	27	169
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Inputs received	Seed	3	3	26	24	36	24	116
	Fertilizer	0	0	5	10	6	2	23
	Farm tools	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
	Pesticide	1	1	34	21	31	19	107
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Difficulties	Yes	3	4	55	44	58	35	199
	No	1	0	10	11	17	12	51
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250
Effects of Extension Services	Improved output	4	4	59	46	69	38	220
	Decrease output	0	0	6	9	6	9	30
Total		4	4	65	55	75	47	250

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 4: Factors affecting farm output

		Factors affecting output				
		Finance	Land	Agricultural Input	Labor	Total
Type of Farming	Subsistence	30	15	47	15	107
	Commercial	9	11	32	2	54
	Irrigation	15	4	13	2	34
	Mixed	23	2	27	3	55
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Obtaining Land	Buy	7	3	11	3	24
	Rent	36	14	52	9	111
	Relatives	30	13	44	7	94
	Group own	4	2	12	3	21
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Received Farming Inputs	Yes	24	8	40	9	81
	No	53	24	79	13	169
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Inputs Received	Seed	36	16	54	10	116
	Fertilizer	8	4	7	4	23
	Farm tools	0	0	4	0	4
	Pesticide	33	12	54	8	107
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Difficulties	Yes	60	29	91	19	199
	No	17	3	28	3	51
Total		77	32	119	22	250
Effects of Extension Services	Improved output	71	24	105	20	220
	Decrease output	6	8	14	2	30
Total		77	32	119	22	250

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 3 and 4 presents the constraint/factors affecting women participation in farming activities and farm output. Result of the study revealed that majority of the women farmers who practice subsistence farming are faced with the challenges of landownership in which most of them have no access to land for crop cultivation. Following this fact, it is clear that land tenure is a challenge to women in their farming operation. This result agreed with the findings of Drafor Amenyah and Puplampu (2013) and Paula (2019). The role of agricultural extension is another issue identified to be a challenge to women farmers, it was observed based on the information collected that, accessing extension services for new ideas and assistance is a big challenge to the farmers which denied them with technological idea that will help them in their farming operation which also concurred with the view of Baba

et al.,(2015). Following the result presented, it is clear that, agricultural extension services is no longer in existence in the study area which entails that, women farmers are lacking some basic and vital information on how to handle and make proper use of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides among others. It also denied the women farmers the opportunities to have access to new developments and technological advancements in the field of modern agriculture thereby forcing them to rely on the old farming methods, hence affecting their farm output and subsequently producing at subsistence level.

Results of the farmer's constraint also revealed that, limited agricultural inputs, water shortages, lack of capital, difficulty in accessing land and distant extension sites were the other factors affecting women's participation in agricultural production. It was observed that, the shortages of water are highly associated with the effects of climate change and changing season which lead to the late rainy season and early unset of the rainy season in the study area while access to capital is associated to the high interest rate and untimely deliverance of the agricultural loans. The combination of all these challenges coupled with the lip service from the government side have impeded the agricultural viability in the study area as also documented by (Ekong., 2011); Paula (2019).

CONCLUSION

In respect to the results of this study, it is concluded that, factors such as unavailability of credit facilities, insufficient farming inputs, water shortages, distant extension sites and lack of ready market are the major constrains affecting full participation of women in farming. In view of these research findings, it is therefore concluded that addressing women's agricultural needs and improving their access to agricultural productive resources could result in effective participation of women in agriculture and meaningful agricultural production.

Recommendations

Below are the recommendations made

i. Extension services should be enhanced and made a priority to increase the level of women training in agricultural production.

ii. Government authorities, non-governmental organizations, farmer's cooperative organizations and other agricultural allied development partners should take an inventory of women farmers and train Women in Agriculture (WIA) on the appropriate use of insecticides for the control of weeds, pests and diseases. It should conduct research and source new technologies that are affordable and geared towards drudgery reduction in the sector.

iii. Government should make farm inputs available and ensure time deliverance and distribute directly to the farmers to avoid the shady practices of middlemen.

iv. Government should look into laws of land tenure and tradition placed on land acquisition and use to reduce gender gap and encourage women participation in agriculture.

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