

**LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN *Telferia* PRODUCTION AMONG WOMEN FARMERS IN ESIT EKET LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWAIBOM STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study analyzed the level of participation in *Telferia* production among women farmers in EsitEket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, identified level of participation of women farmers in *Telferia* production and assessed factors affecting women in accessing land for *Telferia* production. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents for the study using a well-structured questionnaire. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean score and rank. The results revealed that majority of the respondents (47%) were married, (58%) had primary school education implying that their illiteracy level was relatively low. Majority of the respondents had farm size ranging from 1-4ha (76%) and were engaged in *Telferia* production for 1-5 years (45%). Also, majority of the respondents had annual income ranging from N51,000-N100,000 implying that *Telferia* production was a profitable agro-business venture in the study area. The result revealed that women participated most in land clearing (1<sup>st</sup>,  $\bar{X} = 2.55$ ), harvesting (2<sup>nd</sup>,  $\bar{X} = 2.39$ ), planting (3<sup>rd</sup>,  $\bar{X} = 2.38$ ); weeding (4<sup>th</sup>,  $\bar{X} = 2.36$ ) and transportation (5<sup>th</sup>,  $\bar{X} = 2.34$ ). The study concluded that majority of the respondents were married, had primary education and that most women participated in land clearing, harvesting, planting, weeding, transportation and marketing of *Telferia* in the study area.

**Key words:** Level, participation, *Telferia*, women farmers and EsitEket.

**INTRODUCTION**

Vegetable (*Telferia*) production has been described as women's asset or crop due to the intensive participation of women in the production, agronomic management, harvesting, processing, storage and marketing of the produce. (Charles and Bassey, 2004 and Effiong and Asikong, 2013).

*Telferia* is fast becoming an important commodity for poor resource households because their prices are relatively affordable and its production is increasingly targeted as a risk management strategy for livelihood diversification so as to enhance employment opportunities (Schipper, 2000).

*Telferia occidentalis* is one of the most important indigenous vegetable in Nigeria and many parts of Africa due to its role as a condiment/spice in

diets. There is a generally acceptable notion that women have favourable attitude towards vegetable production in Nigeria. Therefore, efforts should be directed towards making women participate in *Telferia* production. (Effiong and Effiong, 2015).

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study was conducted in EsitEket Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, it is located at the Atlantic West-line boundaries of Ibeno, Eket and NsitUbiom LGA's of the state. EsitEket has an estimated population of 63,701 (NPC, 2006) with 23 recognized villages and Eki as the major dialect. The inhabitants of the area are predominantly farmers, fishermen and traders, with majority of the farmers in the area engaged in crop and livestock production: *Telferia occidentalis* production in the area serves as a major source of livelihood diversification for rural households and its production is mainly for sales and domestic consumption.

A multistage sampling technique was used to select the respondents. At first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select EsitEket as a block from Eket Agricultural Zone. This was influenced by the prevalent of vegetable farmers in the area. The second stage was the purposive selection of 10 cells from the block due to the intensive all year round cultivation of vegetables in the cells. In the third stage, 10 respondents were randomly selected from each of the selected cells. This produced a sample size of 100 respondents used for the study. Primary data were collected with the aid of an interview schedule and a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from relevant literatures and publications. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentage, means scores and rank were used in analyzing the objectives.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1, showed results of socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, this revealed that majority (33%) were aged 30-40 years, while (27%) were aged between 51-60 years. The results corroborates with the findings of (Yekini and Oguntude, 2014 and Ekanem, 2018) who reported that majority of women vegetable farmers were aged 51-60 years in Osun State and Uruan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria respectively.

Majority of the respondent (58%) had primary education, (24%) had secondary education and a small number (12%) had no formal education implying that their level of education was relatively high. The result is in line with the findings of (Effiong and Effiong, 2005) who asserted that a good level of formal education is in concomitant with higher economic returns, better access to agro-information, innovations, technologies and subsequent adoption and utilization of such advancements.

Results of household size revealed that (59%) had 1-5 persons per household, majority (76%) had 1-4 hectares of farmland, implying that the higher the number of persons per household /farm size, the higher the *Telferia* productivity (yield), economic returns and labour force for production.

Majority (36%) of the respondents earned income ranging from ₦51,000-₦100,000 while (34%) earned above ₦150,00 per annum implying that *Telferia* production in the area was a highly profitable business venture embarked upon in the area for livelihood diversification by farmers.

Table 2, revealed the level of womens' participation in *Telferia occidentalis* production in the study area. The result showed that land clearing, ( $\bar{X}$  =

2.55) ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, harvesting ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.39) ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, planting ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.38) ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, weeding ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.36) ranked 4<sup>th</sup> and transportation ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.34) ranked 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. This result agrees with the findings of Kumari and Laxmikant (2015) who reported that women showed high level participation in sowing of seeds, transplanting of vegetable nursery, hoeing, weeding, scaring of bird/rodents, vegetable harvesting, processing and marketing.

Results on factors affecting womens' access to land is shown in Table 3, the table revealed that high cost of land, inability to transfer land and insecure land tenure policy were ranked 1<sup>st</sup> ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.67), 2<sup>nd</sup> ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.38), and 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.18) respectively while inadequate land, difficulty in land transaction and limited use of land were minor factors affecting women access to land for *Telferia* production and were ranked (6<sup>th</sup>,  $\bar{X}$  = 2.00), (5<sup>th</sup>,  $\bar{X}$  = 2.12) and (4<sup>th</sup>,  $\bar{X}$  = 2.14) respectively. This result corroborates with the findings of Ekanem (2018) who asserted that high cost of land, inadequate land, limited use of land, inability to transfer, insecured tenure and difficulties in land transactions were the factors affecting women access to land for agricultural production.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their Socio-economic characteristics**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>(Age)</b>		
<30 yrs	13	13
30-40 yrs	33	33
41-50 yrs	19	19
51-60 yrs	27	27
>60	8	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Marital status)</b>		
Single	26	26
Married	47	47
Divorced	4	4
Widowed	23	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Educational level)</b>		
No formal education	12	12
Primary school	58	58
Secondary school	24	24
Tertiary	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Household size)</b>		
1-5	59	59
6-10	37	37
11 –15	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Farm size)</b>		
1-4	76	76
5-8	23	23
	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

9-12	<b>100</b>	
<b>Total</b>		
<b>(Farming experience)</b>		
1-5 years	67	28
6-11 years	28	3
12-16 year	3	2
>16 years	2	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>(Membership of association)</b>		
Yes	52	52
No	48	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Extension service )</b>		
Yes		32
No	32	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Frequency of visit)</b>		
None		66
1-2	66	22
3-4	22	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Annual income)</b>		
<N10,000	-	-
N10000 – N50000	18	18
N51000 – N100000	36	36
N110000 _ N150000	12	12
>N150000	34	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2017.

**Table 2: Level of women participation in Telferiaproduction in the study are**

Areas of participation	SA (3)	A (2)	D (1)	Cum	Mean	Rank
Land clearing	59(177)	37(74)	4	255	2.55	1 <sup>st</sup>
Land tilling	37(111)	58(116)	5	232	2.32	7 <sup>th</sup>
Planting	49(147)	40(80)	11	238	2.38	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Weeding	41(123)	54(108)	5	236	2.36	4 <sup>th</sup>
Fertilizer/manure application	40(120)	40(80)	20	220	2.20	8 <sup>th</sup>
Harvesting	47(141)	45(90)	8	239	2.39	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Processing	27(81)	41(82)	32	195	1.95	10 <sup>th</sup>
Marketing	46(138)	41(82)	13	233	2.33	6 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey data, 2017.SA = strongly agreed, A = agreed, D = disagree

**Table 3: Factors affecting womens' access to land in the study area**

factors	VS (3)	S (2)	NS (1)	Cum	Mean	Rank
Inadequate land	32(96)	36(72)	32(32)	200	2.00	6 <sup>th</sup>
Insecure tenure	31(93)	56(112)	13(13)	218	2.18	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Limited use of land	41(123)	32(64)	27(27)	214	2.14	4 <sup>th</sup>
High cost of land	74(222)	19(38)	7(7)	267	2.67	1 <sup>st</sup>
Difficulty in land transaction	33(99)	46(92)	21(21)	212	2.12	5 <sup>th</sup>
Inability to transfer land	55(165)	28(56)	17(17)	238	2.38	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: Field survey data, 2017.VS = Very serious, S = serious, NS = not serious

**CONCLUSION**

Women farmers participated in *Telferia* production activities like land clearing, harvesting, planting, weeding and transportation of agricultural inputs and produce. They accessed land for production through gifts/freewill donations, government allocations, leasing, share-cropping, community allocations and rents among very many others.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy recommendations were made;

- Women farmers should be encouraged to form agricultural co-operative societies so as to promote the spirit of thrift, self help and partnership in *Telferia* production.
- Government at all levels should include gender related issues in institutional agricultural programmes and policies since women constitutes over 75% of the agricultural labour force in Nigeria.
- Government should encourage women farmers to participate fully in *Telferia* production as source of livelihood diversifications.

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