

**GENDER ISSUES ON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION THROUGH AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA:
A THEMATIC DISCUSS.**

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Abstract

Traditionally, the relevance of agriculture in economic development rests on the contributions of the agriculture sector in economic development and, women constitute a large proportion of agricultural labour and participants. The contributions of women to agricultural production and economic development in Nigeria are critically underrepresented in spite of the roles they play in the sector. They compete much more favourably than the men in terms of participation in agricultural activities, contributions to agriculture based economy and food security yet, are relegated in decisions concerning agricultural activities. The sustenance of agriculture and agriculture based economic diversification in Nigeria may not be feasible without an adequate recognition of women's efforts and, therefore should be given a place of pride in decision-making in agricultural activities. Some gender based constraints have been noted to hinder women's participation in productive agricultural activities. These gender biases exist due to customs and beliefs that confine women to the background. Gender mainstreaming remains one of the options in diversifying the economy with guaranteed effective women participation. It is suggested that Government policies and programs designed to stimulate agricultural production, should take into account the role of women. A gender dimension may be incorporated into all phases of the policy cycle. This should describe in detail a format of how gender can be mainstreamed in every phase of the policy cycle.

Keywords: Gender, Agriculture, Economic diversification, Women

Introduction

Theoretically, this paper aims to provide nuance to structural discusses in traditional agricultural practices through insights from gender studies as well as rural based studies in our agrarian culture. The presentation of agriculture with respect to livelihood variables is an important analytical adaptation to empirical realities of our rural agriculture. There is the conviction that the combination of these narratives will enable research in several fields and to academics in several disciplines (Anderson et al, 2018). Also, a policy aim of this paper is to attract suggestions to facilitate inclusive idea considerations that are related to the development of rural agriculture, economic

diversification and gender mainstreaming. Highlighting the short comings of present opinions and demonstrating gendered inequalities in access to agriculture based resources will warrant moves to identifying possible alternatives to existing norms.

Oil prices have been fluctuating in recent times and may continue on a downward trend as alternative sources of energy is been discovered or developed, Nigerians, must therefore be face the truth that for an economy that is significantly dependent on oil, there is the need to brace up for economic uncertainties ahead. The urgency and severity of the development must be realized and all efforts must be directed towards agriculture, which must become the chief corner stone in setting the nation's economy on the path of recovery. Setting the economy on this path will require a complete shift of priority back to Agriculture as a way out of the present economic confusions (Adams, 2017)

From a traditional perspective, the role of agriculture in economic development hinges on the contributions of the agricultural sector to the process of economic development. Agriculture can facilitate economic development in underdeveloped economies in many ways such as increased food supply for local consumption and for export, making available the labour force necessary for industrial employment, expanding the size of the local manufacturing sector and enhancing the foreign exchange earned from agricultural exports. Agriculture is also seen as a means of reducing dependence on the importation of certain goods and keeps under control food price increases outside absorbing new entrants to the labour market, increases farm incomes and reduces rural poverty (Adams, 2017).

Women constitute a large proportion of agricultural labour and participants towards achieving the positions mentioned above (aspects of diversification in the economy). However, literature suggests that often, women's work and contributions to the GDP are undervalued. There are still inconsistencies in collected data on rural women's contributions in agriculture and other sectors. Women make significant contributions in agriculture and rural economies, tackle hunger and poverty yet, these are grossly undervalued (European Institute for Gender Equality (E I G E), 2018). These under estimation or valuation are the resultant effects of traditional or cultural biases and the absence of gender mainstreaming initiatives.

We may not assume with certainty that women will gain from efforts in every gender based initiative.

Experience has revealed that certain specific steps need to be taken to ensure women participate and benefit from these initiatives. Some constraints and biases have been noted to hinder and demean women's participation and contributions in productive agricultural activities. It is observed that gender biases exist due to customs and beliefs that confine women to the domestic sphere. Women have economic and domestic responsibilities that impose on them heavy time burdens. More over there are laws and customs that limit women's access to credit, resources and employment amongst others. It is very important to seek women's opinions about gender roles, their needs and activities, access to resources and the constraints limiting their participating effectively in agricultural development. (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009)

The evidence of gender differences in assessing farm productivity resources has raised critics of the smallholder farm model productivity valuation. General conclusions from literature suggest a systematic productivity gap in favour of male-headed households. Some of the gaps are linked to unobserved differences in accessing farm inputs. It also suggests gender differences in agricultural productivity have spatial dimensions linked to agro-ecology with the gap being significant in low agro-productive regions (Anderson et al, 2018).

The advocacy for gender equality in agriculture faces significant obstacles such as the differential participation of women and men in agriculture and the under-representation of women in land and farm ownership and especially, in agricultural decision-making. Gender mainstreaming will be central to achieving food security and improving agricultural productivity, enhance nutrition and improve on the welfare of rural populations and even in diversifying the economy through the agricultural sector. Moves towards gender equality and women empowerment as agricultural producers are central to FAO goals (EIGE, 2018). Agricultural development may be facing some levels of man-made Challenges in Nigeria. However, paying attention to the constraints women face is of particular importance if agricultural economy must thrive in our special circumstance considering their immense contributions to the sector. Agriculture-related value chains may be

affected by any constraint that affects women's participation because of their various productive roles in our traditional agriculture. Evidently, the perceived constraints literature suggests are particularly weighty.

Gender based bias and agriculture practices

Certain individuals believe that gender inequality is pervasive in our clime because it mirrors other forms of inequality. Different standards and values govern gender based division of labour, resource distribution and responsibilities in different localities in Nigeria. These gender factors we must try to comprehend in efforts to understand gender inequality concepts in our varied societies. Gender segregation in household hierarchy in Sub-Saharan Africa is highly complex in lineage-based families. Women's access to land (a vital resource in agriculture) mostly is through their husband's lineage group (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009). This significantly limits their participation in the area of decision making in agriculture because of intricately woven cultural norms.

A large percentage of agricultural labour force in Sub-Sahara Africa is female. A recent evaluation of women's contribution to agricultural labour in crop production among six Sub-Sahara African countries showed an estimate of about 40 per cent of the labour share. This implies that female-managed farms play valuable roles in agriculture. The study also revealed they own about 30 per cent of the farms (Magnus et al, 2018). In the case of Nigeria in particular, findings from a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) financed study has shown that women constitute 60-80 percent of agricultural labour force which however varies across the region and produce about two-thirds of the food crops. Yet, in spite of these, men make the key farm management decisions. Sadly, female farmers in Nigeria are therefore voiceless with respect to agricultural policies. Policies, that aim at ensuring food security and production underestimate and significantly ignore women's position in agricultural production activities and decision-making process (Ogunlela & Mukhtar,2009). Table 1 presents a field report in respect of the above discusses in Kaduna State, Nigeria. This is a mirror image of what is obtainable in many communities in Nigeria.

Table 1: Extent of the participation of women in decision-making in agriculture in parts of Kaduna State, Nigeria

Decision-making area	Nil(never consulted)	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Final decision
Land preparation	176 (88.0)	21 (10.5)	3 (1.5)	0 (0.0)
Time of sowing	156 (78.0)	34 (17.0)	8 (40.0)	2 (1.0)
Manure/Fertilizer types and time of application	162 (81.0)	19 (9.5)	15 (7.5)	4 (2.0)
Time of weeding	189 (94.5)	9 (4.5)	2 (1.0)	0 (0.0)
Number of hired labourers and wages to be paid	135 (67.5)	39 (19.5)	17 (18.5)	9 (4.5)
Time of harvesting	111 (55.5)	37 (18.5)	49 (14.5)	3 (1.5)
Storage and marketing of farm produce	28 (11.5)	37 (18.5)	92 (46.0)	48 (24.0)
Purchase and sale of farming implements	156 (73.0)	29 (14.5)	13 (6.5)	2 (1.0)
Purchase and sale of farmlands	161 (80.5)	23 (11.5)	11 (5.5)	5 (2.5)
Farm credit	117 (58.5)	57 (28.5)	26 (13.0)	0 (0.0)

* Figures in parenthesis are the percentages

Source: Damisa and Yohanna,(2007) as reported by Ogunlela & Mukhtar,(2009)

Table1 above paints the picture of a pervasive bias in reality, considering the overwhelming male dominance in spite of women making the largest contributions in agricultural activities. Ogunlela & Mukhtar,(2009) also stated that Damisa and Yohana(2009) reported that women in Anambra State, Nigeria contribute significantly more than the men in labour input in the farm, in another study among the *Jukun*, the nomadic *Fulfude* and the *Kulka* women farmers, about 70 to 80% of agricultural labour is provided by women. However major decisions in agricultural activities are taken by men.

Estruch,(2013) citing FAO(2011) reported that women face serious constraints in accessing resources and services which retard their productivity and limit returns. In North Africa and West Asia, women own less than 5 percent of agricultural ventures and, 15 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. To enhance the productive potentials of women, it is important to support initiatives that will enable them access farm resources that will enhance their productivity and practices. Women as a body should be recognized as a driving force in the development of agriculture in this region, both in traditional and economic terms, representing a reasonable percentage of the workforce in agriculture and contributing to the development of the sector in the face of constant rural-urban migration of farm labour. Unfortunately, women seem to be an invisible force because their presence and roles are inadequately reflected in statistics. Many of them in agriculture do not receive income (support) from their spouses or other male relatives of the household. (E I G E, 2018)

Anderson (2018) observed from a study on gender dynamics of market coordination arrangements that

enable access to value chains in Tanzania and noted that farmers' marketing groups that are dominated by women were limited in accessing markets than the males caused by the inadequate access to natural resources. Citing Fischer and Qaim (2012) and Gotschi et al (2009) Anderson (2018) pointed out those collective activities of Kenyan smallholder banana farmers revolved around increased male dominance over revenues from sales. According to him, intra-household issues prevented women in male-headed households from joining even marketing cooperatives and restricting their engagement in groups. The same pattern of event was also noted in Mozambique. In reference to Handschuch and Wollni (2013) Anderson (2018) stated that there is an empirical gap between the males and females with respect to the marketing of food crops in these regions. What he expressed is a statement of fact on what is obtainable in many cultures especially in Sub-Sahara Africa and some parts of Asia; relegation of the womenfolk to the background. This can never engender economic diversification as evidence suggests women hold the ace with respect to agricultural activities here.

As can be deduced from literature on agricultural productivity and farm based economic diversification, women face exclusion because of inadequate access to agricultural assets and alternative livelihood sources. Because of the established institutional bias against them in ownership and control of agricultural assets, it may be compelling to assume that the smallholder system in our agricultural clime does not favour women a priori (Anderson et al, 2018) and these cultural biases must be jettisoned if women must find some relevance in farm based economic diversification projects. Estruch,(2013) citing Compton et al.(

2010), Horn(2009), FAO(2011) and Heltberg et al, (2012) stated that Women have absorbed most of the shock in recent times with respect to the economic crises in developing countries because they are more likely to accept low-paying or informal jobs. More so, women face the burden of combining reproductive and domestic responsibilities and productive work. Women's work has also been under reported because they tend to classify themselves as not employed, especially in unpaid agricultural work (EIGE, 2018). Government Interventions should consider and address Women's Constraints. This can be done by ensuring that most projects have gender mainstreaming strategy.

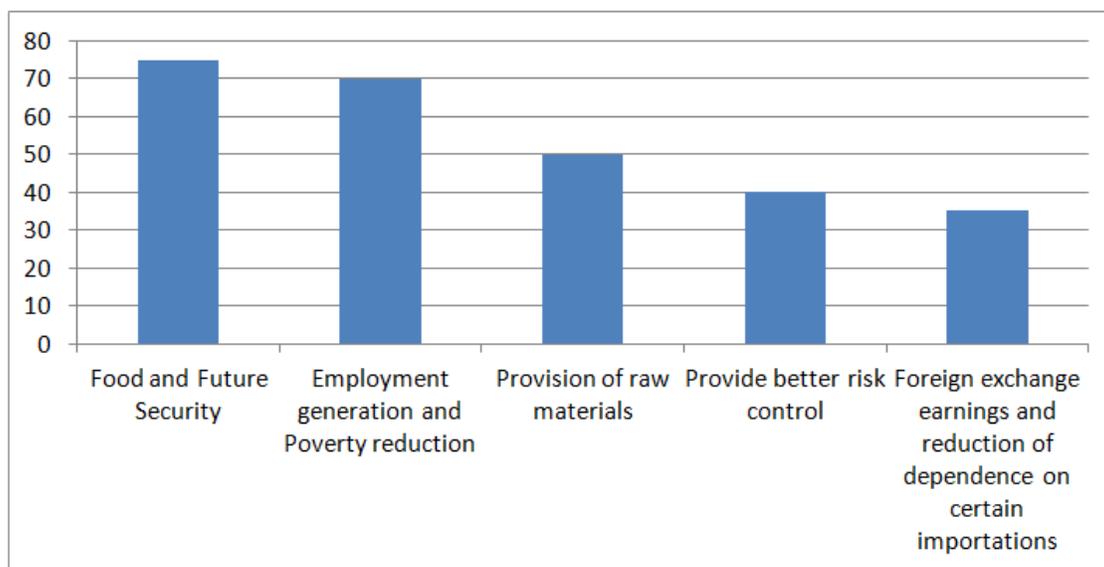
Gender Issues and Economic Diversification through Agriculture

Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice Draft (2017) defined economic diversification as a shift toward a varied structure of trade and domestic production to increase productivity, create employment and provide a base for sustained poverty alleviation and growth. At the domestic scene, diversification will include shifts of domestic output across all the sectors, industries, and firms and must reflect dynamics of structural transformation. Successful diversification will entail resource reallocation across industries from sectors with low productivity activities to sectors with higher productivity. Economic Diversification as a process refers to a range of economic activities that result in economic growth. It also may mean the diversification of domestic markets for exports or having different income sources. It should however be distinguished from economic development which implies not only growth of output but also include changes in both technical and institutional arrangements that produce the outputs and their distribution. Nigeria in alignment to economic diversification using agriculture as a base presently earns 174 billion naira from activities in value chain activities from Cassava, Rice, Sorghum, Maize and Cotton (Adams, 2017). However, the bias against women has limited them in accessing production assets, needed technology and credit, information and, social networks. These have hampered their ability to engage in value chains of higher-value (Anderson, 2018). For women to become effective participants in any form of economic diversification initiative, the traditional and cultural norms hindering

easy access to resources or their emancipation must be done away with through gender mainstreaming.

Economic diversification may depend to a reasonable extent on the performance of the agricultural sector since our economy outside petroleum depends largely on agriculture. This will create demand and supply for non-farm rural economy. This process presently is being adopted in a number of developing countries, where about 40 to 70 per cent of rural incomes and employment are drawn from the non-farm sector. Off-farm work employs by approximation 48 per cent of men in rural Latin America, the Caribbean, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa; 38 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, and in Sub-Sahara Africa where Nigeria belongs, only 20 per cent. Diversifying agriculture will create more employment and release more labour to non-farm activities. For women, the proportions comparatively tend to be lower (ILO,2017). This ostensibly is because of marginalization and bias.

It is admissible that agricultural diversification has helped some nations attain food security, improve human nutrition and increase rural employment. In India, Agro-climatic Regional Planning has documented the zones of optimal opportunity for agricultural diversification on smaller farms. Taking advantage of those opportunities must involve inputs suppliers from both public and private sectors and address on-farm and non-farm features (Adams, 2017). For this kind of programme to be very successful, women who constitute the bulk of rural labour supply must be fully identified and incorporated. These types of economic benefits can be replicated in Nigeria as demonstrated by Adam (2017) in a weighted data that can result from agricultural diversification as shown in the bar charts below. Women are more in number with greater presence in other forms of statistics in the agricultural sector and may still prove their relevance in the diversifications identified in agriculture and shown in the chart below. The various possible areas of diversification possible from agricultural development as shown in the bar charts can induce significant multiplier effects and women's involvement will boost the economy if given unfettered access to agricultural resources since they command the highest presence in agriculture in our clime.



Source: Adams (2017)

The Nigerian women have shown they are not mere spectators despite the male dominance in the agricultural sector and have proved their mettle in all the areas indicated in the bar chart being the largest participants in the sector. If allowed to access opportunities the agricultural sector offers without biases and effectively participate in decisions, policies and governance as it affects agriculture the food security challenges in the country will be ameliorated. They are resilient enough in every circumstance and have done even better than men in aspects of agriculture. The progressive advancement of women in terms of contributing to Nigeria's economic development have, to a large extent exacted positive impact in food security, employment generation and the GDP as a whole being the major players in the agriculture industry though made to look invisible in the scheme of agricultural issues. With respect to available statistics, the place of women in agricultural production in the nation is under emphasized and trivialized. They undertake crucial roles both in domestic and economic life of the nation. In recognition of their importance in nation building and the economy, the government should be keen in alleviating the negatives in their experiences as a way of improving and diversifying the economy (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009).

Conclusion

The success and sustainability of Nigeria's economy will require the full engagement of all genders especially women. Women constitute over half of the labour force in agriculture, a sector that employs a significant number of the population, predominantly in smallholder farms. Women are reported to produce more than half of food crops output. However, their access to cash crops, resources, technology, and market opportunities is generally unfa-

vourable. Government policies and programs designed to rejuvenate agricultural production and processing, should take into account the role of women. A gender dimension can be incorporated into all phases of a policy cycle. This will describe a detailed format of how gender can be mainstreamed in every phase of the policy cycle. Also women's contribution in the rural economy (which is agriculture based in our climate) can be further enhanced through self-employment and small businesses. Women can champion economic and agriculture innovations and diversification in rural areas by developing new skills, production lines and services such as agro-tourism and artisan food production amongst others.

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