

7

Socio-Economic Impediments to Nigerian Women Farmers’ Progress in Acquisition of Technological Skills

By

UDUAKOBONG A. OKON, (Ph.D)
*Department of Vocational Education,
University of Uyo,
Uyo.*

And

GLORY E. EDET, (Ph.D)
*Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension,
University of Uyo,
Uyo.*

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the socio-economic impediments to Nigerian women farmers’ acquisition of technological skills, with a view to recommend strategic measures to address the issue, for advancement of women in agricultural entrepreneurship. It adopted a survey research design. It was conducted in Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised registered women farmers estimated at 3,613, and 800 subjects were randomly drawn from the three major tribes in the state (Ibibio, Annang and Oron,) to constitute the sample of the study. Validated questionnaire (Technology Skill Acquisition Questionnaire TSAQ), with a four point rating scale was used as the research instrument. Data were analyzed using mean with 2.0 points as the benchmark. The results revealed the existence of socio-economic barriers to women farmers’ progress in Nigeria. The ranking of the impediments indicated that lack of women farmers’ technical guidance in technological skill development, is the most grievous impediment with the mean at 3.93, seconded by inadequate government support, with the mean at

3.90 and thirdly, discrimination of women farmers in distribution of agricultural technology facilities had a mean of 3.86, followed by incompatibility of the introduced technology with the norms and values of women farmers, which ranked 4thth with the mean at 3.74 among other factors. Twelve (12) strategic remedial measures were identified. The ranking of the measures indicated that, consideration of norms, values and interest of Women farmers in selection of an agricultural skill is the most accepted measure (mean 3.72), seconded by the need to reduce family pressures for women(mean 3.69) and thirdly the incorporation of women farmers into agricultural technology innovation decisions sphere((mean 3.63) among other factors. It calls on all the levels to formulate regulatory policies that would check cultural barriers to women farmers' progress.

Keywords; Women, Farmers, Technology, Impediments

Scientific and technological advancement has been the bases for increasing agricultural productivity and promoting agricultural development. In Nigeria, women form the significant group and play a dominant role in food production and processing, yet they are not fully adapted to scientific and technological innovations. It is regrettable that there are certain factors that undermine the progress of Nigerian women farmers in acquisition of scientific and technological skills and as well indisputable that the traditional system can hardly cope with Nigerian food demand with regards to quality, quantity and taste. Research has come out with scientific and technological innovations which would raise the quantity, quality and variety of agricultural products, if adopted and practiced by women farmers. Reports of Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Projects (AKADEP,2003) revealed that women farmers are still lagging behind in acquisition of scientific and technological skills in food production and processing. This unfortunate gap distorts the effective harnessing of the obvious gains of women farmers' production potentials and product industrial utilization. This stresses the need to critically examine the variables that hinder the Nigerian women farmers' progress in acquisition of scientific and technological skills.

Impediments encountered by the women farmers in Nigeria may have diverse logical explanations relating to socio- cultural, governmental, economic, educational, organizational factors. For the purpose of remaining within the context of this study, further analysis of only the cultural inhibitions will be considered. Such factors include issues related to norms, values, language, gender roles, socialization process and religion. The concept of culture varies with people, place and time. The often quoted definition of culture according to Absiattai (1987) is that of Taylor adopted by Milanowski which states that, culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals customs and traditions, law, and all other capabilities and habits

acquired as a member of a society. Skill acquisition in agricultural development process varies from society to society and deeply influenced by the culture of the society. In developing the strategies to enhance agricultural skill acquisition, an analysis of the influencing factor is usually an appropriate beginning point. (Okon, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The great puzzle that needs to be urgently addressed why after so many years of investment in research and extension programmes, Nigerian agriculture still remains traditional and has failed to witness scientific and technological transformation to significant levels. The significant group of those involved in food production and processing are suffering from some forms of set backs in their acquisition of scientific and technological skills, as a result of political, social and traditional set up of the Nigerian society and Akwa Ibom state in particular.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the socio-economic impediments to Nigerian women farmers' acquisition of technological skills, with a view to recommend strategic measures to address the issue, for advancement of women in agricultural entrepreneurship.

Research Question

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- 1) 'What are the socio-economic impediments to Nigerian women farmers' acquisition of technological skills?'
- 2) 'What are the remedial measures that could be adopted to eliminate the impediments to Nigerian women farmers' acquisition of scientific and technological skills?'

Significance of the Study

This study hopefully, will ginger the state and national government and international organizations to formulate regulatory policies that would check cultural barriers, to women farmers' progress. It is anticipated that, based on the results of this investigation, women farmers will be spurred up to map out strategies to combat the cultural barriers to acquisition of technological skills

Methodology

The study was a survey, which employed descriptive research designs. It was conducted in Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised registered women farmers estimated at 3,613. and 800 subjects were randomly drawn from the three major tribes in the state, Ibibio and Annang and Oron to constitute the sample of the study. Validated questionnaire (Technology Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (TSAQ), with a four point rating scale was used as the research instrument. Test-retest reliability proof using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaires were administered with the aid of trained research assistants. Data were analyzed using mean with 2.0 points as the benchmark.

Presentation of Results and Discussion

The findings of the research were presented based on the research questions.

Table 1: Socio- Economic Impediments to Nigerian Women Farmers

S/N	Items of Socio-Economic Impediments	Mean	Rank	Remark
1.	Lack of women farmers' technical guidance in scientific and technological skill development.	3.93	1 st	
2.	Inadequate government support.	3.90	2 nd	*
3.	Discrimination of women farmers in distribution of agricultural technology facilities.	3.86	3 rd	*
4.	Incompatibility of the introduced technology with the norms and values of women farmers.	3.74	4 th	*
5.	Exclusion of women farmers from agricultural innovation decision sphere.	3.56	5 th	*
6	Lack of communication of agricultural	3.33	6 th	*

	research information to women farmers.			
7.	lack of analysis of skill need of women farmers	2.68	7 th	*
8.	Family pressures	2.49,	8 th	*
9.	Language barriers.	2.44	9 th	*
10.	High complexity of scientific and technological skill introduced.	2.30,	10 th	*
11.	.Inadequate provision of health services to enhance women farmers capabilities	2.27	11 th	*
12	Inadequate monitoring and follow-up of agricultural technology innovations,	2.02	12 th ,	*

Cut-off point at 2.00. *Accepted impediments

Table 1 indicates that all items in S/N 1-12 were accepted as impediments to women farmers acquisition of technological skill. The results revealed the existence of socio-cultural barriers to women farmers' progress in Nigeria. The ranking of the impediments indicates that lack of women farmers' technical guidance in technological skill development, is the most grievous impediment, seconded by inadequate government support, and thirdly, discrimination of women farmers in distribution of agricultural technology facilities, followed by incompatibility of the introduced technology with the norms and values of women farmers, and exclusion of women farmers from agricultural innovation decision sphere among other socio-cultural factors shown above.

Okon (2003) in her earlier investigation observed that, the notion that women should be seen and not heard is still being tenaciously held by some men folks in the Nigerian society. This idea is strictly against the expression of women farmers feedback to the extension agents, in cases where difficulties are experienced in the skill acquisition process. She further opined that, such attitude may be responsible for the apathy shown by some men, when assistance is sought from them for women

developmental programmes. Despite the fact that women in agriculture constitutes 60% to 80% of labour force, men and not women make the key farm management decisions (world Bank,2002). Men, remarked Abasiattai (1987), insist on managing and controlling agricultural projects established by the women farmers.

Table 2: Remedial Measures for Elimination of Socio-Economic Impediments to Women Farmers

S/N	Items of Remedial Measures for the Impediments	Mean	Rank	Remark
13.	Compatibility of selected technological skill introduced, with the norms and values of women farmers	3.72	1 st	
14.	Reduction of family pressures	3.69	2 nd	*
15.	Incorporation of women farmers into agricultural technology decisions sphere.	3.63	3 rd	*
16.	.Provision of technical guidance to women farmers' in scientific and technological skill development.	3.55	4 th	*
17.	Equal distribution of agricultural technology facilities between genders.	3.46	5 th	*
18	Effective communication of agricultural research information to women farmers.	3.31	6 th	*
19	Complex scientific and technological skills in agriculture should be presented with demonstrations.	2.98	7 th	*
20.	Adequate government support.	2.75,	8 th	*
21	Provision of interpreters where barriers exist	2.50	9 th	*

22	Thorough analysis of skill need of women farmers.	2.47	10 th	*
23.	Adequate monitoring and follow-up of agricultural technology Skills	2.36	11 th	*
24.	Adequate provision of health services to enhance women farmers capability	2.12	12 th ,	*

Cut-off point at 2.00. **Accepted strategic remedial measures to eliminate the impediments to Nigerian women farmers' acquisition of scientific and technological skills*

Twelve (12) remedial measures were identified, which could be adopted to eliminate the impediments to Nigerian women farmers' acquisition of scientific and technological skills. The ranking of the measures revealed the relevance of considering norms, values and interest of women in selection of an agricultural skill for acquisition as the most accepted measure, seconded by the need to reduce family pressures for women, this would aid them participate in the practices of agricultural skills. Thirdly the incorporation of women farmers into agricultural technology innovation decision sphere was considered necessary, to harmonize the interest of women. It is worthy of note that, provision of technical guidance to women farmers' in technological skill development, equal distribution of agricultural technology facilities between genders, effective communication of agricultural research information to women farmers, demonstrations of technological skills, adequate government support, thorough analysis of skill need of women farmers, the need for follow-up programmes and provision of health services to enhance women farmers' capabilities, have their relative significance in women farmers' skill acquisition and progress. These findings are in consonance with that of comtesse, Hodkinson and Krug (2002), who discovered among other factors, socio-cultural barriers to women farmers' acquisition of technological skills in Switzerland.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The point has been made that every society has a recognized set of gender roles for men and women. The rigidity or flexibility of these roles is based on the social system and culture of the people. In many instances mobilizing women means working

against tradition. Women are marginalized in terms of access to, and control of agricultural resources. Nevertheless, there is need to boost acquisition of scientific and technological skills by women farmers. Social and economic justice and equity can be attained when all citizens irrespective of gender can boast of unhindered access to technology. The great puzzle that needs to be urgently addressed is to find out why after so many years of investment in research and extension programmes, Nigerian agriculture still remains traditional and has failed to witness technological transformation to a significant level. In Nigeria, women form the significant group and play a dominant role in food production and processing, yet they are not fully adapted to scientific and technological innovations. As key actors in agricultural production in Nigeria, women should be integrated into agricultural development schemes from inception. This paper stresses the need for a review of gender-based social and cultural issues in Nigeria, to facilitate women farmers' acquisition of scientific and technological skills. It calls on the state and national government and international organizations, to formulate regulatory policies that would check cultural barriers to women farmers' progress.

References

- Abasiattai, A. (1987). *Better life for Women Rural Women Development*. Uyo; Better life publication.
- Abasiattai, M. B. (1987). *Akwa Ibom and Cross River State , The land , People and Culture*:Calabar, Nigeria. Wusen Press.
- Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development project (AKADEP)(2003) *Repot of the rural and Institutional Development Unit*. AKS., Nigeria. AKADEP.
- Comtesse, X.L. Hodkinson, A & Krug (2003). *Success Factors and Barriers to Innovation in Switzerland* Retrived 8, December , 2003,Http;www.softxs.ch/innovation.

Socio-Economic Impediments to Nigerian Women Farmers' Progress in Acquisition of Technological Skills -UDUAKOBONG A. OKON, (Ph.D) and GLORY E. EDET, (Ph.D)

Okon, U. A. (2003a). *Gender Disparity in Science, Technology and Mathematics . (STM) Performances*. Books of Reading National Conference of institute Of Education, University of Uyo... Uyo. ACEN Publishers.

Okon, U. A. (2003b). *Gender Disparity in Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM) Performances*. Books of Reading on Science and Technology Education. National Conference of Institute of Education, University of Uyo.Uyo. , Nigeria. ACEN Publishers.

World Bank (2002). Nigeria. *Women in Agriculture; Worlbank Participation source book*. Retrieved November, 2002 [www.worldbank .org/wbi/ source book/sbo212htm](http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sbo212htm)