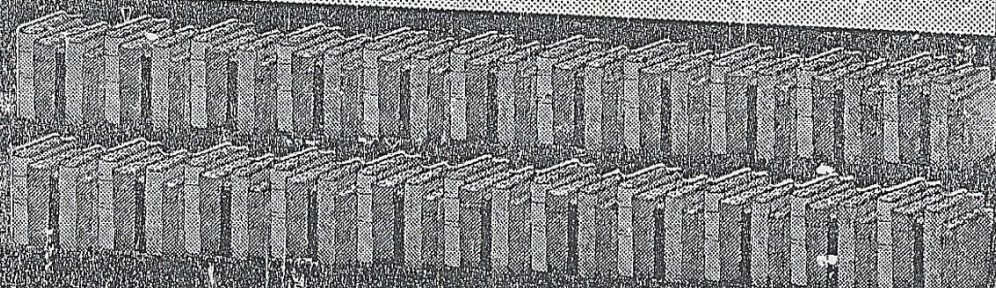
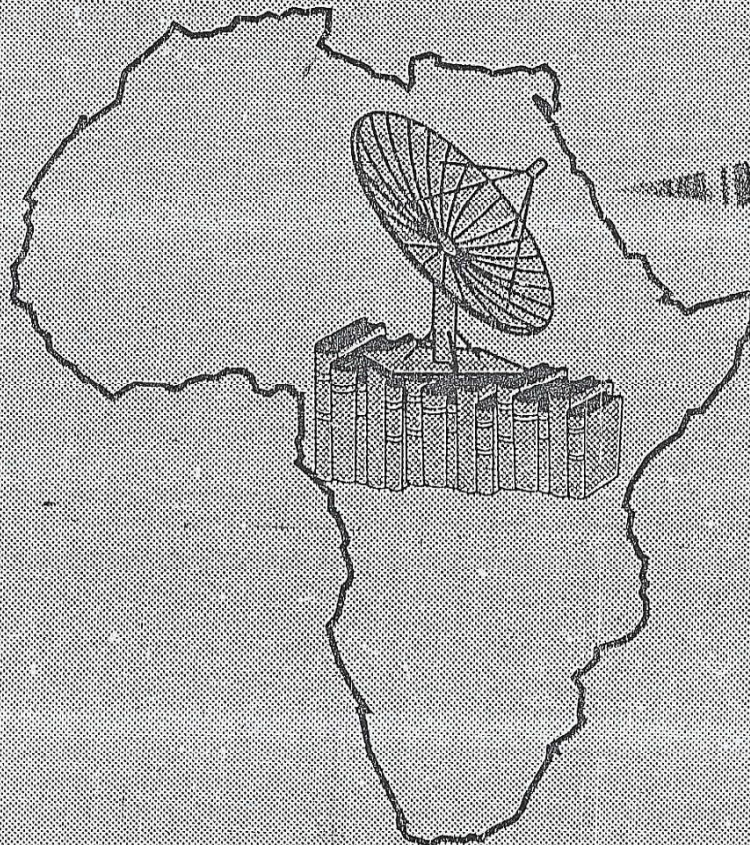


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WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN LARGE-SCALE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND INFORMATION UTILIZATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the place of women in the use of information in large scale agricultural development process in Ijaye community of Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. This is with a view to providing valuable data for government, NGOs and other Policy making bodies, to guide in developing the agricultural development programmes. Two hundred and forty copies of a questionnaire were administered to respondents, which include women farmers and extension workers. Also data were collected through the focus group discussion oral interview and existing comparative literature. It was revealed that only a very small percentage of women farmer were involved in fairly large-scale agriculture. Factors responsible for this include non-allocation of land to women, lack of relevant information on agriculture and lack of funds. Nevertheless the very few that were engaged in farming utilize the information at their disposal maximally.

Introduction

Women all over the world, especially in Africa, are seen as second class citizens. Anderson and Judith (1990) supports this view by saying that women are perceived as a separate class of being. This has led to the under valuation and subordination of women in human history. The male folk see women as creatures to dominate and control because to them, women are weak, brainless and can do no productive work. Thus women are not being involved in large-scale agricultural production.

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Wubert (1999) says women in agriculture are only silent partners. The Human Development Report of 1993 shows that women are the greatest excluded group from development process. UNIFEM (1997) affirms that gender is an obstacle, which affects women participation in development. Women in our societies are seen as wives and mothers, as a result, that should just be their role. UNIFEM further opines that the department of agriculture including Policy makers and development programmes, assumes that farmers at the large scale level will be men. These obvious discriminations aroused the concern all over the world to give women their place in every sphere of productive process. Uhegbu (2001) confirms this when he said that United Nations, UNDP, UNICFF and other non-government organization (NGOs) are showing increasing interest through their campaigns, conferences and workshops to stop all forms of discrimination against women and development in the last decade, actual progress has been very minimal; not even in large scale agricultural production.

1. **Specific Objectives of this Study Include:**

- i. To determine the level of women involvement in large-scale agricultural production
- ii. To determine the extent of which women utilize agricultural information for enhanced farming.
- iii. To determine the hindering factors to the adoption of agricultural measures among female farmers.
- iv. The factors affecting the participation of women in large-scale agriculture.

2. **Literature Review**

2.1 **Information**

According to Saunders (1981), information is a social pre-requisite for living that can be perceived in terms of its everyday sense of facts, data, opinion and the like, including, but certainly not confined to what is revealed in the result of study, research and scholarship in all fields of knowledge. Information is as old as human civilization and it pervades all aspects of human activity. No consensual definition of the concept exists in literature. Each definition appears to be titled to the academic, professional and occupational orientation of the definer.

However, many scholars have opined that information is the most important ingredient required for rural development effort to succeed in Nigeria. Stanley (1990) says that information is of the basic human needs after air, water, food,

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and shelter. The survival of man in his environment depends on information. Therefore, the need to have information for the purposes of decision making is variable. Man requires information to be able to manipulate the factors of production such as land, labour, and capital resources into meaningful and productive use (Madu, 1999). In essence, information is an essential instrument for development UNESCO (1979) defines information as:

A commodity, a resource of value capable of being exploited in the same manner as coffee, cotton, machinery, mineral resources, human resources that can be utilized to produce more goods for the consumption of society.

As a means of mobilising people for a group or individual goal, information can drastically alter deep rooted attitude and opinion about all that has to do with an individual or group success. To support this, Gordon (1994) comments that information is interchanged between individuals and/or group of individuals in order to co-ordinate their physical activities on that their collective behaviour a group.

Information has a locus and a driving force for change. According to Deeson (1971), information in a cultural context is in the maintenance and transmission of that culture. This information must be disseminated in a useable form and at the right time in order to achieve its aim. Wijasuriya (1983) opines that access to relevant information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potentials, the advancement of civilization and continuance of enlightened self-government.

2.2 Utilization of Agricultural Information

According to Hornby in Popoola (1993), utilization is to make use of, find or use for something. The something here would be taken for information. Therefore utilization of agricultural information is a way of using the information on agriculture which has been received on farming operation by the farmer beneficially. Uhegbu (2001) says that information utilization is the actual putting into appropriate use of acquired with nation.

For agricultural information to be utilized, it must be relevant to the need of the user Alegbeleye (1987) support this by saying that utilization of information by any clientele is influenced by the kind of job done profession or function one performs in essence only relevant information can be properly used by the right use.

The medium of sources in which information is presented must be in harmony with the characteristic of the user for it to be utilized. For example, if a user is an illiterate farmer and as result cannot read and write, any information

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on fertilizer application brought to him in written medium is useless. The information must be presented in an appreciable format. The extension workers of public libraries and government agencies should form the habit of repackaging information in written medium to suit the rural dwellers (Unegbu 2001, Aboyade 1983).

Another determinant to the utilization of agricultural information is availability and accessibility. Availability of information is meaningless if the user cannot have access to it. Thus proper and effective utilization of agricultural information entails that the information must be available in the right quantity and time, devoid of socio-economic and environmental impediments (Unegbu 2001 and Aboyade 1981). Adekunle (1995) explained when he talked about Thorndike's laws of effect and readiness. According to him, the law of readiness applies that farmers must be trained when the time is ripe in the planting and harvesting seasons, otherwise such extension efforts will be wasted while the law of effect posits that a farmer tends to adopt a technology only when that experience brings satisfaction (psychologically, socially and financially) to his/her environment.

Moreso, educational level and social participation has been identified to determine the utilization of agricultural information (Onu 1991). Sequel to the low level of education of farmers in the rural areas Adeniran (1995), noted that adults learn by participation, problems solving experiences, positive reinforcement, psychomotor approach (learning by doing), use of audiovisuals and avoidance of communication barriers. Also when farmers form meaningful groups/societies at the grassroots, they can spearhead the demand for the extension message that suits their purpose. Adekunle (1995b) opines that when these strategies are put in place, the attitudes of farmers toward extension service will be favourable. The consequence would be an enlightened group and sustainable increase in agricultural production.

Finally the exclusion of farmers from planning the innovations that are meant for them, results in vehement rejection of several innovations by farmers. This is either because the innovations are socially incompatible or economically invariable (Ogunfeditini and Yahaya 1995)

2.2 The Place of Women in Nigeria Agriculture

Just like in other African countries, there has been a paucity of detailed data on the contribution which women make in agricultural production, for a long time. However, recent studies are beginning to show the place of women in Nigeria agriculture. According to Adeyo Kunu (1981), there are regional services in the participation of Nigeria women in agriculture. Petal and Anthwoison (1990), indicate that 98% of women in the study they carried out were

engaged in farm work. While Engunjobil (1992), says 70% of women employed in the third world, are actually engaged in agriculture Nkoil further opines that these women planted yams, participated in bush clearing and the preparation of land and weeding.

As hard working as the women are, they remain unappreciated, especially the women in the villages. (WJP, 1993), refers to these women as voiceless women in the villages, who are equal actors in the effort to feed the cities. The rural women have no other routine than a vicious circle of house chores and farm work. Wilbat (1995), comments that throughout history, women have played very important roles in pre-agricultural hunting and gathering societies, when they provided 75 to 80 percent of the food. Aina and Salau (1992) supports this view by saying that women produce of food in Africa.

However, the strength of women in agriculture is subsumed in that of the men. This is sequel to gender issues as noted by Aderson and Judith (1990), that the perception of women as a separate class of being, has led to the under valuation and subordination of women in human history. Consequently women have been neglected and deprived of their right to useful information. Spring (1986) argues that agricultural information given to men will automatically truckle down to their wives but the reverse has been the case. Thus Women Justice Programme (WJP) advocates that women need as much attention as men if we must get out of our food crisis.

Today, the contribution of women peasants to agricultural production is more than that of men (WJP 1995). The increasing participation of women in agriculture is, according to Yahaya (1990) and Okorji (1985), attributed to greater male involvement in non-farm range employment. They note that greater number of men migrate to urban areas, while the women are left to do the farming activities.

With all that women we putting into agriculture, experts believe that they could still perform considerably better, than they are doing presently if given the fullest opportunity WJP (1995) says that women are only performing at least 35 percent less than full capacity. Also Wilbert (1999) has says:

All sings part to women become an even greater force in the future. And as women gain wider recognition for their contribution to agriculture, as more women become owners and decision makers on the world's farms, as women gain a stronger stake in food and agricultural policy and rural community development, as Universities begin to provide more role models for women in agriculture, as roles in agriculture stift from being male dominated to being represented equally by both sexes, agriculture or at

least our conception of it will quite simple, chance.

Factors that affect the performance of women in agriculture have been identified by studies, such as those of Gama (1990), Olowoye (1990) and WJP (1995), to be social, cultural and economical which include social norms, social values, social beliefs, access to land, financial capital, access to production input and transportation/storage.

Statement of the Problem

Women are not yet accorded their place in large-scale agricultural production and the development process generally. The society as a whole including agricultural development programmes discriminate against women (UNIFEM 1997). Thus agricultural departments exclude women in their design of extension services. In the communities, the traditional system underplays women by totally excluding them from applying for or owing land. (Women justice Program (WJP) 1995). So women are not recognized to be the great change agent and powerful influences that experience has shown in development process. They hardly own large farms, thus no role models for women in large scale agriculture. Rather the roles are male dominated. Until these roles move from male dominance to being represented equally by both sexes, agricultural productivity will not know any significant change.

Methodology

The survey method of research was adopted for the study 240 respondents were chosen for the study. 220 who responded to the questionnaire are women farmers in Ijaye while 20 represented agricultural development personnel. 10 women were selected for focus group discussion.

In choosing respondents for the questionnaire, the stratified and simple random sampling techniques were adopted. Respondents were stratified according to the quarters in the town. The quarters in Ijaye include Sariki, Arekurunmi, Oritamerin, Isale Oja, high school road, Balogun, Ajobo, Fkinola – Faginmi, Alakita and Agesingbena. From each of these quarters (Stratum) 22 respondents were randomly selected.

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting subjects from the agricultural agencies. These agricultural development representatives were both respondents to the questionnaire and the interviewee.

Finally, there was a focus groups discussion (FGD). For the FGD, 10 women farmers were selected, five of these are young farmers and while five were elderly farmers. The convenience sampling technique was adopted for the

selection. The frequency method of analysis was used. Data were coded in simple percentages and were presented in tables. Data obtained through the questionnaire were discussed in relation to the research questions. Findings of the interview and focus group discussion were also discussed in relation to the research question.

Table I

Distribution of Questionnaire to Respondents in Ijaye Town

S/N	Quarters	No of respondents	Percentage
i	Sariki	22	10%
ii	Arekurunmi	22	10%
iii	Oritannerin	22	10%
iv	Isale Oja	22	10%
v	High school raod	22	10%
vi	Balogun	22	10%
vii	Ajobo	22	10%
viii	Akinola Faginmi	22	10%
ix	Alakita	22	10%
x	Agesingbena	22	10%
	Total	220	100%

Table 2

Distribution of Agricultural Personnel Respondents

S/N	Agricultural Agencies	No of Respondents	Percentage
i	Lita	5	25%
ii	Oyo State Ministry of Agric. (OYSADEP)	5	25%
iii	COWAD	5	25%
iv	University of Ibadan Agric extension	5	25%
	Total	20	100%

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Table 3

Distribution of Respondents According to the Number of Farm Owned

No of farm Owned	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	48	23.8
2	67	33.3
3	35	17.4
4	40	15.0
5	19	9.4
6	2	1.0
Total	201	100.0

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents According to Hecters of Land Owned

No of Hecters	No of Respondents	Percentage
0	3	1.5
1	8	4.0
0.5	27	13.4
1.5	60	29.9
2	42	20.9
2.5	33	16.4
3	6	3.0
3.5	13	6.5
4	3	1.5
5	3	1.5
6	1	.5
7	1	.5
8	1	.5
Total	201	100.00

Tables 2 and 4 above show that only 9 (two) women own up to six farms in Ijaye community while only 1 (.5) own up to 8 hecters area of land. While 67 (33.3) own two farms and to (29.9) own one and half hecters areas of land and 42 (20.9) own two hecters area of land to farm on. This justifies WJP's claim that women are not given the opportunity own large areas of farm land.

Table 5
Distribution of Respondents According to the Extent of Utilization Of
Agricultural Information Among Women

No Types of Information Utilized	No Resp.	Most Freq.	Frg.	Occ.	Never	Total / %
1. Information on plant	1(0.5)	84(41.8)	59(29.4)	46(22.4)	119(5.5)	201(100.0)
2. Information on harvesting	-	45(22.4)	66(32.8)	76(58.2)	14(7.0)	201(100.0)
3. Information on processing of prod.	-	31(15.4)	35(15.4)	117(52.2)	18(9.2)	201(100.0)
4. Information on weeding	-	74(24.14)	54(26.9)	54(28.4)	16(8.0)	201(100.0)
5. Information on ploughing	-	49(24.4)	42(20.0)	81(40.3)	29(14.4)	201(100.0)
6. Information on product preservation	1(0.5)	19(9.5)	29(14.4)	108(53.7)	44(21.9)	201(100.0)
7. Information on cultivation	1(0.5)	20(9.9)	57(29.4)	52(25.9)	21(7.0)	201(100.0)
8. Information on crop diseases	-	67(33.3)	60(29.9)	60(29.9)	14(7.0)	201(100.0)
9. Information on cropping period	-	54(26.9)	73(36.3)	68(33.8)	6(3.0)	201(100.0)
10. Information	-	54(28.4)	75(37.3)	75(37.3)	12(6.0)	201(100.0)
11. Information	-	26(12.9)	50(24.9)	105(52.2)	20(10.0)	201(100.0)
12. Information on new technologies	-	18(9.0)	29(14.4)	121(60.2)	23(16.4)	201(100.0)
13. Information on improved seed variety	2(1.0)	51(25.4)	23(11.4)	85(42.3)	40(19.9)	201(100.0)
14. Information on Pesticides	-	74(36.8)	54(26.9)	57(28.4)	16(8.0)	201(100.0)
15. Information on Animal care	-	49(24.4)	42(20.9)	81(40.3)	29(14.4)	201(100.0)

This table reveals that majority of the respondents have been influenced by agricultural information to adopt new agricultural practices to a great extent. 95(97.0) indicated that they use information on cropping period either very frequently, frequently or occasionally while the least number of respondents who use agricultural information, which is on product preservation either very frequently, frequently or occasionally is 157(79.1).

On the other hand, 44(21.9) is the highest number of respondents who were used to agricultural information and this is in the area of product preservation, while the least number of respondents who never used agricultural information is 6(3.0), in area of cropping period.

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Table 6

Distribution of Factors as They Affect Participation of Women and Adoption of New Agricultural Measures

No	Hindrance	It doesn't hinder	It hinders	Total
15a	Access to land	49(24.4)	152(95.6)	201(1000.0)
15b	Finance	59(29.4)	142(90.6)	201(1000.0)
15c	Production Input	174(86.6)	27(13.4)	201(1000.0)
15d	Storage	98(48.8)	103(51.2)	201(1000.0)
15e	Transportation	112(55.9)	39(44.5)	201(1000.0)
15f	Cultural constraints	194 (?)	7(3.5)	201(1000.0)
15g	Social constraints	188(93.5)	13(6.5)	201(1000.0)

152 (75.6) of the total respondents indicated that access to land is a major factor that hinders women participation in agricultural adoption of new agricultural measures. Also the finance reveals that finance is another hindering factor, with 143 (70.6) of respondent's indication. Moreover, 103(67.2) respondents indicated that cultural constraint is a hindering factor to their adoption of new agricultural measure. 188(93.5) respondents say that social constraint is not problem. This relation goes a long way to establish the point made by (UNIFEM 1997), that women are prevented from having access to land and loan as their male counterpart. Also from the interview encounter with agricultural representatives extension workers. It was revealed that the local women are usually being discriminated against, when it comes to owning land and money

Conclusion

The result of this study shows that the extent to which women are involved in large-scale agriculture is little. Out of a total of 201 respondents, only 22 indicated to own between 5 and 6 different farms while only 6 indicated to own between 7 and 8 hectares of land.

Also the findings revealed that the agricultural information received by women farmers is maximally utilized. Thus if they are encouraged to participate in large-scale agriculture, they will make great impact on agricultural development process.

Finally the result showed that the factors that hinder women participation in large-scale agriculture and the adoption of new agricultural measure among women include land, fund, relevant information, storage and transportation.

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