

TRAINING NEEDS OF WOMEN FARMERS :IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KWARA STATE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study is to determine the training needs of women farmers in Kwara State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling design was used to select one hundred and fifty women farmers. Data were obtained by the use of interview schedule and analysed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean score and chi-square. The result indicated that about two-thirds (66.0 per cent) of the women were between 40-59 years and majority (78.67 per cent) were Moslem. Also, high percentage (98.67 per cent) of them were married with 88.67 per cent having not less than 16 years farming experience and 72.67 per cent with no formal education. The result further showed that women farmers ranked the plant production as the highest priority for training followed by animal production, food processing is the third priority while bee keeping became the last priority for training. The lack of information ranked highest, followed by time as constraints to training. Chi-square result revealed that there was no significant relationship between training needs and age ($X^2 = 4.020, P = 0.251$), farming experience ($X^2 = 3.018, P = 0.697$), and religion ($X^2 = 1.661, P = 0.436$) of these women farmers. The implication for rural development is that empowerment of women farmers through adequate training in all the aforementioned areas where women farmers indicated need for training is a predisposing factor to sustainable livelihoods.

Introduction

In many developing countries like Nigeria, women involvement in agriculture and rural development cannot be over-emphasised. Women in Africa have always played a crucial role in farming activities, either as direct producers of agricultural commodities or as contributors of unpaid and paid labour of the production process. They produce up to 60 to 80 per cent of basic foodstuff and account for 50 per cent of the labour force engaged in agriculture (Otieno, 2001). Women produce between 60 and 80 per cent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the

world's food production, yet their key role as food producers and providers and their critical contribution to household food security is only now becoming recognised (FAO, 1998).

The role women play in agriculture and rural society is fundamental to agriculture and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa and it has been reported that women in Africa make up more than one-third of the workforce in agriculture (Fabiya *et.al.*, 2007). Currently, women make up 70 per cent of the total agricultural workforce in sub-Saharan Africa. They are responsible for 100 per cent of the processing of the basic foodstuffs (Govender - Batema, 2009).

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The international community recognises the important contributions made by women to food security and the fight against poverty, but women farmers continue to be a marginalised group within the agricultural sector. Throughout the world, women farmers play a vital role in supporting the family unit and community by providing food in developing countries. Eighty per cent of the food produced is produced by women! They are key players in day-to-day agricultural tasks, the instigators of activities that generate agricultural and non-agricultural income and the custodians of natural and productive resources. Given the importance of their involvement in the agricultural and rural sector, women should be recognised as precious assets for rural communities, and we should all be aware of the countless results that could be achieved by investing in women farmers (IFAD, 2009).

Women are traditionally good in marketing, educating the consumers, collective action and communication (Rogowski, 2005). Nnonyolu (2002) and Anna (2003) noted that the constraints facing women farmers are connected with child weaning, time factor, opportunity to move freely, educational facility and socio-cultural characteristics and religion.

The objective of rural development in Nigeria is "to increase rural productivity and income and generally enhance the quality of life in rural areas". To achieve this objective, various strategies have been employed. Farinde and Ajayi (2005) identified the various strategies employed in Nigeria to include Agricultural Development Programmes, Industrial Development Programmes, Cooperative and Community Development Programmes, Youth and Rural Women Development Programmes. Specifically, some of the agricultural development programmes include the National Accelerated Food Programmes (NAFP) established in 1972; Integrated Agricultural Development

Programme (ADP), which started as a pilot project in 1971 and became a nation-wide programme in 1975, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1976, River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), which commenced operation in 1976, and Green Revolution Programme of 1980. Others include the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DIFRRI) of 1986; and women specific programmes such as Women in Agricultural (WIA of ADP) came on board in 1990; Committee on Women and Development (COWAD) - A Non-Governmental Organisation; Better Life for Rural Women Programmes (BLRW) of 1987; Family Support Programme (FSP), which replaced BLRW in 1994; Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) of 1997; and Women Cooperatives.

Training is defined as the act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee in doing a particular job. Training is mostly directed at improving the ability of individual to do his/her job better. Proctor and Thornton defined training needs, as skills, knowledge and attitude an individual requires in overcoming problems as well as avoiding creating problem situations. The training needs of rural women in Nigeria are diverse and vary from one project to the other (Farinde and Ajayi, 2005).

Having considered the vital roles that women farmers are playing in the area of agriculture and in the national development, there is need to identify the areas where these women need training in order to increase their quota to agricultural production and ensure effective extension programming. Therefore, the general objective of this research is to identify the training needs of women farmers in Kwara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were :

- * To determine the personal characteristics of women farmers in Kwara State.

- * To examine the nature of farming activities engaged by these women farmers and to locate the sources of agricultural information available to them.
- * To assess the training needs of the women farmers in the Kwara State.

Hypothesis

This study's hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between training needs and selected personal characteristics (age, religion and farming experience) of the women farmers. The hypotheses were tested in null form.

Methodology

This study was carried out in Kwara State of Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was used to select five Local Governments from sixteen Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria and three villages from each of these five local government areas were randomly selected. Then, ten women farmers were randomly selected from each village for interview. One hundred and fifty women farmers were interviewed using structured interview schedule which was administered individually to the farmers but it was first given to experts for modification so as to be more efficient in addressing the stated objectives. After that it was pretested in three other villages. The responses were analysed using simple frequency counts, percentages and chi-square. For assessment of training needs, each of the operations was rated on five-points scale using the following response categories : 1=No need, 2=Little need; 3=Moderate need, 4=Need, 5=Great need and the weighted mean score of the respondents were calculated. The scores were rated as follows, 3 points and above ranked high and less than 3 points rated low.

Data to identify the training needs were divided into four main categories as follows :

1. Plant production : includes the fields of vegetables, crops and fruit trees.
2. Animal production : includes cattle, sheep and poultry.
3. Food processing : includes processing of cheese, tomato and pickling.
4. Bee keeping : includes establishing hives, harvesting of honey, feeding and inspection of hives.

Results and Discussion

Personal Characteristics of Women Farmers : Data in Table 1 show the personal characteristics of women farmers in the study area. Majority of women farmers (66.0 per cent) were between 40 and 59 years and this indicates their need for training and extension to develop their skills. Their sense of responsibility at this age is very high and their willingness to pay more attention for their future through developing their work is also high. Also, high percentage (98.67) of them were married, 1.33 per cent widowed, 78.67 per cent were Moslem and 88.67 per cent having not less than 16 years farming experience.

The study further shows that most of the women farmers (72.67 per cent) were without formal education. This requires the extension workers not to rely much on written materials, instead visual and broadcast materials should be used in delivering the extension messages for the farmers.

Respondents' Sources of Agricultural Information : The study shows that their husbands were the first source that the women rely on to obtain solutions whenever they are being faced with any problem or difficulties, followed by personal experience. Other sources vary as illustrated in Table 2. This might be due to the fact that there is lack of availability of enough female extension staff.

Table 1 : Distribution of women farmers according to personal characteristics (N=150)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age (Years)</i>		
<30	12	8.0
30-39	26	17.33
40-49	31	20.67
50-59	68	45.33
60 and above	13	8.67
<i>Religion</i>		
Christianity	32	21.33
Islam	118	78.67
Indigenous	-	-
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	-	-
Married	148	98.67
Widowed	2	1.33
Separated	-	-
<i>Educational Level</i>		
No Formal Education	109	72.67
Quranic Education	25	16.67
Primary School	15	10.0
Secondary School	1	0.67
Tertiary Education	-	-
<i>Farming Experience (Yr.)</i>		
Less or equal to 5	-	-
6-10	7	4.67
11-15	10	6.67
16-20	27	18.00
>20	106	70.67

Source : Field Survey 2008.

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents according to sources of agricultural information

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	95	63.33
Extension Agents	29	19.33
Personal Experience	72	48.00
Veterinarian	3	2.00
NGOs	-	-
Radio/Newspapers	1	0.67
Other farmers	52	34.67

Source : Field Survey 2008.

Problems Facing the Women Farmers in undergoing Training : The results of the study show that lack of information and time to spare were the major problems facing the women farmers in undergoing training, even the problems vary from one farmer to another as

illustrated in Table 3. This indicates the need to take this into consideration when preparing and planning the extension programmes and activities in order to deal with these problems according to their priorities.

Table 3 : Distribution of women farmers according to the problem facing them in undergoing training

Problems	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Lack of Information about training	113	75.33	1
Lack of transportation	11	7.33	7
No land or access to land	7	4.67	8
Lack of credit facility	40	26.67	4
Permission by the husband	11	7.33	7
Lack of time	102	68.0	2
Lack of female extension agents	90	60.0	3
Inability to read and write	24	16.0	5
Distance	17	11.33	6
Religion	1	0.67	9

Source : Field Survey 2008.

Nature of Farming Activities for Women Farmers : The results in Table 4 show that the dominant farming activity for most women is food processing (94.0 per cent). This is

followed by crop production (56.66 per cent), vegetable production (54 per cent), goat raising (47.33 per cent), poultry keeping (14.67 per cent) and lastly bee keeping (0.67 per cent).

Table 4 : Distribution of women farmers according to the nature of farming activities

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Vegetable production	81	54.00
Fruit production	30	2.00
Crop production	85	56.66
Goat raising	71	47.33
Poultry keeping	22	14.67
Bees keeping	1	0.67
Food processing	141	94.00

Source : Field Survey 2008.

The Training Needs of Women Farmers

This part of study discusses needs of the training in main fields of agricultural production, then indepth analyses the needs of the training in every component of these farming activities.

Main Farming Activities : The women indicated high need for training in plant production activities compared to animal

production, food processing and bee keeping activities (Table 5). This might be explained with the fact that the plant production activities are wide in size and require many tasks because the farmers cannot follow all the farm activities rather than countering all the difficulties that might appear. While the farmers in the fields of animal production and bee keeping are engaged in these activities all times of the year.

Table 5 : Training needs of women farmers in main farming activities

Farming activities	Mean	Rank
Animal production	3.84	2
Bee keeping	1.30	4
Plant production	4.27	1
Food processing	2.80	3

Field Survey 2008.

The Training Needs in Plant Production Field: The study shows that the women farmers indicated higher needs for training in vegetables than in field crops and fruit trees (Table 6). This might be due to the fact that most of the work in vegetables production is done by individual unlike the field crops and fruit trees where all the family members are engaged in. For this reason the training needs for the individual farmers are higher than that for the family as a whole.

The Training Needs in Animal Production Sectors : The study results show that the respondents indicated highest training needs in poultry keeping followed by that of sheep and cattle (Table 6). This knowledge gap in this field might be as a result of low level of farmers' knowledge on poultry sector since it is new sector compared to the other traditional sector (sheep and cattle).

Training Needs in Bee Keeping Field : The respondents' needs for training in the diseases and pests of bee are higher than that for other bee keeping activities (Table 6). This is partially due to low level of farmers' knowledge in bee keeping.

Training Needs in Food Processing for Women Farmers : The study shows that the women farmers indicated need for more training in the tomato pumice processing more than preparing pickling and the least is cheese processing activities.

Table 6 : Training needs of women farmers in agricultural activities

Farming activities	Mean	Rank
<i>Plant Production</i>		
Vegetable	4.85	1
Crops	3.83	2
Fruit trees	3.81	3
<i>Animal Production</i>		
Poultry	3.02	1
Sheep and goat	2.87	2
Cattle	1.60	3
<i>Bee Keeping</i>		
Establishing bee hives	2.96	1
Monitoring the bees	1.74	5
Inspection of bees	1.83	3
Honey harvesting	1.71	6
Diseases and pests of bees	1.85	2
Bees	1.82	4
<i>Food Processing</i>		
Cheese making	1.30	3
Tomato pumice processing	1.42	1
Preparing pickling	1.34	2

Source : Field Survey 2008.

Testing of Hypothesis : According to the chi-square result from Table 7, there is no significant relationship between training needs and personal characteristics of the women farmers : Age ($X^2 = 4.02$, $P > 0.05$); farming experience ($X^2 = 3.018$, $P > 0.05$), Religion $X^2 = 1.661$, $P > 0.05$). Since the P

values for the three selected personal characteristics are greater than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$) then, the null hypothesis is accepted which stated that there is no significant relationship between training needs of women farmers and their personal characteristics.

Table 7 : Chi-square relationship between training needs and selected personal characteristics of women farmers

Characteristics	Chi-square	Sign.difference	Remark
Age	4.020	0.251	Not significant
Farming Experience	3.018	0.697	Not significant
Religion	1.661	0.436	Not significant

Source : Field Survey 2008.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study pointed out that all the women farmers are in need of training in all field and activities of the agricultural work in addition to the needs within each field. It is evident from the foregoing that women farmers have training needs which should be met. The implication of all these for rural development is that empowerment of women farmers through adequate training in all the expressed areas of training needs in agricultural activities is a predisposing factor to sustainable livelihoods. Efforts should be directed at meeting these training for the improvement of the farming activities, which will in turn, increase the financial strength of rural women. Also, for the existing training policy of the government for the farmers and since there are specific training package for women farmers, it is therefore, recommended that every development programme should include women, and ensure their active participation in the planning, implementation,

monitoring and evaluation of the relevant development programmes.

The study also recommends that government should pay attention to the improvement of quality of life of rural women who are involved in food production. Knowledge and skill of performance of the listed areas of farming activities where the women farmers need training should be improved upon.

Agricultural extension agents should always stress the importance of training to rural development for the women farmers and more regular field surveys aiming at specifying the needs of women farmers for different training programmes before planning the training and extension activities. Proper monitoring and evaluation of women extension programmes must be put in place and more female extension agents should be employed so that women farmers can depend on them rather than depending on their husbands for information.

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