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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study was to analyze women labour utilization in crop production in Abia State. The specific objectives included (i) identify specific farming operations that utilize women labour in the study area; (ii) compare the relative contribution of women and men to total labour utilization in different levels of farm operation in the study area; (iii) identify factors that affect the participation of women in different levels of farm operations; (iv) determine the effect of women labour utilization on the value of farm output; and (v) identify and analyze the constraints facing women farmers in crop production in the study area. Using multi-stage sampling technique, the study area was zoned into three using the existing zoning arrangement of the Abia State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). Nine (9) rural Local Government Areas (LGA) were randomly selected from the Zones. From the LGAs, 18 communities were randomly selected and from the communities, 36 villages were randomly selected. From these villages, 108 households having women farmers were randomly selected. A set of structured questionnaire was administered on the relevant women and men farmers in the household to obtain required information. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, t-test, Likert rating scale and multinomial logit model. Results showed that among twelve crop production operations identified in 2010 farming season, greater proportion of all the operations were executed by the women farmers e.g. harvesting 70%, planting 63%, weeding 60% and transplanting 58%. The men and hired labour were used for tedious operations like ridging and bush clearing. The multinomial logit result showed that the participation of women belonging to large families were less in clearing and cultivation. Their level of income had a negative relationship with clearing. The multiple regression analysis showed that greater number of variables like age, farm experience and household size were significant and have positive effect on output at 5% level of significance. The multiple regression analysis showed that the value of Coefficient of determination otherwise known as R-square (R^2) was 0.67. Despite the high level of participation of women farmers in crop production, they still face unique constraints which adversely affected their ability to increase food production. The identified problems

included lack of finance, lack of improved inputs, lack of storage facilities among others. Poor implementation of agricultural projects and policies, lack of government commitment and intervention programmes not directed to the farmers needs were the major reasons why previous intervention measures did not achieve much success. The study therefore recommended that adequate finance should be provided by government to support women labour requirements. Government should ensure implementation of agricultural programmes by monitoring and evaluating them from the beginning to the end by independent consultants. The problem of illiteracy among rural women can be overcome if extension services extend their training to the rural women.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nigeria at the moment is witnessing an upward trend in the price of foodstuffs partly due to the inability of production to keep pace with increase in demand. Demand itself increases largely as a result of increase in population. The resulting effect of this imbalance between demand for and supply of food is malnutrition, poverty and deteriorating living conditions (Nnadozie and Ibe, 2000). This is mainly because agriculture is being neglected and, sometimes, down played in development strategies.

Agriculture is one of the main pillars of the Nigerian economy because it plays many roles. It is a major source of food to the population, it provides employment for over 70 to 80 percent of the population and it is the only thriving economic activity in rural areas. It contributes foreign exchange as well as a source of industrial raw materials for the nation's industries (Amanze, 2000).

However, with the oil boom in the seventies, there was a sharp decline in agricultural production as people's attention was diverted from agriculture to the oil sector of the economy. The "oil boom" also rendered many indigenous land owners landless and, in some cases, a reduction in the hectare farmed. There was rural-urban movement because of lack of social amenities in the rural areas. Many able bodied men moved to the urban centres in search of white-collar jobs because of the income disparity and availability of amenities in the urban areas. Women and their children were left behind to carry on agricultural production activities which resulted in many household economic activities championed by women. This situation placed on them the responsibility of taking decisions on issues on the farm (Lily, Feidman and Shert., 2001).

Attempts to restore agriculture to its former glory, national efforts to boost the production of food and cash crops have been made through a number of agricultural programmes like National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution Programmes, Go Back to Land, Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) etc. Despite these efforts the problem of food shortage continues. Food production strategies so far tried, appeared to have achieved limited success. One of the remote causes of the apparent failure was inability to develop and utilize the nation's manpower resources effectively and efficiently especially in the rural sector (Okunade, 1998).

The involvement of women in agriculture has attracted greater attention in recent years because women play very significant roles in Nigeria's agricultural production, processing and utilization (Nnadozie and Ibe, 2000). Millions of women work as farmers, farm workers and resources managers (Olayide et al, 1990). In doing so, they contribute to national agricultural output, maintenance of environment and family food security (Brown et al., 2001). They dominate in almost all phases of food production such as production of food crops like maize, cassava, vegetables and yam. They have also undertaken the rearing of small farm animals and execution of certain intricate farm operations (Oluwesola 1998). Not only do women play significant roles in food production, they are now also mastering those aspects of agriculture that used to belong exclusively to men. For instance, women help with the strenuous jobs of cutting trees and clearing bushes (Onyibe, 2001). Nnoyelu and Gadzane

(1991), revealed that women were found working all the year round producing food crops while men performed only pre-planting tasks that occupy small parts of the agricultural year.

While men specialized in certain tasks like clearing bush or forest, cultivation, felling or pruning trees, ploughing or tiling the land, women, have been estimated to do 70 percent of hoeing and weeding, 60 percent of harvesting, 80 percent of transporting crops home and 90 percent of food processing (Steady, 2001). As men's participation in agriculture declines, the role of women in agricultural production increases. In Mozambique, for example, for every 100 men working in agriculture there are now 153 women (Saito, 1994).

Though traditionally, women do not have land of their own, they do their farming on family plots and in any available piece of land no matter how small. Women contribute in areas of food preparation, processing and marketing. The involvement of women in agricultural food production has no limits. Through increased participation in agriculture, women have influenced family decisions on what to produce, how to produce, the sale of small food surpluses to meet their needs and labour supply. Therefore, their involvement in agriculture is without doubt (Oluwasola, 1998).

It is obvious that women are very active in food production. More emphatically, women are the backbone of African agriculture and Nigeria in particular. In the olden days, when agriculture was almost the only available profession, men used to marry as many wives as possible to assist in farm work. Throughout the world, women constitute a greater part of the workforce especially in the rural areas (Ufiem 2000).

Women are, to a large extent the backbone of Africa rural economics (Adetenwa, 1998) and they play specific roles in the production and processing of food. Having seen that women's effort cannot be neglected, the World Bank funded two consultancies in Nigeria to determine the extent of the participation of women in agriculture and recommend strategies for concretizing their findings in the form of project activities in 1986 (Nonyelu, 1996).

FAOs (1995) report estimates showed that women contributed over 50 percent of the labour force in 56 countries out of 82 developing countries in the world. These figures show the importance of women in the agricultural development process. Furthermore, Mickewait (1999) observed that most African women are significantly engaged in subsistence agriculture; emphasizing Olayide's (1993) classification of them as the backbones or pillars of small peasant farmers in Nigeria.

WOMEN LABOUR UTILIZATION IN CROP PRODUCTION IN ABIA STATE NIGERIA

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