



WOMEN AND AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL

NDU, AUGUSTINA U.

DEPT. OF AGRIC. SCIENCE, FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECH.), BICHI

ABSTRACT

Success and sustainability of Agricultural projects are at risk if women are not included in project activities. In line with this, this paper discusses women and agricultural entrepreneurial skills. The special qualities of woman were discussed such as resilience, perseverance, great risk taking. Also, various careers in agriculture where women can excel in entrepreneurship were enumerated. Such areas are poultry production, fishery, processing, snail farming and many others. The paper also identified three vital areas in food security where women have excelled to include sustainable food production, economic access to food and nutrition security. Recommendations were made such as review of the land use decree to favour women, provision of incentives, functional literacy, etc. especially to women in agriculture of which if accepted and implemented will increase food production and enhance economic empowerment of the nation.

Introduction

Every form of education, traditional, western or even agricultural always emphasizes functionality, that is, usability of learned skills. This education enables one to acquire skills, abilities and competencies to live and contribute to the growth and development of the society at large. Entrepreneurial training in agriculture especially for women exposes the recipients to various areas/specialties where they can acquire skills for productive farming practices. In times past, it was thought by many that agricultural enterprises were exclusively men's domain. However, in recent times, the reverse is the case. Women now own, manage and run small, medium, large and even commercial agricultural ventures successfully. They are seen in production, processing, marketing, research and even extension services. The unique activities of women especially in the home in terms of nutrition, family health, income generation among others, make their role in agricultural entrepreneurial skill very essential. Moreover, women are naturally endowed with the qualities required for successful entrepreneurship especially in Agriculture.

Entrepreneurial Education

This is the type of education that teaches one how to plan, organize, and manage a business venture. This training exposes one to the various business opportunities available, the one best for you and how to choose your business site. The risk of each enterprise, how and where to source for funds, and reason why business fails are all parts of the course content. Entrepreneurship education goes hand in hand with vocational courses in order to equip graduates with appropriate skills required to start off a business in an area of choice. An entrepreneur is a risk-taker, a man (woman) who braves uncertainty, strikes out on his own, and through native wit, devotion to duty and singleness of purpose, somehow operates a business and industrial activity where none existed before (Nwachukwu, 2005). The woman entrepreneur with this type of education will be able to select from the pool of agricultural enterprises that would interests and makes her earnings from it. It implies that this training helps the woman agricultural entrepreneur to be self-employed, have saleable skills for employment, able to fend and provide for her family and society at large. Ogwuazor (2008) enumerated that an educated woman has equal opportunities as she can compete on equal terms with man; the benefits of girl-child education accrue from generation to generation. No wonder the popular saying that when you train a man, you train a soul or an individual but when you train a woman, you train a nation and that nation starts with her home. Quinsunbing (1995) stated that project success and sustainability are at risk if women are not included in project activities. Men usually decide on the measure planned, but in many cases women are then responsible for carrying out the activities. This is an informed opinion because they work with women farmers.

Enterprises in Agriculture

Agriculture is a multi-disciplinary course that span from Art through to Science as well as the Business and management of crops and animals. Mundi and Alfred (2006) listed about thirty-two careers that are taught at various levels of education. Nwachukwu (2005) categorized the enterprises for small scale operation into Agro-based, livestock-based, forest-based, marine-based and others.

Some of the specific enterprises in Agriculture include:

- ✓ **Poultry production** – chicken, turkey, guinea fowl, ducks, parrots, ostrich, etc. One can specialize in incubating, hatching, rearing or marketing of their produce (Aduka, 2002:147-150).

- ✓ **Fish farming/Aquacultures:** Caring for and rearing of water animals like prawns, crabs, fish, etc. One may specialize in fingerling production or even algae culture. Constructed ponds, demarketed parts of rivers/stream or even big water tanks can be used. The major challenge is the supply of some good quality water always.
- ✓ **Cattle, goat and sheep:** The major challenge here is areas that are tse-tsefly and ticks free (Macdonald, 1985)
- ✓ **Rabbitary and piggery:** These animals are highly prolific and their rate of feed conversion is very high, brings in quick returns on investment.
- ✓ **Snailry or snail farming:** Cool shaded areas with abundant vegetation. Use wire netting to protect them from escaping (Ndu, 2003).
- ✓ **Apiculture/Bee Keeping:** A shady orchard (nectar) far from railway or highway to avoid vibration and also close to stream or provide good steady water supply (Leventis Manual, 1996:52-53).
- ✓ **Feed compounding:** Feed compounding for various animals using by-products such as bran, offials, cakes from groundnut, palm kernel, cotton seed, meals of bone, blood and fish as well as additive. The type, age and condition of animal determine the quantity of each feed ingredient.
- ✓ **Raising nursery plants with improved seeds, plantation crops such as oil palm cocoa, rubber; orchard crops/fruit-orange, mango, guava, pineapple.**
- ✓ **Ornamental – flowers. Vegetables – all types (leafy, fruits, roots)**
- ✓ **Processing:** Primary processing in the farm: threshing; winnowing, parboiling, drying of grains; fermentation of cocoa and curing of tobacco, fish and meat drying.
- ✓ **Secondary processing:** small, medium and large processing in industries, e.g. Fruit juice, tomato puree, yoghurt making, plantain chips, etc.
- ✓ **Preservation and storage:** Grains are preserved with chemicals, or locally with pepper, ash, tubers are peeled, sliced and dried in order to increase their shelf-life. Dawanau Market in Kano is an eye opener that there is great wealth in storage of grains. Also the Federal College of Produce Inspection and Storage Technology, an offshoot of the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute (NSPRI) offers nine months' certificate course in various areas of storage pest and disease management (Okunade, 2004).

- ✓ **Marketing and Distribution:** Sales of - farm fresh items e.g eggs, milk, meat, vegetables, honey, fruits, etc in shops, supermarket and even for export.
- ✓ **Soil testing and fertilizer programming.**
- ✓ **Farm surveying and landscaping.**
- ✓ **Organic farming** – a new trend in agriculture whereby crops and animals are produced and processed devoid of synthetic materials; only organic materials are used. It is however, not popular in Nigeria yet, but gaining so much ground in Europe and America.
- ✓ **Engineering:** Fabrication and maintenance equipment, sales and service of these equipment.
- ✓ **Oil milling:** groundnut oil, palm-oil processing, soya oil, cotton seed oil (vegetable oils).
- ✓ **Processing of spices and condiments,** eg. yajj curry thyme, ginger and garlic powder and oil.
- ✓ **Processed and bottled ground nut, cashew**
- ✓ **Tannery works** – leather shoes, bags, etc.
- ✓ **Local soap-making** – dudu oshu.
- ✓ **Breeding and research** (crops and animals).
- ✓ **Extension.**
- ✓ **Service centres,** e.g. drug stores, feed stores. Many of these services centres are run and managed by women. For example, PHED Agrovot, along Airport Road, Kano, feed store for fish, poultry and other animals. They also render veterinary services and supply improved day-chicks to customers.

Special Characteristics of Women and Agric. Entrepreneurship

The Holy Bible aptly describes the woman as a virtuous, hardworking person who feeds for everyone, making her husband proud at the gates (Proverbs 31). These home-makers which constitute a greater percentage of the Nigerian population are the custodians of social, cultural and fundamental values of the society. They are uniquely created to perform unique and peculiar functions, both at home and in the large society. Ogwuazor (2008) opined that women are ... uniquely created for unique purposes. Their feminine nature, mental capability and organizational ability, power of womanhood and the influence they exert in the world are unique. These rare qualities equip the woman to move on despite all odds. Their resilience, perseverance and endurance prepare them for all the hazards and risks of agricultural production and processing. Women patiently birth, nurture and care for whatever the lay their hands to do especially things that have direct effect on the family income, nutrition, welfare, and health.

These priceless qualities are in line with those outlined by Nwachukwu (2005) as requirements for successful entrepreneurship. These qualities include:

- (i) Reasonable risk takers
- (ii) Self-confident
- (iii) Hard workers
- (iv) Goal setters
- (v) Accountable and,
- (vi) Innovative.

A woman is the greatest risk-taker in life. She is the one who can afford to abandon her parents, siblings, family name, home and every relative to go and live with an unknown man for life. What a risk! Paramount changes in most spheres of life come through or for women. She is therefore an indispensable tool for the development of any successful venture, business, family or even nation; Agriculture therefore is not an exception. Quisumbing et al (1995) enumerated the advantages of working with women farmers to include:

- (i) They are more easily accessible, are rarely away from the farm,
- (ii) Have much better basic knowledge of nutrition, health, and reproduction,
- (iii) Have experience in group work especially in extension.

She functions effectively in wealth creation of her society and nation at large. The woman excels in whichever aspect of Agriculture she engages in due mainly to her dedication, accountability and her ability to manage and cope with environmental challenges. Her education enables her to identify the areas of need and ventures into it. Vocation in Agriculture are many

and varied and can be obtained from various institutions of federal or state ownership such as universities, colleges of agricultural polytechnic, college of education, agricultural research institutes, corporations such as Leventis Foundation Schools at Ilesha in Osun, Dogon Dawa in Kano (Leventis Manual, 1996); Federal College of Produce Inspection and Storage Technology in Kano. Others include the institutions where certificates and diploma programmes are organised in order to develop high and low manpower in Agriculture. Other avenues of acquiring these skills include: on-the-job-training on the farm as a staff, industrial attachment training (IT) or as a corps member. Many people, who work on farms especially animal farms, own and manage their own and even render services to other farmers. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have not been left out especially as it relates to women in agriculture. WOFAN is popular in this area because they empower the rural women providing information; materials and equipment to enable them (rural women) have better produce especially in processing and packaging their yield.

Food Security

Despite the economic melt-down, the world population is yet on the increase. Governments of both the developed and developing countries are all making efforts to ensure that their citizens are secured and protected from the effects of the global economic hike-up. The Seven-Point Agenda of the Yar'adua administration has food security as one of its priority areas. In Nigeria, as in other parts of the world, women are under-utilized as good source of power for agricultural growth and development. The removal of the biases especially in the allocation of resources to women will help turn agriculture around. In spite of the enormous social, cultural and economic constraints faced by women in Agriculture, Quisumbing et al (1995) identified three vital roles women play in food security. These are:

- (i) sustainable food production
- (ii) economic access to available food, and,
- (iii) nutritional security.

Women and Sustainable Food Production

Sustainable food production is the first pillar of food security. When food is continuously being produced, hunger and starvation is far and people are healthy to produce their quota to economic growth. In most rural communities in Nigeria, it is the women and children that are active in food production, while the able-bodied men migrate to the cities. The food produced usually in subsistent level is consumed in their fresh state. The farm sizes range from 1 – 2 ha to 2- 5 ha (Leventis Manual, 1996), and items produces include vegetables, grains, tubers, and animals. Women account for 70 - 80% of household food production in Sub-Saharan Africa, 65% Asia, and 45% in Latin America and the Carebeans (Quisumbing et al 1995). That is, to say if women are given equal opportunities in terms of input and other resources as well as human capital, they can achieve yields equal to or even significantly higher than those of men. Their level of production will rise from subsistence to commercial on a steady level. This is so because women engage in lean season production than men and this ensures continuous supply of fresh food all year around.

Women and Economic Access to Food

Recent studies have indicated that improvement in household welfare depends not only on the level of household income, but also on who earns that income. According to Christin (1995) women relative to men, tend to spend their income disproportionately on food for family. It further went on to say that women's incomes are more strongly associated with improvement in children health and nutritional status than men's income. It is a known fact that a woman's focus is her home. It therefore means that whatever she gets her priority is the home's welfare. When women's income improves through appropriate agricultural empowerment, the household stands

to benefit since she will have more money to spend on balanced nutrition, healthcare and education. Another feature of women's income is that it comes steadily and more frequently though in smaller amounts than that of the men. However, and whatever the amount, it is spent on the family up-keep.

Woman and Nutrition Security

Nutrition is another vital pillar of food security which deals with having balance food for members of the family or society. It focuses on providing the right quantity and quality of food for the various age brackets in the home based on their work or what they are going through at the moment (pregnant, sick, baby, etc.). In every normal society, the woman is in charge of the kitchen. Ogwuazor (2008) opined that education helps the woman to understand complex issues associated with modern times such as healthcare, suitable diet for the family and appropriate clothing. ... whatever her profession, a woman is a mother who takes care of her husband, children and home.

She ensures that her family members have their fair share of protein, energy, micronutrients and minerals from the available food for their good health. It also includes health and child care, access to clean water and proper sanitation. As a home manager, the woman is equally interested in the non-food inputs towards good nutrition. These areas require care and time investments. Care affects nutrition security in the following ways.

- (i) feeding practices such as breastfeeding and the preparation of nutritious food;
- (ii) health and hygiene practices such as bathing of children, washing hands before food preparation, etc.

Also every member of the family requires time and attention to meet up with physical, mental, and social needs especially of children. When appropriately done promote good health which good nutrition is to achieve. These three vital pillars of food security are enhanced when the woman entrepreneur is properly educated. Her family is healthy due to food and steady nutrition, the children are educated thereby enhancing the human capital and the society is good for it.

Challenges to Women in Agriculture Entrepreneurship

There are several challenges to entrepreneur development especially in Nigeria. Some of the obvious ones include:

- (i) Inadequate and ready finance, poor technological knowledge higher degree of risks and uncertainties, management problems, competition, utilities. These challenges face

all business whether managed by a man or woman. This is to say that for women entrepreneurs in Agriculture, their problems are double. Some of the peculiar challenges of women in agriculture to include limited access to land – for production, as collateral for loans, formal right and title are given to only men.

- (ii) Poor access to improved inputs such as seeds, young animals, improved planting practices, and even agricultural information.
- (iii) Social and cultural barriers e.g. pudah system, poor communication with extension staff.
- (iv) Women's lower education levels relative to men,
- (v) Women agricultural entrepreneurs have to fulfill multiple roles (sometimes simultaneously) as a mother, wife, daughter, sister, etc.
- (vi) Moreover, technical innovations are not necessarily gender neutral mainly incline for men's use.

Apart from the above, agricultural production deals with crops and animals that are subject to weather factors, disease pathogens, nutritional imbalances, prize fluctuations as well as perishability of produce. This means that agricultural entrepreneurs have higher risks and uncertainties than their counterparts in other production areas.

Conclusion

Women are naturally endowed with highly valued traits and virtues that make them unique and fit for production, processing or even marketing in agricultural enterprises. All that is needed is to provide them with the necessary resources (inputs) for effective production. Some of these needs include equal access to large fertile lands, non-collateral credit facilities, vocational and extension education as well as access to improved breeds of plants and animals. Moreover, facilities for processing, preserving and storing of produce should also be made available to them. With most of the resources available, women agricultural entrepreneurs will ensure sustainable food production, accessibility as well as basic nutritional security for both the home and the nation.

Recommendations

- (i) The land use decree of 1978 should be reviewed in line with Yar'adua's Seven-Point Agenda on land reforms. Land should be made available to females especially for farming activities. The stringent measures should be relaxed.
- (ii) Intensives such as improved seeds, animal breeds, improved planting practices; etc. at subsidized rates should be made available to farmers especially women.
- (iii) Functional literacy training for women and increased education for girls will increase productivity both today and in the future.
- (iv) Programme and project planners in Agriculture should borrow a leaf from sustainable city project (SCPs) whereby the target communities are directly involved from planning through to the implantation. The leads to sustainability of such programmes.
- (v) Women farmers should be encouraged to form co-operative in order to ease loan acquisition, marketing of their produce as well as purchase of inputs.
- (vi) Provision of small – medium scale technologies for processing of produce. This will reduce the rate of damage of agricultural produce and increase the farmers' income.
- (vii) Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) especially those that are women inclined should be encouraged WOFAN in Kano.

References

- Aduka, A. O. (2002). Poultry processing and marketing in *Poultry Production in Nigeria. A Training Manual*. Shika-Zaria: NAPRI-ABU, 147-150.
- Awojobi, A. O. (2005). Skill acquisition programme for women: A tool for promoting peace culture in Nigeria. *Journal of women in Colleges of Education (WICE)*, Lagos, 9, 145.
- Christin, M. (1995). *Women in development activities in the context of animal production*. Washington D. C. IFPRI Report.
- Leventis Foundation Manual (1996). *Small-scale Farming in West Africa for Improved production and better family living*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 51-53
- Macdonald, I. and John, L. (1985). *Livestock rearing in the Tropics*. London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Mundi, N. E. and Alfred, S. D. Y. (2006). *Agricultural Science Methods*. Lagos: National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), 4-6
- Ndu, A. U. (2003). *Guidelines on Agricultural Science Practical for Schools and Colleges*. Kano: Qudra Prints. 76 -77
- Nwachukwu, C. C. (2005). *The Practice of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria*. Onitsha: Africans First Publishers.
- Ogwuazor, K. E. and Nwaham, C. O. (2008). *Nigeria Education System: Problems and prospects*. Asaba – Delta: Progress Printing Association. 174 – 179).
- Okunade, S. O. (2004). *Control of Household and Garden Peast*. Kano: Oladipo Idowu Printing Press.
- Quisumbing, A. R; Lynn, R; Brown Hillarn, S. F; Lawrence H; Christiana, P. (1995). Women: The key to food security. *Food Policy Statement of IFPRI*. Washington D. C. IFPRI
- The Holy Bible: New International Version (NIV). Mexico City, International Bible Society.