

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE



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A common statement says that “Women are the backbone of the family and the bedrock of a nation” as they gain precedence in the affairs of humanity. According to UN, Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable nation. Despite their precedence, women are still faced with gender inequality, barriers of societal norms, strange stereotypes, poverty and violence. In Nigeria about 32% of women are employed in agriculture, forestry and fish farming which promote the economic activities

of a nation (Dokua Sasu, 2023). Women play crucial roles in agriculture, engaging in a wide range of activities related to food production, processing, and marketing. Their involvement spans various agricultural processes such as planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, and marketing, including the care of livestock (Sasa *et al.*, 2023). Recognizing the integral nature of their contributions, it is imperative to incorporate women into the planning, policies, and programs aimed at fostering effective and sustainable national development (Asamu *et al.*, 2020).

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3. Sasa, S.A., Adebayo, E.E. and Maurice, D.C. (2022). *Constraints to women participation in agriculture and economic development in Nigeria: A Review. International Journal of Advanced Academic Research*, **8**(5): 1- 23.

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Woman in farms and households in general play significant roles in food production, processing and feeding families, it must be mentioned that they perform these functions whilst facing numerous problems and as such are hardly ever able to attain their full potential with respect to the substantial efforts they put into the agricultural sector (Machuka, 2022). Thus, it is important to identify and highlight these challenges of women in agriculture:

Financial Inclusion barriers

Women encounter difficulties in accessing financial services, loans, small saving schemes and agricultural microfinance and this hinders their ability to invest and develop their farmlands to a larger scale. These hindrances are often due to their lack of education, high transaction costs, absence of machinery tools for agricultural products, socio culture impediment (marriage) and collateral requirements (Machuka, 2022).

Landownership

Land is a critical asset for agriculture, yet women often face imperative barriers to land ownership and control. In Nigeria, religious practices, cultural and legal norms prioritize male inheritance and ownership, leaving women without access to land. Addressing these barriers and providing women with secure land tenure can improve their productivity, income, and decision-making power in agricultural production (Daudu *et al.*, 2021).

Lack of resources and Information

In Nigeria with the high rate of poverty in the society, many women lack access to resources such as modern farming equipment, pesticides and herbicides, storage facilities, improved seedlings and climate smart agriculture.

Cultural barriers and unruly gender roles

In Nigeria due to the presence of vast inter cultural backgrounds different tribes give norms to gender roles. For instance, In the south eastern region, women participate fully in all key stages of farming activities while the men cultivate cash crops while in the Northern and Western region women are only allowed in certain stages of cash crop farming but allowed to fully engage in subsistence farming as they are delegated to home front activities (Amusan *et al.*, 2022). In Africa, woman also face problems of division of labor where by women are limited to some factors and have stricter of division of labor in gender where by most hardened jobs are done by the men and women are designated to only sell the farm produce in the market and cater for the family (Machuka, 2022).

IMPLICATIONS

Further studies by (Dokua Sasu, 2023) have shown that women participation in agricultural activities have decreased over time which implies that women participate less due to other

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household activities. This in turn causes a vast gender gap in the agricultural space causes poverty, risk of hunger and sole dependence on the husband, limited farming on high mature

crops and food insecurity which affects the economy of the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Policy on Gender Integration:** There are existence of core policy and legal instruments which guide the agricultural sector and gender related issues such as the Green Alternative 2016 – 2020, ECOWAS Gender Policy and 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended) are examples of such policies and a study done by (Harrison *et al.*, 2022) described that these policies have shown little or no effect in promoting gender equality in all parts of Nigeria. It is necessary for Government to ensure appropriate policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Also, government should collaborate with other agricultural institutions to ensure awareness to farmers on these gender equality policies in all states.
- ❖ **Gender Budgeting:** Effective gender mainstreaming requires that gender is sufficiently integrated in policies, development plans, and implementation strategies, supported by budgetary allocations (Ampaire *et al.*, 2020) Government should ensure that gender equality is incorporated in budgets for agriculture including local small holder female farmers for access to loans, trainings, equipment's and information. Gender budget would also be used to facilitate these policies, strategies and initiatives.
- ❖ **Government collaboration with private institutions/ NGOs:** There should be amplification of national agencies of women and marginalized groups by supporting collective action, advocacy and legal frameworks for farmers.
- ❖ **Enhanced Data Systems:** Nigeria has poor accountability on data systems to show the gender gaps that exist in the agricultural sector and other sectors. Closing these significant gaps calls for conceptual and definitional advances, improved quantitative and qualitative methodologies, account for unpaid and informal activities, norms, quality of gender participation and better gender equality policies (Elias *et al.*, 2020)

Citation

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