

ACCESSIBILITY OF WOMEN CASSAVA PROCESSORS TO LAND IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the current level of women cassava processors' access to land resource in Nigeria with a case study of women cassava processors in Oyo State. A sample of 240 women processors was selected for the study through multi-stage sampling procedure. The results showed that only 34.6 percent of the women got more than 50.0 percent of the land area required for their cassava processing activities. One hundred and ten women got their holdings by rent, while 90 and 40 women got their land from their husband on permanent and temporary bases respectively. The majority (62.1 percent) of the women had low socio-economic status. The results showed further that there was a positive and significant correlation between socio-economic status of the women processors and their levels of access to land. (calculated r -value = 0.25 at $p = 0.01$).

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INTRODUCTION

Gender means a state of being male or female. Feree (2000) defined gender as a social relationship between men and women based on perceived sex difference and an ideology regarding their roles, rights and values as workers, owners, citizens and parents. Gender is conceptualized as a social construct.

The agricultural sector of Africa is dominated by female food producers and processors, majority of who face limited access to productive sets, including land. This is mainly due to some socio-cultural factors. The women thus find it difficult to improve their productivity levels and incomes, and to break away from the vicious circle of low productivity, low income and poverty.

In poor households, according to the World Bank (1995), having rights to land could alleviate a woman's own poverty and the household's risk of remaining poor. This is because women's access to productive assets has a positive effect on household welfare (Agarwal, 1994).

Cassava is a perennial woody shrub of the family Euphorbiaceae, possessing tall and thin stems with an edible root. It is also tolerant to drought and can grow in low nutrient soils. Cassava provides a basic daily source of dietary energy. Its food products are part of the most importance staples of rural and urban households in southern Nigeria. Current estimates show that the dietary calorie equivalent of per capital consumption of cassava in the country amounts to 235Kcal (Purseglove, 2009). Cassava can be peeled, boiled and processed into fufu, pupuru and gaari. It can also be processed into cassava flour for making bread, puff-puff and chin-chin etc. Its importance in feeding livestock can also not be overlooked. Cassava is processed into different products to minimize loss due to storage problems. It also increases food availability through expansion of marketing opportunities by expansion of shelf life of the crop while at the same time it reduces toxicity level and adds value per unit weight (Ayinde et al, 2004).

Cassava processing was observed to be one of the ways of improving the revenue base of the rural population and meeting the demand of the urban food needs in the country. Processing of cassava provides an avenue for diversification of farming activities for farmers which has been identified as a strong panacea towards alleviating poverty from rural farming community (Ayinde et al, 2003). Cassava products such as chips and pellets are forms of cassava

which can be exported. From chips, ethanol, glucose, sugar, flour and livestock feed are produced (Nkang et al, 2006; RMRDC, 2004). Cassava chips are unfermented dried product of cassava with an average diameter of 3mm-5mm, often used as carbohydrate base in animal feed or milled into flour for other uses like ethanol, cakes, biscuits etc.

In order to effectively carry out these processing activities, there is need for adequate land area. Land is also needed, on which to construct necessary factories, sheds and warehouses where machines, equipments, raw products and final products (before they are sold) are kept. Some of the processors also cultivate cassava near the processing site to be processed instead of relying on cassava farmers for raw materials. For all these, the cassava processors require land.

Generally, there is a shortage of good quality farming and processing land for small holders in Africa. High population pressure and fragmentation of holdings have drastically reduced land area per person. For women the situation is even more critical; faced with uncertain tenure and decreasing size of land, they have a difficult task maintaining levels of output and household food security (FAO, 1993 and World Bank, 1994).

Under Customary law in Africa, women traditionally have clearly defined rights to land. Usually, land is allocated to women from their husbands and natal families based on their positions within a kinship group, and particularly on their relationship to a male relative. These rights entitled women to farm the land, often in exchange for labour on their husbands' and other family plots. As land becomes increasingly scarce, renting is becoming important among the women. Women's Agricultural productivity in Africa (WAPIA) survey showed that 42.0 percent, 22.0 percent and 15.0 percent of female-in-agriculture in Nigeria obtained land by inheritance, through their family and through rent respectively (World Bank, 1994). This study examined the current level of access of women cassava processors to land in Oyo State of Nigeria and their sources of land.

METHODOLOGY

The study area is Oyo State of Nigeria. Oyo state is located in the South Western part of Nigeria. It is located between latitudes 70 31 and 90 121 north of the equator and longitudes 20 471 and 40 231 east of the Meridian. It is bounded on the West by Republic of Benin, on the North by Kwara State, on the East by Osun State and on the South by Ogun State. There are two

distinct seasons namely wet and dry seasons. Based on the prevailing climatic and soil characteristics, three vegetation zones are identifiable in the State. These are forest, savannah and the derived savannah. The zones favour the cultivation of tree crops such as cocoa, kola, citrus and oil palm, as well as arable crops like maize, cassava, yam and rice. Oyo State Agricultural Development project has divided the state into four agricultural zones which are Ibadan/Ibarapa, Ogbomoso, Oyo and Saki. The study focused on the rural areas of the state where women processors were mostly located. Investigative research design was employed since the study entailed examination of the current level of access of women processors to land.

The population for this study is women cassava processors of Oyo State. There was no complete list of women cassava processors in the state to constitute a sample frame from which individuals could be selected using simple random sampling technique. Multi-stage sampling technique was therefore employed in the selection of 240 women cassava processors as sample for the study. The stages involved selection of one agricultural zone (Ogbomoso), two blocks (Ajaawa and Ikoyi), four cells (Ikoyi and Olorunda from Ikoyi block, Ajaawa and Ayegun from Ajaawa block), eight processors' groups and eventually 240 women cassava processors.

A pre-tested and reviewed interview schedule was used to obtain information from the sampled women processors. Items in the schedule were selected from preliminary survey of women processors in the study area and literature search. Data were collected from the respondents through interview between September and November, 2012.

Frequency and percentages were used to present data on level of access to land and women processors' perception of the suitability of the location of their processing site. The women processors' socio-economic status scores were correlated with their levels of access to land using the Pearson correlation statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the investigation are hereby presented.

SOURCES OF LAND TO WOMEN PROCESSORS

The results showed that the major sources of land include rent and allocation from their spouses. One hundred and ten out of the 240 women obtained their farmland through rent, while 90 and 40 women obtained their plots from their husbands on permanent and temporary bases

respectively (Table I). The findings conform to those of the World Bank (1994) that the purchase of farmland in Nigeria is comparatively rare for both men and women, while renting is becoming important. The World Bank (1994) also found that land was allocated to women from their husbands. This corroborates the claim that women processors' access to land is often mediated through marriage.

Table 1: Distribution of Women Processors By Sources of land Resource, n = 240.

Source	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
Temporary Allocation by Husband	40	40	16.7
Permanent Allocation by Husband	90	130	45.2
Rent	110	240	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2012

WOMEN PROCESSORS' LEVEL OF ACCESS TO LAND RESOURCE

Data in Table 2 show that most of the respondents (65.4 percent) obtained 50.0 percent or less of the land required in cassava processing, while 34.6 percent got more than percent of the land requirement' for processing activities. This shows that most women still face limited access to land.

Table 2: Distribution of Women Processors by Level of Access to Required land Resource.

Level of access (%)	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
1-25	16	16	6.7
26-50	141	157	6.7
51-75	50	207	86.3
76-100	33	240	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2012

WOMEN PROCESSORS' SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THEIR AGRICULTURAL LAND

The women processors' perception of the suitability of the location of their processing site was examined. One hundred and thirty three women assessed the location of their land as moderately suitable for them, while 72 women opined that their agricultural land were highly suitable (table 3). This puts the number of women who perceived the location of their processing site as appropriate at 205 (85.42%). Determinant factors for suitability assessment include distance to sources of raw material, distance to market place and fertility of the land in cases of those who personally cultivate cassava for processing.

Table 3: Distribution of Women Processors by the Suitability Perception of their Processing Site (n= 240)

Suitability of Processing site	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
Not suitable	35	35	14.58
Fairly suitable	133	168	70.0
Highly suitable	72	240	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2012

WOMEN PROCESSORS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

The socio-economic statuses (SES) of the women were determined with a view to finding out the relationship between women processors' socio-economic statuses and their levels of access to land. The results showed that the women processors' minimum score on selected items of SES items was 6.0 and maximum score was 34.0 while 45.0 was the total score obtainable (Table 4). Approximately, sixty two percent of the respondents had low socio-economic status (SES), scoring between 6 and 15. This corroborates Haq's (1996) finding that the majority of women in Africa live in poverty. However, 34.6 percent had average SES, with scores between 16 and 30.

Table 4: Distribution of Women Farmers by their Socio-economic Status (n= 240)

Category	Scores	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
Low	1-15	149	149	62.0
Average	16-30	83	232	96.7
High	31-45	8	240	100.0

Mean Score = 14.15

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Relationship Between Women Processors' Levels of Access to Land Resource and Socio-economic Status Scores.

The relationship between women processors' socio-economic statuses and their levels of access to land were ascertained. The women processors' socio-economic statuses correlated positively and significantly with their levels of access to land with the observed value of Pearson correlation coefficient, r , (0.46) being greater than the tabulated r -value (0.25) at 0.01 level of significance. It may be inferred that the higher the women processors' socio-economic status, the higher their level of access to land. This implies that the affluent women rented land for agricultural purposes aside the land allocated to them by their husbands and families.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that most women in agriculture still had poor access to land resource. Many (65.4 percent) of the women obtained half or less of the land required for agricultural activities.

Most of the women (44.2 percent) also obtained their holdings from their husbands. More than eighty percent of them perceived the location of their plots as appropriate.

Sixty two percent of the women processors had low socio-economic status. The female processors' socio-economic statuses had positive and significant correlation with their levels of access to land resource.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to improve women processors' access to land resource, the cultural barriers to holding of land titles by women should be removed. This is because secure land tenure expands access to formal credit markets and encourages the adoption of improved technology aimed at raising agricultural households' productivity and incomes. It could also alleviate both the women's own poverty and that of their households.

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