THE IMPACT OF RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF KUSTIM WOMEN 2013

GUMAR MANJI KEFAS
UNIVERSITY OF JOS CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION | manjikefas47@gmail.com, 07038010342

DR. GREGORY GOTULGOTOM
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF JOS, | gregoryg@gmail.com, 08069650442

DR. IFEAGWU CHRISTOPHER UCHECHUKWU
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COLLEGE JOS | krisuche@yahoo.com, 07031658524

ABSTRACT
Agriculture is the cornerstone of many African economics especially in sub-Saharan Africa. It provides a relatively large portion of the Gross Domestic product (GDP) in Sub-Saharan African. And it is also the main source of foreign currency. Agriculture is important to thee Economic Growth of most Nigeria's societies. It is also the principal source of food and livelihood in the rural areas. The study is centered on women participation in agricultural activities. The research is set to investigate the impact of women participation in Agricultural activities study of Kustium Women2013 -2023.

Introduction

Kustim women have been actively involved in agricultural production of their community. Their activities have created a very significant impact on the families, society, employment and the Nation as a whole. It was discovered in the course of the research, that about 70% of agricultural production inKustim was done mostly to the women ranging from clearing of farm lands to the last stage of transportation and sells of these agricultural produced. The efforts of the women have created tremendous impacts in the society. For proper analysis of the impact, the research concentrated on the following: societal impact, family impact and self-employment.

A. Societal Impact

The impact of agricultural activities on the society of Kustim can never be over-emphasised. Under the societal impact, the analysis centered on the following;

i. **Food production:** The aim of agricultural engagement of women is for food security. This is the same with kustimwomen in agriculture. Most of them were initially just home-keepers, but have now over taken the men in farming so as to provide food for their families. MrsNankiling Posited that

"since her husband started mechanic work in 1999, he does not have time for any farming activities, therefore, I have to cultivate his family portion to complement his effort of bringing food to the family" [1]In another conversation with same woman, it was understood that she is able to farm crops such as millet, maize, soya beans, red-beans, cocoyam etc. All of which are for consumption. In her case, her portion of farm was not big limiting her crop production to just family consumption. MrsNa'omireiterates that "my crops are mostly for me and my family… when we harvest, we dry the ones and use till the next farming season". [2] Never the less, there are other women farmers in Kustim whose farm produce goes beyond family consumption. These women produced cash crops that enrich themselves. For Mrs Longtang, farming is beyond family consumption she farms in large quantity which she in turn sells. In an interview with her, she emphasized that "that I am no longer just a farmer but also a business woman… I produce crops for sells so that I can make money for myself." [3] However, some of these woman farm produce is just mainly for consumption like the case of Mrs Naomi but others like longtang, Nankiling, Tongretetc all farm for business purpose and family consumption. "my crops, especially beans, maize are mostly harvested and sold in the market but I still store some at home for my family needs. [4]MrsMikatu emphasized the active participation of these women farmed in food production to ensures that their household always have enough food to meet their consumption needs so as to avoid daily shortages.

ii. **Employment of Labour:** The role that women play and their position in meeting the needs of agricultural production and development are quite dominant and prominent. Therefore, Kustim women have become employers of labor. A world Bank sponsored study undertaken by satio and weidmann showed that women in the sub-saharan Africa, including Nigeria, provide most of the labor that make certain key decisions albeit randomly for many agricultural activities. [5] In Kustim, most of the women farmers have also become employers of labor. They employ the services of young men, church groups and other women in their farms. Mrs Maryamu said that "due to my age, there are some work I

cannot longer do in my farm so when it is time to cultivate and plant, I hire some young men and women to work on my farm… I mostly do the wedding but when is time to harvest, I hire them again to harvest my crops. [6]Therefore, it is not out of place to conclude that even though she spends a small fortune to pay her employers, she can definitely be said to be an employer. This also applies to other food production such as cash cropping. MrsNa'anwal confirmed that "I don't have a farm but I work in people's farm especially the ones that have large farm for cash crop production because they pay more and they farm all year round so I always have work to do. [7] More emphasis came from MrKhatkop when he said "even though I have a small farm, for I have been working on other women" farm for the past twenty (20) years till date… the money they pay me helped in feeding my family and also take care of my aged father. [8] The number of farm workers employed by these women, varies from time to time and the amount of work that needs to be done in the farm "over the years, between the years 2015 to 2020, I employed the services of young men even women who were willing to work for pay "[9]The activities of these women in agriculture transcends beyond family food production but as a means of sustainable employment for most people.

iii. **Provision of goods for the market:** Agriculture has been the main stay for most Nigerians especially in rural areas, while providing employment directly and indirectly to many People. Women in Kustim who seem to be more dominant in agricultural activities, not only farm but also engage in marketing their farm produce. Mrs Christiana who own a large farm land, spoke of how proud she was of her fellow women farmers in Kustim stating that "during farming season, a large number of women are more on the farm than men, as the men would rather go to other jobs that to work on the farms. [10] Some of them even preferred to buy and store them till when it is ready to be marketed. Although Mrs Christiana who had been farming for over thirty (30) years and a small time farmer, who also plant crops which sell in her case most of the crops planted during raining season is for consumption and the dry season farming she take to the market and sells. In her word, she

stated that "when I do dry season farming I like tomatoes or cabbage, I take it to building material market together with my sister in-law to sell… sometimes the buyers come to the farm to buy after the harvest. [11]For bigger farmers like Jummai who have a very big farms she has gone as far as establishing contacts with dealers who come and buys directly from the farm during harvest, thereby making more interest. That method ensures that she spends little when it comes to transporting her product to the market. She attested that "when tomatoes are harvested, some of the traders brings their vehicles to by them and if there are more leftI have some ladies who take them to the market to sell". [12] Never the less, there are traders who are not involved in the actual farming but buy and sell agricultural produce from these farmers and sell in the markets like Evelinewho has been a trader for over twenty (20) years but new trades at Mangu, she buys from the farmers also. She said that "sometimes, they call me when they have any produce to sell I go and buy… I sometimes go to their homes to buy. [13]Sometimes these women group themselves in to a group of either 2,3, or 4 to hire a vehicle that would take their farm produce to places like Jos, Abuja or Lagos and sell them there to make more profits.

iv. **Socio – Economic Development:** Socio – economic development incorporates public concerns in developing social policies and economic initiatives with aim of bringing sustainable is improvement in the well being of individual, family group and society as a whole. [14]The Nigerian women has proved to be more than a mere bench – warming spectator even in the midst of male – dominated professional congregation if given the opportunity women can effectively participate in policy-making that can greatly impact on their societies. They can hold their own in very difficult and stressful circumstances and can do so well, if not better that men. This is the case with some of the women in Kustim who have literally taken over farming from their male counterparts and are doing it so well. There are attestations of their social and economic life having a tremendous turn around since they became predominantly involve in farming such as less dependency on the men being able to pay their children's

school fees like the case of Mrs Na'atee who said "that her husband died since 2005 when her children were still very young so she was left with the responsibility of sending them to school and farming all alone. [15]Adding to her statement, Mrs. Na'ateerecounted how her family has helped her build another house for herchildren and rent out the other one that was build by my late husband. [16] This goes to show the level of success gained from farming which at the same time, gives them a sence of responsibility and respect in the society.

v. Provision of Raw Materials: The women of Kustim have not only evolved from being just farmers but also prodders of raw materials processed from their agricultural produce. Although in small quantities, just to meet the need of their community. The maize they plant and harvest from their farms go through the process of drying removing of shafts and grinding all done by these women. They then turn it in to corn meal and even powdered pap. Mrs Mary explained how she buys grinded maize from some of the women in Kustim market who have taken it upon them to transform the maize to powdered form. She said "some of the women I buy some farm produce from have already broken down their farm produce in either forms. [17] She also dries and grinds her soya beans and turns it in to powdered form which she sells to her neighbors and even in the market. [18] Commendable efforts go in to the work these women do both on the farm and off their farm who have dedicated their lives not to only provide for their family but also their society at large.

vi. Sources of Jobs for Transporters: With the increase in agricultural production market activities increased also. This time, it is not just the traders who benefits from the farm produce but even the wheel barrow pushers, load carriers etc also benefits from the agricultural activities because they help carry some these farm produce in to the market an informant narrated his experienced… "that in a day if it is harvest period he makes four to five thousand naira per day just loading tomatoes and maize in a truck when ever buyers come to buy". [19]

B Family Impact:

As a result of agricultural activities among this women in Kustim. It has positive impact on their families as a sources of

livelihood, which has also propelled them to do more in the following areas

i. **Food Security:** Food instability can cause hunger and malnourishment which can imbedein one's ability to perform well in their daily life activity. Kustim women seem to have eradicated hunger as a result of their farming activities in their community. Since the farms are cultivated by the women. They harvest their crops and store to last them enough till the next farming season, leading to their healthier eating habit. Even more crops that are not consumed are sold in the market to complement whatever crops they did not plant or harvest. "we utilize both the raining and dry season to farm and stock our houses and this has helped to keep hunger away from our family". [20]Because of the availability of food in the family as a result of their deep involvement of agricultural activities. Therefore, the assurance of food in the family becomes a motivation for most of these women to work harder on the farms.

ii. **Sources of Education of their Children:** Education they say is the key to success of any nation. The more people get educated the more some negative vices decrease in such community. It was discovered during the period of the research that more children were in schools compare to ten years back, which was attributed to the women involvement in agricultural activities. MrsNantok affirmed this in an interview that "I did not have the opportunity to go to secondary school because my parent could not afford it, but due to my farming activities my first son was able to graduate from the university of Jos in 2023. And his younger brother is in federal college of education Pankshin, while their sister is also schooling at plateau state university Bokkosrespectively. [21]In addition to making sure that their children do not lack food some of these women are contributed seriously to the education of their children because of the income they get form their agricultural activities.

iii. **Sources of Health of the Children:** Access to modern health care these days is usually difficult to get, if one does not have the resources is to pay for. In an interview with Mrs. Talatu, she narrated her experience in 2018, with her baby who had to undergo surgery" that she was lucky to have five bags of maize, two bags of beans one bag of dry okoro and four bags of milet that she had kept in the store… after she sold it then she was able to pay her baby's surgery ". [22]This goes to shows that not only farming providing them with food but also with medical bills which would have been almost impossible without active involvement in farming activities

(c) Self Employment

The importance of Agricultural activities can never be over emphasized in any society whether developing or developed. The impact on kustim women is becoming so different to neglect especially since these women are becoming a force to be reckon with. The impact of Agricultural activities on self-employment among the women can be discussed under the following:

Financial independence, skill acquisition self-education ad self-care.

(i) Financial Independence: There is a growing number of women in Agriculture, who are gradually becoming stable due to their participation in the Agricultural sector. Before now, they depended heavily on the men to give them almost everything they needed, but in recent times, these women can now depend on the same likes for some of their needs. An informant said "that his wife now takes care of some basic thins in the family and even lends him money whenever he asked her all these because of her farming.[23] Mr. Vullong attested that, financial freedom from financial dependency on men is gradually phasing out amongst the women in kustim. [24] Mrs. Talatu talks on how being financially independent enables her fulfil some responsibilities without depending on her husband or her parents that "when theoretical need to pay immediate bills for example, school fees, drugs for the kids when any of them fall ill, I don't have to wait for my husband before taking care of such needs".[25] there is a great satisfaction

derived from these women, whenever they contribute to the family especially in the life of their children be it health or education.

(ii) Skill Acquisition: Skill acquisition is the act of mastering a skill in other to earn a living. Acquiring skills ranges from hair dressing, fashion designing, tailoring, automobile mechanic, trading etc. some of the women in Agricultural activities have begun expanding their sources of income and livelihood by acquiring other skills apart from farming. This is only possible because they can pay for whatever skills they venture into as a result of the active involvement in farming which enable them raise money from it. However, apart from being farmers, they have also acquired other financial skills like trading, soap making, some even tailoring. In 2014, Mrs. Benshin was able to learn soap making which she paid from the money she gets from her farm. Stating that "I am not just a farmer but I also have soap making business…my farming activities helped me to get the money to buy all the items used in making the soap.[26] In a similar case, Mrs. Milkatu who led a piggery farm had also use some of the money she makes from her piggery to learn how to trade on olive oil business are women wrappers. She recounted that "I always wanted to do other trade apart from the piggery but I did not have start-up capital, so in 2010, after selling some of the pigs I used some of the money I made to learn this business of selling women wrappers which I now sell to different people from different communities not only kustim. [27] Even though, she did not have a large piggery, but that did not deter her from venturing into another business she was passionate about and with the obvious desire to increase her financial status. Therefore, farming for most of these women has transcended beyond just feeding but has opened up other opportunities for them.

(iii) Self-Education: Rural women are gradually making themselves to be recognized in the society by acquiring some forms of education apart from education their children. Some of them have gotten one form of literacy just to improve self-communication and gain better exposure and business education Mrs. Rauta attested to how she was able to acquire a diploma certificate at the age of 49 years in business administration that "since her piggery has become her major business and a source of income she felt she needed to educate herself to get more idea on managing a business".[28]

(iv) Self-Care: There is no doubt that a near and good looking appearance can attract the right kind of people. There is a great improvement in the physical appearance of women farmers in Kustim. Gone are the days when they could not take good care of themselves and needs. It goes beyond the physical appearance. They are able to pay their usual dues at the women's group meetings, while they also lend financial support to one another. It also enabled them opportunity to buy better clothes for themselves. Mrs. Longret states that "now, because of my farming, I can buy clothes for myself and that of my children comfortably. So that we look good, we also have good and clean clothes to wear to church on Sundays and other social events.[29]

Conclusion

The conclusion reached from the research is that women spend more time than men in activities and Agricultural tasks. Studies have proceeded it, particularly as the case with Kustim women in Agricultural activitieswithin the period under reviewed. The paper discussed the impact of rural women participation in Agricultural activities with particular reference to Kustim women. An attempt was made to identify some of the impact of their participation in Agricultural activities of Kustim women from 2013-2023. The paper examines the following as some of the major impact as: societal impact family impact and self-employment. It therefore, concludes that with the support of government, NGO's spirited individuals and donor agencies will boost food production and efficiency.

Recommendation

Women's role in agriculture have a crucial and transformative impact on the sectors future. The contribution of the female farmers in Kustim have gained increasing recognition, challenging gender strerotypes and paving the way for inclusive and sustainable practices. Women play instrumental roles in diverse areas of agriculture, encompassing crop cultivation, livestock management, agricultural business and rural development. They engage in all stages of agricultural value chain, from planting and harvesting to processing marketing and policy making. Notably women demonstrate remarkable resilience, adaptability and innovation in the face of evolving challenges like climate change and food security concerns. It is in the light of all these that the following recommendation are presented as:

i. The government at the national, state or local government should as a matter of urgency, seek ways of lowering the cost of agricultural services, to encourage women farmers to embraced farming and if possible provide tractor services, so that the prices are reduced through completion

ii. While the kustim women might have been doing a good job by themselves in terms of financing their farming activities, easy access to credit facilities would help them to do even much better, as it would lead to more production

iii. Extension service workers should encourage rural women farmers to make more use of cow dung or other forms of natural fertilizers. Because this would go-along way in lowering the high input costs as well as improving the soil fertility.

iv. Government at whatever level or spirited individuals should assist rural women with affordable or free training on modern and evolving farming methods for effective production on their farm produce.

Endnotes

1. Mrs. NanklinYohanna, 44 years, Teacher Kustim, 21/12/2022
2. Mrs. Naomi Tangka'am, 64 years, Trader, Kustim, 3/4/2022
3. Mrs. Longtang Sati, 50 years, Farmer, Kustim, 6/4/2023
4. Mrs. MilkatuGokper, 50 years business woman, Kustim,, 20/3/2023
5. World Bank Nigeria: women in Agriculture in sharing experience cox-examples of participating approaches; The World Bank Group, World Bank Participation source book, Washington DC, 2023. http//www.worldbank.org./wbi/publication.html
6. Mrs. MaryamuMwanret, 79 years, retired business woman, Kustim, 20/3/2023
7. Mrs. Na'anwalLongshak, 39 years, farmer, Kustim, 20/3/2023
8. Mr. kharkopDacatchi, 52 years, farm worker, Kustim, 21/3/2023
9. Mrs. MilkatuGojper, 58 years, business woman, Kustim, 20/3/2023
10. Mrs. Christiana Sati, 50 years, farmer, Kustim, 21/3/2023
11. Mrs. JummaiDanladi, 50 years, farmer, Kustim, 23/3/2023
12. Mrs. JummaiDanladi…..

13. Mrs. Evelyn Yabo, 43 years, business woman, Kustim, 30/3/2023
14. Robert Tweheyo, Developing knowledge for societies for district century contects, kyambogo university, kampala Uganda, 2021
15. Mrs. Na'atee Sunday, 52 years, farmer, Kustim, 14/4/2023
16. Mrs. Na'atee Sunday 52 years, farmer……
17. Mrs. Mary Samson, 48 years, Teacher, Kustim, 4/4/2023
18. Mrs. Na'anwalKamshak, 38 years, farmer, Kustim, 15/4/2023
19. Timothy Musa, 52 years, Loader, Kustim, 14/4/2023
20. Mrs. LongdiSendi, 40 years, farmer, Kustim, 14/4/2023
21. Mrs. NantokTapshak, 48 years, farmer, Kustim, 15/4/2023
22. Mrs. TalatuTongnan, 50 years, farmer, Kustim, 18/4/2023
23. Mrs. WetsenAdamu, 48 years, farmer, Kustim, 15/4/2023
24. Mrs. VullongGungvit, 47 years, farmer, Kustim, 15/4/2023
25. Mrs. TalatuTongnan, 50 years……
26. Mrs. BenshineZumwar, 53 years, business woman, Kustim, 18/4/2023
27. Mrs. MilkatuLongwar, 53 years, business woman, Kustim, 20/4/2023
28. Mrs. Rauta Emmanuel, 49 years, business woman, Kustim, 19/5/2023
29. Mrs. Longret David, 40 years, farmer, Kustim, 19/5/2023