

CONSTRAINTS TO GROWTH AMONG WOMEN FARMERS CORPORATIVE SOCIETY IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: Agricultural development is a complex process and a challenging one as well. Rural women farmers play a vital role in food production and food security. This study aimed at examining the constraints to the growth of Women Farmers' Cooperative Societies in Kano state Nigeria. The study adopts descriptive analysis based on questionnaire survey. The study reveals that women cooperative societies in the study area were engaged in production and processing activities including food processing, food storage and animal production and management respectively. Shortages of farm inputs and machineries, lack of new techniques of farming system, lack of access to farm finance loan and resources due to political scandal and corruption, and above all inadequate western education among women farmers are among the constraints of growth of Women Farmer's Corporative Society in Kano State, Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that, government should provide special attention to women farmers corporative by asking extension staff to make women's' corporative society their target group for quick delivery of extension services.

Key words: constraint, empowerment, farming, growth

Introduction :Farmer Associations have been found to be very useful in accelerating the process of rural development and poverty alleviation in many developing countries, women farmers inclusive. Cooperative society is the organization of people for an improved agricultural production.^[6] These have been established in different parts of the world where they contribute to the livelihood of over 800 million members and their families. (International Cooperative Alliance, 1983).^[1] Given women's crucial roles in and contributions to food security, any efforts to reduce food insecurity worldwide must take into consideration the factors and constraints affecting women's ability to carry out these roles and make these contributions, with a view to removing the constraints and enhancing women's capacities. In fact, if suitable extension delivery techniques are adopted in introducing and nurturing new technology then economic growth in a larger scale will be achieved easily. It was expected that the organizational structure of cooperative societies should be based on sound principles of accountability, transparency and good collective performance.

Over 80% of African women live in the rural areas, and between 60% and 80% of them are engaged in agricultural work. Similarly, the Nigerian rural women involvement in agriculture apparently varies from one locality to another. Women contribution to Nigeria's development has in the past been either underestimated or neglected.^[5] Yet, Nigerian women do perform vital economic functions both at work and within the limits of their households. For example, among ethnic groups such as the Hausa of Northern Nigeria, the produce from women's farm feed the household, while the crop from the husband's farm supplies cash to pay for taxes and

ceremonial expenses. While among Yoruba of Western Nigeria, women work as unpaid workers, especially during period of rising agricultural wages, they also make substantial contribution to family net cash income. As Nigeria is getting developed, more women are entering into the economy as market women, wholesalers, civil servants, business women and professionals, their economic contribution to the development efforts are becoming more publicly acknowledged. This action is supported by the realization that across West Africa region women play a pivotal role in providing most farm labour and making key decisions for many agricultural activities in the course of performing their roles of providing food for the family and rearing the young ones.^{[3][2]}

Materials And Method : The study was conducted in Kano State, Nigeria. Primary data was collected from three Agricultural zones, the first stage involved purposive selection of two local government areas from each zone based on the relative abundance of women cooperative societies, the second stage involved random selection of five women farmer's Cooperative Societies within each local government. The sample was drawn from each of the production and processor women associations represented by at least two members purposively selected (based on the relative viability of their association). The third stage, involved random selection of respondents from the six selected local government. A pre-survey was conducted and a total of 595 cooperative members were identified from all the local governments out of which 30% was considered. At the last stage, a total of 178 cooperative members were randomly selected for the study. Out of the 178 questionnaires administered, 176 questionnaires were retrieved and valid. Data were collected by use of structured questionnaires

administered to the cooperative members using oral interviews with groups and also key informants. Data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistic.

Results And Discussion : The data collected showed the types of cooperative societies women pursue in the area. The dominant type was multipurpose cooperative society (46.7%) which registered members that are into multiple enterprises. They engage in different types of crop production under both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. The main crops cultivated include wheat, tomato, rice, vegetables, green maize, cucumber and related products during the dry season when irrigation is pursued. In the wet season rice, maize, sorghum, millet, groundnuts and beans are cultivated by the respondents in a year. Among members of this group also many engage in marketing agricultural products especially those produced from the area.

From the socioeconomic perspectives of members, 35% fall into age group of 20-25 years followed by age group 26-30 with 30%. In fact 95% of the members are 50 years of age or below. This indicates the dominance of youth among the respondents and that many experienced women farmers have joined the Associations. Since the project is about four decades old, it indicated that less than 20% of the members were adults when the project started. This may infer that there is strong potential for growth of the women cooperatives in the future as able bodied physical strong women constitute over 80% of members. Among the conditions for registration of members into the women cooperative societies in the area, a woman must be married. This explained why 95% of them were married with only 2.5% each that are widowed or divorced but none was single. This could also explain the minimum age captured among members in this study.

Though there are number of elderly women in all the associations, the story was different with regards to their age based on dates of registration. More so, the age was based on date of first registration, which is a proxy for experience of each cooperative society since

its inception. It showed that over 73% of the societies were less than 5 years old and none is more than eleven years since registered. All are active. The implication may not be divorced from the low level of awareness on the benefits of women cooperative societies in the area as expressed by respondents. With the existence of the large scheme in the area for over 3 decades it is difficult to rationalize the total absence of active women groups for almost 20 years. Kano State was the heartbeat of KRP, Further inquiry from members pointed out that even though many groups were formed with the hope of developing them but members lose interest quickly due to members' apathy and lack of clear vision and strategy by the prime movers. In fact, even those that survived did so due to Government patronage. This confirmed the findings of Eze (1990) who posited that such societies remain alive to benefit from government support services. They die as soon as it's withdrawn or made unavailable.

The responses on the level of education attained shows that 67.5% of members were limited to attendance of literary classes and/or religious education only. 25% attended primary School while 7.5% had either secondary or Tertiary level of education. While this level of educational attainment are higher than the State average which put the level of literacy of the population at 70%^[4] it is still below the recommended level by International Cooperative Alliance (1972) which insisted that all members of Cooperative societies must be literate in the western education for the full realization of cooperative movements objectives i.e. achieve economic independence and democratic good governance. As for the major constraints to the activities of the Women Farmers' Cooperative Societies' the respondents pointed to a number of factors. They range from inadequacy of finance to fund their activities, lack of training of their members, high interest rates on loans, inadequate farm implements and lack of suitable technology for women use.

Table 1: Key issues relating to constraints highlighted by corporate members n=176

1.Financing corporate activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Members contribution	80	45.5
Financing activities	161	91.5
Surplus from activities	59	33.5
2. Access to finance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Readily available	87	29.39
Not readily available	62	20.95
Very rarely available	129	43.58
Not available at all	18	9.18
3.Types of Technology	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Traditional	76	33.33
Modern	24	14.14

Mixed	94	47.47
4. Training of members	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Readily available	109	42.58
Not readily available	21	8.20
Very rarely available	106	41.41
Not available at all	20	7.81

Source: field survey, 2014.

Multiple response existed hence >100%

The results reveals that the major problem emphasized by 91.5% of the corporative members is inadequate financial institution to expand their business with 33.5% complained on surplus from other activities, while 43.58% of the corporative members complained that access to credit was very

rarely available with 9.18% complained that access to credit was not readily available at all. The result further reveals that, 42.58% of the corporative members say that training to corporative members is readily available in the study area while 7.81% say training to corporative is not available at all.

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