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ROLE OF WOMEN FARMERS' COOPERATIVE
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CASE STUDY OF BAUCHI LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF BAUCHI STATE.

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ROLE OF WOMEN FARMERS' COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF BAUCHI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BAUCHI STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at examining the role of Women farmers' cooperative Societies in Agricultural Production in Bauchi Local Government Area of Bauchi State Nigeria. A total of eighty (80) women farmers were randomly selected from eight Cooperative societies which represent 50% of all registered and viable Cooperative Societies in the study area. Data were collected using well-structured pre-tested interview schedules, and analysed by means of descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentages and means). The results indicated that women Cooperative Societies in the study area were engaged in agricultural activities, such as land clearance (62.5%), planting and transplanting (62.5%) weeding (40%), fertilizer application (75%), food processing (87.5%), food storage (95%) and animal production and management (94%) respectively. The average land size of the respondents was 1.3 hectare. Constraints to their development efforts included inadequacy of finance; lack of training of their members, inadequate farm implements and lack of suitable machines for Women farmer's use. Government should provide soft and medium term loan to women cooperative societies. Extension staff should make women cooperative societies as a target group for quick delivery of extension services. Apparently technologies for Women farmers should be made available and affordable to all women farmers particularly members of Cooperative Societies.

INTRODUCTION

Cooperative society is the organization of people for an improved agricultural production (Strickland, 1934). While women farmer's cooperative societies are aimed at organizing women farmers for an improved agricultural production through tackling of individual women farmers' problems, limitations and odds. Historically in Nigeria, the orientation and growth of cooperatives in Nigeria was related to the development of agricultural export sector by the Colonial Masters who invited an expert in 1934 known as C.F. Strickland who served in India to advice "on the prospects and desirability of forming cooperatives in Nigeria" (Nkom, 1984). Among the recommendations made by Strickland was the formation of Agricultural Marketing Cooperatives with the aim of pursuing the major export crops, like cocoa, cotton, palm produce farms in the country (Ekpere, 1980). From 1935-37, however, these east while production cooperatives were either transformed or designated cooperative produce marketing societies and unions. From 1960-1972, the role of farmer cooperative in the primary production process has been re-vitalized (Ekpere, 1980). Presently, the cooperative movement is on the increase for the search of sustainability in an agricultural system. While sustainability is possible when we encourage the agricultural activities of cooperatives. It is in the light of fighting to survive/improve the living standard of women farmers that they have to come to form cooperatives, which help them to battle the problems they face as individuals with ease.

As a cooperative member, the women have a new sense of direction, hope and empowerment, because they are in control of their lives and are able to contribute to their family's needs and economic growth of the community (Claxton, 2000). Cooperatives have the advantage of bettering their lifestyle and eradicating diseases, which has direct effect on their living standard and giving them better chance of performance in agricultural production. (Claxton, 2000). Since one of the objectives of forming the cooperative group is to mobilize members in modern agricultural practices and use of agricultural inputs. Also to help pull its member's resources together for an improved agricultural production and marketing. (Strickland, 1934).

Recognising women cooperative societies seem to be the "quickest way innovations could get individual farmers and it is the surest way of increasing food that is available to the masses (Fayese, 1990).

The organizational structure of cooperative societies is based on their operation, organization, structure, membership, functions and services (Scope) with the main aim of "Collecting, processing and marketing specific commodities and providing with inputs, credit and technical services for benefits of members. Therefore, these cooperative organizations are usually arranged into "tiers". They are: The primary societies, secondary and Apex organization. The involvement of women cooperative societies in agricultural production is in line with the purposes of the existence of agricultural cooperative societies presented in this study. The cooperative societies presented in this study fall within the primary Societies.

It is therefore against this background that this study was undertaken:

- (i) To study the role of women farmer's cooperative societies in agricultural production in the study area.
- (ii) To identify the constraints militating against the success of the women farmers cooperative societies in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study was conducted in Bauchi Local Government Area of Bauchi State. The study area comprised of eight women farmer's Cooperative Societies within the Local Government Area:

Bayara Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
Wuntin-Dada Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
Kauna (1) Woman Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
School of Agriculture Women multi-purpose Cooperative Society Zango Woman Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
Zuma Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
Zuma Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
Bege Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society
Gudum Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society

Eighty women farmers were purposively (based on their viability) selected from eight different women farmer's cooperative societies in the area, through random sampling technique. The selected societies included villages within the Bauchi Local Government Area where agricultural production seems to be high. Data were collected by use of structured interview schedule. Data analysed were analysed by means of simple descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentages and means).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The types of animals kept by the respondents are shown in Table 1. Animals like goats and poultry birds are kept by 31.3% of the respondents, 12.5% of the respondents kept sheep, goats and poultry birds, 41.3% of the respondents reared poultry birds and goats, 5% of them reared rabbits and pigs, 1.3% of the respondents reared cattle and poultry, and 8.8% of them reared pigs. The nature of the animals reared by the respondents depended largely on the needs of the environment they find themselves in. The result agrees with Yahaya and Oluwo's findings (1998) about the various agricultural activities of women farmers in Northern Central Nigeria which include cultivation of cereals and legumes, keeping of goats, cattle, sheep and pigs. Probably because of the similarity of the environment and climate.

Table 2 shows the size (in hectare) of land cultivated by the respondents in a year. 10% of the respondents cultivated between 0.1-0.5 hectares of land, 15% of them cultivated between 0.6-1.0 hectare of land, 48% of the respondents cultivated between 1.1-1.5 hectares of land while remaining 28% of them cultivated between 1.6-2.0 hectares of land in a year. This result agrees with Yahaya and Oluwo's findings as cited earlier. This means that the constraints faced by women cooperative societies have effect on their performance. It calls for a proper priority to be placed on the cooperative societies by Women in Agriculture (WIA) in order to have better results.

Consequently, the types of crops grown by the respondents are shown in Table 3. They included rice (28.8% of them), maize (8.8% of respondents), Sorghum and Millet (12.5%) of them. Groundnuts and beans (12.5%) of them and the remaining 37.5% of the respondents grew all these types of crops mentioned above. The result agrees with the earlier mentioned author's findings. It implies that certain crops would soon disappear from circulation of these societies if nothing is done about it. Also balance diet in their cooking may be lacking.

In Table 4, respondent's involvement in Joint (cooperative) farm and off farm tasks is shown where respondents were directly involved in farm clearing (62.5%), land cultivation (60%), planting and transplanting (62.5%), weeding (40%), fertilizer application (75%), food processing (87.5%), food storage (95%) and animal management (94%) respectively. It is only in harvesting that the greatest percentage (50%) of labour comes from the family members. This result disagrees with Egbugara's findings (1993) that sources of labour for women farmers is hard to come by, basically because they are cooperative societies. This table indicates the extent to which the members are involved in joint agricultural activities at cooperative level.

CONSTRAINTS MILITATING AGAINST THE ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN FARMERS' COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

The major constraints to the activities of the women farmers' cooperative societies are summarized in Table 5. These ranges from inadequacy of finance, lack of training of their members, high interest rates on loans, inadequate farm implements and lack of suitable technology for women use. These constraints may be common to all societies, but are still peculiar to these societies, because lack of professional training of women societies (in particular) could hinder the progress of the societies obtaining maximum success.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Training of women farmers' cooperative societies should be taken as a challenge by women in Agriculture (WIA). While research institute should find better ways of disseminating ideas to the cooperative societies. The policy implication of the study is that lack of adequate funds serve as a serious constraint that need to be tackled through the provision of soft loans and medium loans to the women groups at a subsidized interest rate. Interest rates on loans should be reduced as high interest rates make the members of these societies to avoid loans. While the delivery of essential farm implements and extension services to all women farmers cooperative societies should be regular and on time. Also, machines for shelling, threshing, winnowing and harvesting should be produced locally and specially for women use.

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Table 1: Distribution Pattern of the types of Animals kept by the Respondents

Type of Animals	Frequency	Percentage
Goats and poultry birds	25	31.3
Sheep, goats & poultry birds	10	12.5
Poultry and goats	33	41.3
Rabbits and pigs	4	5
Cattle and poultry	1	1.3
Pigs	7	8.8
Total	80	100

Source: survey Data, 1999-2000

Table 2: Distribution Pattern of Land sizes for the respondents in a Year

Land size (in hectare)	Frequency	Percentage
0.1-0.5	8	1
0.6-1.0	12	15
1.1-1.5	38	48
1.6-2.0	22	28
Total	80	100

Source: Survey Data, 1999 –2000.

Table 3: Distribution Pattern of the Types of crops Grown by the Respondents

Crops Grown	Frequency	Percentage
Rice	23	28.8
Maize	7	8.8
Sorghum & millet	10	12.5
Groundnuts & beans	10	12.5
All of the above	30	37.5
Total	80	100%

Source: survey Data, 1999-2000

Table 4: Distribution Pattern of Joint farming activities of women farmer's cooperative societies involvement in both farm and off farm tasks.

Farm & off farm tasks	Women group (%)	Hired labour (%)	Self (%)	Family members (%)	Total (%)
Farm clearing	62.5	18.8	6.3	12.5	100
Land cultivation	60	10	10	20	100
Planting & transplanting	62.5	2.5	2.5	10	100
Weeding	40	13	15	32	100
Fertilizer application	75	6.3	6.3	12.5	100
Harvesting	27.5	-	22.5	50	100
Processing	37.5	-	3.8	8.8	100
Storage	95	-	-	5	100
Livestock Management	94	-	-	6	100

Source: Survey Data, 1999-2000.

Table 5: Distribution pattern of Major constraints faced by women farmers' Cooperative Societies in Bauchi Local Government.

Constraints	Ranking	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate financial assistance/high interest on loans	I	40	50
Lack of training/seminars/workshops	II	20	25
Inadequate farm implements	III	13	16.3
Lack of suitable technologies for women use	IV	7	8.8
Total		80	100

Source: Survey Data, 1999-2000.