

## GENDER ANALYSIS OF MELON PRODUCTION IN IBARAPA AREAS OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA.

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the roles of men and women in the production of melon, *Colosynthis citrullus* a popular vegetable crop in Nigeria. A purposive random sampling process was used to select 120 melon farmers from the study area and data were taken using interview schedule. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result showed that men (68%) and women (32%) were actively involved in melon production, out of which 81% (men) and 22% (women) were fully involved in the production activities. Such activities as land clearing, planting, pod breaking, and seed washing were almost exclusive roles of men while seed selection, seed extraction and drying and cleaning were women's roles. The *t*-test also showed that there is significant difference ( $t_c=17.65$ ,  $t_r=2.35$ ) in the level of involvement of men and women in melon production. The study recommends that adequate recognition be given to both men and women on crop production incentives.*

### **Introduction**

A larger proportion of the rural people, (men and women) are involved in the cultivation of food crops on subsistence and medium scale levels. More than 70% of

the population in developing nations especially in Africa depend directly on agriculture as a means of livelihood, (Buckland, 1996).

Over the decades, the roles of women in the agricultural sector have not been clearly defined. It is widely believed that men are farmers while women supply family labour by helping their husbands on the farm. The production decisions are mostly taken by men according to the right they possess over women who are customarily expected to engage in food crop production for family consumption. Gbadamosi (1989) stated that women in Nigeria engage in a wide range of farming activities and are responsible in most cases for food production, processing and distribution for home consumption and for sale. For this reason, men were usually the target for agricultural development because there had been the concentration of production factors in the hands of men than the women.

The social science defines "gender" as the roles and activities of men and women. These roles are often expressed by the traditions and beliefs of a particular culture. However, in the traditional African society, women are considered as economically inactive, not contributing to the family income, they only work only as unpaid family labour, taking care of children, food preparation and processing. Their contribution to the creation of form utility to farm produce for marketing is not adequately recognised. According to Yahaya (2002), women do help their husbands on the farm in almost all the farm operations ranging from planting and harvesting to processing of crops. With this, men and women can be said to complement one another in the production process.

According to Fawole (1995), agricultural production is characterised by sexual division of labour in which both men and women complement one another.

Gender responsibility in agriculture could be seen from different patterns according to Gbadebo (2001) and Feldstain (1989). They include:

- a. **Separate Enterprise** where men and women specialize in different crop production within the household system. Here, men and women do not produce the same crop.
- b. **Separate Field** where women produce the same crop on the farm as men do, but women's production is majorly on a subsistent base, while that of men can be on a large scale.
- c. **Share Task** in this pattern, men and women share the tasks on the farm. Both men and women have their own plots and all perform the operations together except in some labour intensive tasks when men alone perform.

- d. **Separate Task** this embraces men and women doing separate jobs, since women are termed weaker sex, they are often given less tedious jobs like harvesting, planting, sorting and storage.

In order to have a meaningful development in agriculture, concerted efforts should be made to utilize the potentials of men and women. In this investigation, a few research questions become pertinent, such as;

- What are the personal characteristics of melon farmers in the study area?
- What are the level of involvement of men and women in the production of melon crop in the study area?
- What specific activities do the men and women perform in the production of melon in the study area?

The general objective of the study is to evaluate gender roles in melon production in Ibarapa area of Oyo State and specifically to:

- identify the social and personal characteristics of melon farmers;
- assess the levels of involvement of men and women in melon production;
- identify the roles of men and women in melon production in the study area.

### **Methodology**

#### **The area of study:**

The study was conducted in Ibarapa area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The area is made up of Ibarapa Central, East and North Local Governments of the State.

The choice of the area for this study was due to several reasons particularly, the prevalence of rural characteristics and the predominance of melon crop production which is a result of favourable soil and climatic factors that favour the production of the crop. Ibarapa area of Oyo State consists of predominantly an agrarian population. The people engage in the cultivation of a wide range of crops on a small and medium scale levels in addition to other agricultural activities. Women involvement in farming activities is quite pronounced. The bulk of agricultural production centres on manually cultivated rain fed crops. The crops grown include

arable crops such as maize, guinea corn, yam, cowpea, cassava, sugarcane, rice, melons, leaf vegetables and cash crops such as cocoa, cashew, oranges, mango, oil-palm, etc.

Furthermore, due to the geographical location of the area, there are two main cropping seasons, early planting season, commencing around March to April and late planting season commencing around July to August. This pattern allows for the cultivation of melon crop twice in a year by the farmers. However, inter-cropping is a prevalent practice throughout the entire study area.

### **Sampling procedure and sample size:**

The target population of this study consisted of melon farmers in the three Local Government areas that make up Ibarapa in Oyo State. Multi-stage and purposive sampling techniques were used to select respondents for the study. They consist of male farmers and their female counterparts. On the whole, 120 melon farmers were selected in the entire study area.

### **Study variables:**

These are the levels of involvement of men and women in melon production based on responses provided by the respondents, the roles of men and women in melon production determined as the percentage of the activities performed by men and women respectively.

The research instrument used in this study was a comprehensive interview schedule. It consists of both open and close ended questions related to the objectives of the study. The instrument consists of questions related to the levels of involvement and the roles of men and women in the production of melon. The interview schedules were administered to respondents in their homes and villages.

