

Gender Dimension in Agricultural Food Value Chain Development in Nigeria: The Women Perspective

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Abstract

Gender issues have taken a global dimension in the recent times especially in Nigeria. Women are increasingly being involved in agricultural food value chain which contributes to economic development. Policy agenda has for decades given priority to the production sphere, where men generally predominate, and has largely neglected processing and marketing activities, where women often play a key role. The paper draws on available empirical literature evidence for the study. Aggregate data shows that women comprise about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force globally and in developing countries contributing 60 to 80 percent of total farm and non-farm task. Their access to resources and opportunities to enable them move from subsistence agriculture to higher value chains is much lower than men's. Women farmers and entrepreneurs face a number of disadvantages, including lower mobility, less access to training, less access to market and information, and less access to productive resources such as credit, land and labour saving processing technologies. Evidence suggests that women tend to lose income and control as a product moves from the farm to the market. Despite their significant presence in the sector, most agricultural data collection systems fail to capture the actual contributions of women to value chain development and as such generally remain disadvantaged throughout the value chain, with their productive potential unrealized. There is much diversity in women's roles and over-generalization undermines policy relevance and planning. Government and policy makers should put in place policies and interventions that can improve women potentials through providing access and control to key productive assets required for value chain development and create linkages among food value chain players in order to capitalize on new market opportunities along emerging food value chains that will have further implications on food and nutrition security and household welfare in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Women, Agriculture, Food Value Chain, Development, Nigeria*

1.0 Introduction

Gender issues have taken a global dimension in the recent times especially in Nigeria. Women are increasingly being involved in agricultural food value chain that contributes to economic development. Development literature is replete with evidence of high level of involvement of women in agricultural production and value addition activities in Nigeria. Aggregate data shows that women comprise about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force globally and in developing countries. Policy agenda has for decades given priority to the production sphere, where men generally predominate, and has largely neglected processing and marketing activities, where women often play a key role. In sub-Saharan Africa, women provide up to 80% of the labor used to produce food destined for household consumption or for sale (FAO, 2005). In Nigeria particularly, women play a vital role in agricultural food value chain, making up to two- third of the global agricultural workforce (Ayoade, 2011), producing about 60-80 percent of total output (Buckland and Halegoah, 1996; Rahman *et al.* 2004) and contribute more than two-thirds of their produce towards household subsistence (Ayoola, 1999; Rahman, 2008). Studies conducted on the contribution of women to agricultural development in the country suggest that women contribution to farm work is as high as between 60 and 90% of the total farm and off-farm task performed which ranges from such tasks as land clearing, land-tilling, planting, weeding, fertilizer/manure application to harvesting, food processing, threshing, winnowing, milling, transportation and marketing as well as the management of livestock (Damisa *et al.*2007).

Agricultural food value chain approach has become an increasingly important framework for examining change in the global trade commodities and their implications for women producers. It encompasses the whole lot of activities from production, processing distribution and marketing of specific traded commodity and identifies the main stakeholders involved at each stage, including research and development. Value Chain development reside at the core of high-impact and sustainable initiatives focused on improving women productivity, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) growth. Value Chain thinking is revolutionizing the agriculture and food industry. Focus has shifted from agricultural production to consumer demand, marketing and the coordination of product flows from producer to consumer. The concept acknowledges that production must be linked to demand and the critical role of organizing the flow from farmer to consumer opportunities (Porter, 1985; FAO, 2012). Studies by Sharon (2008) viewed that both women and men play critical roles in agriculture throughout the world, producing, processing and providing the food we eat. Women increasingly supply national and international markets with traditional and high-value produce, but compared to men, women in Nigeria still form an underclass and lack equality of opportunity, both in the contributions they make to value chain development and the benefits they receive from it (Ajani, 2008). Their access to resources and opportunities to enable them move from subsistence agriculture to higher value chains is much lower than men's. Women farmers and entrepreneurs face a number of disadvantages, including lower mobility, less access to training, less access to market and information, and less access to productive resources such as credit, land and labour saving processing technologies that would suit their physique (Folasade, 1991). Evidence suggests that women tend to lose income and control as a product moves from the farm to the market (Gurung 2006). However, despite the significant presence of women in the agriculture particularly in food value chain development, most agricultural data collection systems fail to capture the actual contributions of small-scale women farmers to food value chain development and as such generally remain disadvantaged throughout the food value chain, with their productive

potential unrealized. This is why this paper focuses on gender dimension in food value chain development in Nigeria with the primary objective of ascertaining the role of women and their challenges towards this regard.

2.0 Agricultural Value Chain Development and Gender Perspective in Nigeria

Agriculture remains the dominant sector in the rural areas of Nigeria where over 70% of Nigerians reside. Agriculture contributes about 40% of Nigeria's GDP and provides livelihood for about 70% of the population; hence the importance of agricultural sector in the overall Nigerian economy cannot be overemphasized. As leading donors adopt value chain approaches to agricultural development, there is a strong imperative to consider gender issues. The Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) Project's approach to Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains is built on the growing body of empirical evidence that addressing gender issues in value chains can improve program outcomes. Developing value chains and supporting gender equity are mutually supportive goals. Gender participation in agricultural production, processing, marketing and the right to agricultural production input has increased significantly in Nigeria in recent times. Gender refers to social constructed role difference between men and women for the purpose of allocating powers, duties, status, responsibilities and role in any given social milieu or context (USAID, 2005). It deals with the social relationship between men and women and how these relationships are negotiated in the production of goods and services (Ironkwe, 2011). Such gender relations exist in agricultural Food value chain where men and women have different roles, priorities, opportunities and constraints. Lack of gender consideration has often led to failure of different Popular programmes in the past (Ekpo, 1999). Value chains encompass the full range of activities and services required to bring a product or service from its conception to sale in its final markets—whether local, national, regional or global. Value chains include input suppliers, producers, processors and buyers actively supported by a range of technical, business and financial service providers.

Gender is important because men and women often perform different tasks within food value chains, and have different assets, skills, experience, knowledge and decision-making roles. However, the invisibility of women's roles in official agriculture statistics, coupled with the negative impacts of gender-blind policies, leave women facing discrimination and marginalization within the sector. Despite some positive changes such as women's group food crop enterprises or women's growing role in industrial agribusiness, women generally remain disadvantaged throughout the food value chain, with their productive potential unrealized. Given the importance of agricultural development as a springboard to economic growth and enhanced food security, there are several compelling reasons for development programs to explicitly examine gender issues and proactively integrate gender components into value chain analysis and development strategies. Value chain programs, when designed with gender equitable principles, can foster both competitiveness and gender equity goals to enhance poverty-reduction impacts and food security both at household and national levels.

3.0 Concept of Value Chain

The value chain concept is a useful analytic tool to understand a series of production and postproduction activities—whether it is a basic crop, such as vegetables, or a highly processed good, such as cotton textile—and the enterprises and individuals who are involved. A value chain incorporates the full range of activities required to bring a product or service from conception to production, delivery to consumers, and final disposal after use (Kaplinsky and Morris 2002). The concept of value addition is a vital component of the overall strategy for addressing global market competition, post-harvest losses and food security. The value

chain approach is not new. It builds on subsector analysis and was first popularized by Michael Porter, a professor at Harvard Business School, more than 20 years ago. The approach has continued to evolve, however. USAID's articulation of the value chain approach retains Porter's focus on the importance of competitiveness strategies and incorporates work on global value chains, governance and industrial upgrading conducted by Gary Gereffi (sociology professor, Duke University), John Humphrey (sociology professor, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, UK) and Hubert Schmitz (development economist, IDS). It also draws heavily on lessons learned in the field by an array of practitioners over more than five years. The strategy of value addition on agricultural food produce provides ample opportunity for revenue generation, employment generation and effective post harvest management.

Agriculture is evolving towards a global system requiring high-quality, competitive products and organized in value chains. Value chain analysis was originally developed for manufacturing (Gereffi, 1994). Then, Gibbon (2001) emphasised the relevance of value chain analysis for agricultural commodities as well. The relevance for agricultural commodities became particularly clear when the approach became applied to high-value produce within the so-called "buyer-driven" chains (Dolan and Humphrey, 2001; Dolan, et al., 1999; Ponte, 2002). Value Chain Analysis is a tool that facilitates investigation of business activities in terms of new value-adding opportunities in relation to existing values with regards to sourcing of factors of inputs, production, processing and delivery of the finished product (FAO, 2005). According to Frank Hartwich et al (2010), the potential for the development of agricultural value chains in Nigeria is substantial and promising, both from the supply and demand perspectives (sufficient natural resources as well as large domestic market opportunities for export). Value chain development has become a reliable tool for stimulating sustainable agricultural investments. The value chain analysis, however, starts from the perspective of the end market, to determine the products they want and how the greatest value can be shared down the chain as the actors work to produce those products. Gender differences are at work in the full range of activities making up value chains. A gender approach to value chain analysis makes it possible to consider the access to productive activities of men and women individually and in groups, differential gender-based opportunities for upgrading within the chain, the gender-based division of activities in a given value chain, and how gender power relations affect economic rents among actors throughout the chain. The process of value chain suggests ways of making value chains work for smaller actors—especially women working as farmers or in micro- and small enterprises by enabling them to capture a larger slice of the revenues. It highlights the importance of building trust and understanding among partners in a targeted value chain. It emphasizes the need to strengthen relationships between partners to open channels for the transfer of technology, information, and gains. Because men and women usually pursue distinct activities in value chains, building mutual understanding of their respective needs and responsibilities as “chain actors” ensures that product quality is maintained as it passes along the chain, which results in efficiency gains. Greater equity gains can be achieved by encouraging women to take on new roles in value chains, for example, by engaging in value adding strategies.

4.0 Role of Women in Food Value Chain Development in Nigeria

The United Nations International Decade for Women, which was marked in 1985, has helped to stimulate official awareness of the increasing impoverishment of women and of the central role they play in the agricultural economies of Third World countries. Perry (1985) pointed out clearly that while agricultural planners often stereotype women as consumers rather than producers, rural women actually account for more than half of the food produced in the

developing countries and also play a leading role in the storage, processing and marketing of food. He reported that in Africa, women actually account for as much as 80 percent of the food production. Apata , 2013, Mgbada, 2000, and IFAD, 2007 opined that about 60-80 percent of the total agricultural labor force comes from women. Value-chain development projects have increasingly been promoted as a way to link smallholder women farmers to market which aim to increase the productivity and efficiency of actions and organizational links that move a product or service from conception through a series of steps, including production, processing, marketing, and delivery to final consumers and finally through consumption and disposal (Rubin and Manfre 2012). In Nigeria, Women play prominent roles in food value chain development which cuts across production, processing and marketing. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (1998) notes that women's contribution to the production of food crops ranges from 30 per cent to 80 per cent in Africa with estimates for most countries tending toward the higher end of the scale. Women are responsible for 70 per cent of food production, 50 per cent of domestic food storage, 100 per cent of food processing, 50 per cent of animal husbandry and 60 per cent of agricultural marketing. Agricultural Food value chain is an integral part of the notion of “motherhood” in African countries. Henn (1983) suggested that failure to recognize women’s crucial roles in value chain tends to produce interventions in the food sector which can erode traditional women farmer’s ability to respond to the increasing urban demand for food and thwart their efforts to adequately feed their families. The development of food value chain became imperative for a sustainable food sector to raise rural incomes, permit the transition of subsistent agricultural farming system to a sustainable market-driven system and standardize food products’ supply lines in West Africa particularly in Nigeria. In many African countries, especially in Nigeria, women are the primary labour force on small farms. They play major roles in hoeing, weeding, transporting, processing, storage and marketing of agricultural products. Different studies have identified and documented the invaluable role of women in agricultural food value chain in various parts of the world. What is not certain, however, is the level of women participation in the various activities in the food chain. Agricultural value chain development can increase rural incomes and purchasing power for large numbers of people, especially for women. Unfortunately, research and development programs rarely target rural women; as a result they are denied access to skills and new technologies (Satyavathi et al., 2010). Women face numerous obstacles to access productive inputs, assets and services; these obstacles not only heighten their vulnerability to food insecurity, but also considerably reduce their contribution to overall agricultural food value chain development. It has been established that in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is gender inequality in farmers’ access to adequate productive resources such as land, credit, agricultural inputs, education, extension services, and appropriate technology; and that results in relative inefficiencies of female farmers (Fabiya *et al.* 2007).

Empirical studies by Damisa and Yohanna (2007) stated that the role of women in agricultural food value chain in Nigeria can never be underestimated. Rural and national developments can hardly be achieved with the neglect of this important and substantial segment of the society. In recognition of the critical need to respond to the diverse opportunities and constraints presented by gender relations in Nigeria, the federal government has made it a priority to include women in efforts to modernize the agricultural sector and is committed to removing the constraints that limit women from contributing fully to food security. Despite their contribution to global food security, women farmers are frequently underestimated and overlooked in development strategies. Women’s substantial contribution continues to be under-valued in conventional agricultural and economic analyses and policies, while men’s contribution remains the central, often sole focus of attention (Fabiya *et*

al. 2007). However, there is much diversity in women's roles and over-generalization undermines policy relevance and planning.

5.0 Challenges of Women in Food Value Chain Development in Nigeria

A number of different factors present challenges providing the right incentives for reaching end market opportunities for women involved in food value chain development. The challenges and constraints that have made it impossible for women to reach their potentials in food value chain have been discussed severally. These include;

i. Lack of Basic Physical Infrastructure and Essential Services: Basic infrastructural facilities like electricity, water and transport are lacking in most part of the country particularly in the rural areas where majority of women farmers live. These infrastructures are considered critical for there to be any meaningful development in the food value chain process.

ii. Lack of Access to land: Women are constrained with access to land. Agricultural intensification, population growth and economic change have led to substantive shifts from common property systems of tenure towards more centralized resource control. In the process, women and poorer people generally have lost out. Women rarely own land and when they do; their holdings tend to be smaller and less fertile than those of men.

iii. Lack of Appropriate Technology and Machinery for Production and Processing of Agricultural Products: The absence of appropriate processing technology and the obsolete nature of existing machinery and equipment constitute great hindrance to agro raw materials processing in the country. Most of the processing equipments are not built to suite the women physique. In addition, the machines are outdated and lack the necessary spare parts for their maintenance. Consequently, the efficiency and product quality of the output are greatly affected.

iv. Difficulties in Accessing Credit Facilities for Investment in Agriculture Food Value Chain: Investment in the sector is usually capital intensive and consequently, fund sourcing is a necessary aspect of the enterprise. However, it is extremely difficult for women to access credit for working capital from the financial institutions for agribusiness ventures than their male counterpart. The high cost of funding arises from the depreciation of the local currency (Naira) against major currencies coupled with high lending rates. Presently, the lending rates fluctuate between 16 – 25% in some banks. The high lending rate encourages service business such as trading and imports rather than productive venture in the agribusiness sector.

v. Apathy towards Investment in the Agricultural Sector: There is great apathy towards investing in the agricultural sector of the economy. Preference is rather given to trade than real sector. This is because of the get-rich-quick attitude of the people at the expense of enduring and sustainable economic ventures like agro industrial processing (value addition).

vi. Poor Entrepreneurship Development: The women entrepreneur is the central actor in the process of change. There is a dearth of well trained and experienced human resource in the various fields of agricultural development particularly value chain development. This has negatively affected the level of participation by women and their activities in the full exploration and exploitation of the abundant agricultural resources in the Country.

vii. Policy Issues and Challenges: There is currently no separate policy articulation for the development of agribusiness except for the brief objectives stated in the 1988 Agricultural Policy for Nigeria document for agricultural commodity processing. The Nigeria agricultural policy is outdated and inconsistent with the situation of today. Most regulations and laws change frequently or are inconsistently applied and are not gender sensitive, causing uncertainties in production, processing and market prices of products, hence unpredictable projections in return on investments and lack of protection for local women producers/processors due to inconsistency of policies.

viii. Weak Linkages between Agriculture and Industry and Poor Marketing: One of the constraints to the development of agricultural food value addition in Nigeria is the inability of the Agricultural sector to harness the Research and Development results coming out of research centres into innovations. Most research findings in Nigeria do not get to the market because there is a very weak link between research and implementation. Both sectors appear to be working independently. There also exist weak linkages among food value chain players which also hamper women potential to capitalize on new market opportunities along changing or emerging food value chains.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper re-affirms that women make essential contributions to agriculture food value chain across the country and world at large. Women are vital instrument for any meaningful development in food value chain in Nigeria given the country's enormous agricultural resources which when fully harnessed and developed can generate more revenue for the country, create more jobs and is capable of solving most of the socio-economic challenges facing the country today particularly in the areas of gender inequality, women empowerment and food security. However, there is much diversity in women's roles and over-generalization undermines policy relevance and planning. In order to harness and develop these resources, the value chain approach currently being promoted by the Federal Government which is aimed at addressing technological, infrastructure and finance challenges in the entire chain from production, handling, preservation, processing, distribution and marketing of selected agricultural products needs to be supported and pursued robustly.

Nigeria can achieve self sufficiency in food and raw material production in key agricultural sectors by 2015 under the Transformation Agenda of the present administration. This can be achieved through the pragmatic integration of women in all facets of the value chain development process as well as creating policies and interventions that can improve the potentials of women farmers through providing them access and control to key productive assets required for value chain development, labour-saving technologies, especially those targeting women who perform the hard labour associated with field operations and food value addition; as well as create linkages among food value chain players in order to capitalize on new market opportunities along changing or emerging food value chains that will have further implications on food and nutrition security and household welfare in Nigeria.

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