

## AN ASSESSMENT OF GENDER INVOLVEMENT IN CROP PRODUCTION: A CASE OF KOLA PRODUCTION IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

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The study investigated the gender involvement in kola production in the study area. Structured questionnaires were used to select 200 respondents for the study and the study was conducted between June and July 2007. The data collected was analysed with descriptive analysis. Result shows that more males were involved in farm clearing (83.6%), chemical application (81.8%) and harvesting (74.5%). However, more females were involved in on-farm kola nut processing (89.1%) as well as kola nut preservation (70.9%). The study recommended that soft loans should be made available to the farmers (kola farmers) and that improved processing methods geared toward improved storage should be introduced.

Keywords: *Gender, kola nut, chemical application, harvesting.*

### INTRODUCTION

Kola, which belongs to the family sterculiaceae, has long history in West Africa, its use features prominently in religious, social and ritual activities of West Africa. They are found relevant in ceremonies related to marriage, child naming, funerals and in consulting various gods and goddess as the case may be. Johannas Leo Africanus was the first person to refer to kola nut in 1556. The Portuguese, Odorado Lapez recorded the occurrence of kola tree in Congo in 1591 followed by Andre Alvares, who saw them in Gambia and Guinea in 1954 (Opeke,1987). Subsequently, the tree was recorded along the West Coast of Africa from Gambia to Angola.

*Cola nitida* was originally distributed along the West Coast of Africa from Sierra-Leone to the Republic of Benin (Opeke, 1987) with highest frequency and variability in the forest area of Ivory Coast (now cote D' ivoir) and Ghana. This area remained for long the only source of kola nuts to the West African trade routes.

The importance of kola nut to Nigerian economy can not be over-emphasized, kola nut as a tropical tree crop has over twenty species, out of these *cola nitida* and *cola acuminata* are the only species grown on large scale in Nigeria. Out of the two species, *cola nitida* is being traded internationally, while, the consumption of *cola acuminata* is confined to Southern Nigeria. Before the dependence of the economy on crude oil, the place of kola nut cannot be over-emphasized (Akinbode 1982). Out of the three components of kola fruit (pods) that is kola pod husk, kola testa and nuts, only the nut has been found of high economic use, either in Nigeria or in the developed countries. It was estimated that Nigeria produces about 127500 tons of the fresh nuts annually; representing 70% of the world production (Pala, 1976) about 90% of this amount is consumed in Nigeria and some neighboring West African Countries (Van Eijjinnatten, 1964). It was also estimated that the internal kola nut market in Nigeria worth's about ₦30 million (Pala, 1976). In 1970, kola nut exports fetched ₦126,000 to Nigerian government. Kola pod husk, which has been considered wasted on the farm in the past, has been processed as diet, this ensure 60% replacement of maize in poultry feed formulation. Also, kola testa, which is found in small quantity, has been used in some feed formulation (Hamzat and Jayeola, 2002). This showed that the whole kola fruit has considerable economic uses.

Prior to the colonization of most African countries, tree cropping was mainly undertaken by men folk. But studies, such as Pala (1976) and Mertha (1982) have shown that colonial economy adversely affected traditional pattern of task allocation. These writers noted that the disruption of the pre-colonial division of labour between sexes in the rural communities, as a result of male absenteeism from the countryside. In line with the fact that wage employment draws men away from their own farms, and western education changing men's attitude about agriculture, many women were found doing what was traditionally meant for men. In several parts of sub-Saharan Africa, women undertake up to 70 percent of production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products. In kola production, there are different stages involved; and in each stage both men and women are involved but in some cases in different intensities. This study examines the extent of gender involvement in kola production in the study area.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in five Local government areas of Osun State, Nigeria between June and July, 2007. The sampled Local government areas are Ede North, Ife North, Ife South, Iwo and Osogbo. A total of two hundred

respondents were randomly selected from the study areas at the rate of forty respondents per local government area. Information was collected from the respondents with the aid of structured questionnaires. Questions such as age, educational level, farm ownership pattern, marital status, gender, stages involved in kola nut production as well as the problems encountered in the course of their work were asked. The data obtained from the information collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents*

Table 1 show that 83.6% of the respondents were male while 16.4% were females. This shows that there were more males in the study area than females. The implication of this is that there would be more hands to do tedious operations in kola production. Such tedious operations could include clearing, chemical application as well as harvesting. All these operations require much strength, which could easily be provided by the males. Table 1 also showed that 75.4% of the total respondents acquired their farmland through inheritance. Out of this, 72.7% of them were males while 2.7% were female – showing that there were more males involving in acquiring farmland through inheritance than females. Also, 3.6% and 7.3% of the respondents acquired their farmlands through purchases and rented on yearly basis respectively. The result however revealed that inheritance is the land ownership pattern that is common in the study area. The age distribution shows that 70.9% of the respondents are above 56 years of age while 29.1% of the respondents are above their active stage. This may have negative impact on the farm size as aged people may not have enough strength to cultivate large farms. However on the other hand, the development may have positive impact on the farming experience. Older farmers would have more experience than the younger ones. Table 1 also showed that 85.4% of the respondents were married while the rest were not married. The implication of this finding is that there is possibility of more availability of family labour. As regards the educational level of the respondents, Table 1 showed that 66.4% of the respondents had no formal education while 33.6% had formal education. Hence majority of the respondents had no formal education. This may reduce the respondent's efficiency, as only few of them may be able to adopt and practice new technologies on their farm. The level of adoption of a technology by a farmer is determined by the level of education of the farmer (Oluyole, 2005).

### *Gender involvement in production stages of kola nut*

Table 2 shows that five stages of production were identified in kola production. The stages are farm clearing, chemical application, harvesting, on-farm processing and kola nut preservation. The result shows that 83.6% of the respondents involved in farm clearing were male while 16.4% were female. Hence, more males were involved in farm clearing than females. This is quite obvious because farm clearing is a tedious operation, hence not many females will be able to have enough strength to carry out the operation.

Table 2 also shows that 81.8% of the respondents involved in chemical application were males while 18.2% were females. Therefore, there were more males involved in chemical application than females. The finding is logic in as much that chemical application also requires much strength which could only be provided by males. 74% of the respondents involved in harvesting were males while 25.5% of the respondents were females. Hence, more males were involved in kola nut harvesting team females. However, it could be observed in Table 2 that 89.1% of the total respondents involved in on-farm processing were females – while just 10.9% were males. Hence, on farm kola females in the study area mostly undertake processing. As regards preservation of kola nut, 70.9% of the respondents that were involved in this operation were females while 29.1% were males showing that there were more females involved in this operation than males.

It could be observed that females mostly undertook on-farm processing as well as preservation operations. This is quite obvious in as much that these operations do not require much strength hence more females would find it so easy to undertake them. Meanwhile, some of the problems faced by the respondents in the course of their work are lack of capital, lack of good storage facilities, lack of good roads and fluctuations in price.

## CONCLUSION

There were more male respondents (83.6%) than female respondents (16.4%) in the study area. Most (66.4%) of the respondents had no formal education while only 33.6% of the respondents had formal education. The identified stages in kola nut production in the study area are farm clearing, chemical application, kola nut harvesting, on-farm processing of kola nut as well as kola nut preservation. More males were involved in farm clearing (83.6%), chemical application (81.8%) and harvesting (74.5%) while there were more females involved in on-farm kola nut processing (89.1%) as well as kola nut preservation (70.9%).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Illiterate farmers among the respondents should be encouraged on their need to acquire formal education, as this would make them to be more efficient in their production. The encouragement could be in form of granting free adult education.
2. Policies to make loans available to farmers should be initiated, as the importance of capital cannot be over emphasized in kola nut production.
3. Improved processing methods geared towards improved storage and enhancement of the nutritive value of kola nut should be introduced in the study area.

Table 1. Socio – Economic Characteristic of Kola Farmers

Characteristics	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	167	83.6	33	16.4
<b>Ownership pattern</b>				
(1) Inheritance	145	72.7	5	2.7
Purchased	7.0	3.6	7	3.6
Rented on yearly basis	15	7.3	20	10.0
<b>Age Distribution of respondents</b>				
26 – 35	7	3.6	2	0.9
36 – 45	15	7.3	4	1.8
46 – 55	27	13.6	4	1.8
56 – 65	54	27.3	9	4.5
Above 65	64	31.8	15	7.3
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	5	2.7	0	0
Married	162	80.9	9	4.5
Widowed/Separated	0	0	24	11.8
<b>Educational Level</b>				
No formal Education	113	56.4	20	10
Adult literacy school	22	10.9	5	2.7
Primary Education	18	9.1	4	1.8
Secondary Education	11	5.5	2	0.9
Tertiary Education	0	0	0	0

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Table 2. Stages in kola nut production

Stages	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Farm clearing	167	83.6	33	16.4
Chemical application	163	81.8	37	18.2
Harvesting	149	74.5	51	25.5
On farm processing	21	10.9	179	89.1
Preservation	58	29.1	142	70.9

Source: Field survey, 2007.

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