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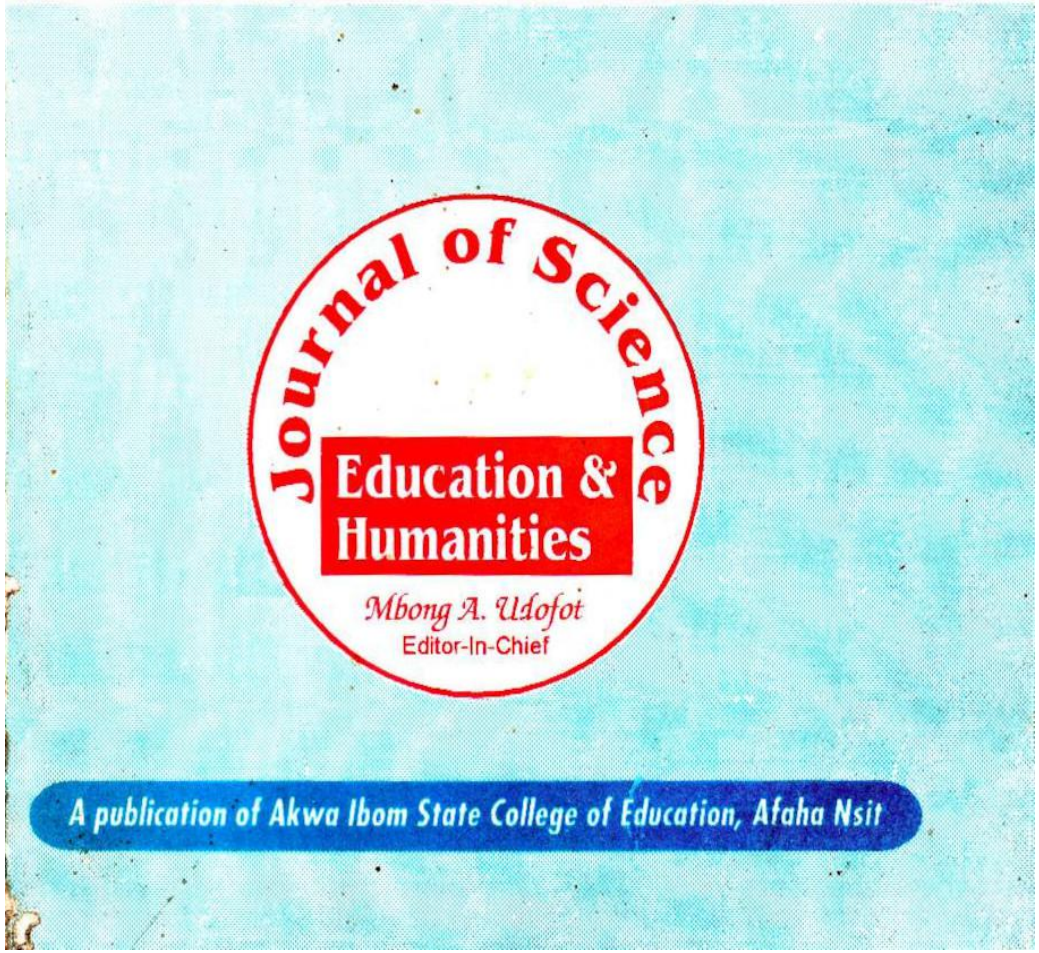

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GENDER PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED VEGETABLE PRODUCTION IN AKWA IBOM STATE

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research was carried out to investigate the vegetable production in Akwa Ibom State between January 1994 - February, 1995. The data were collected through the use of structural questionnaire. Two thousand and seventy farmers (683 males and 1387 females) were sample across Akwa Ibom State. In all, women constituted 67% while men formed only 33% of the vegetable growers in Akwa Ibom State. The average farm size for males and females ranged from 0.01 - 0.90 ha and 0.01 - 0.50 respectively. The order of estimated quantity of vegetable produced/annum was found to be fluted pumpkin> waterleaf> okro> pepper> garden egg> tomatoes. Females played significant role than males in the production of vegetable in Akwa Ibom State.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, researchers have paid greater attention to males than their females counterparts with regards to agricultural engagement. Consequently, research on the gender participation in production of vegetable crops has been on a limited scale. However, in the maize production practices Fortman (1979) found no difference among men and women when they are provided with similar inputs.

Hawksworth (1984) regarded vegetable as crops that are of prime importance as the major part of the food intake of the African nations. Meanwhile, the contribution of vegetable crops to our state economy is not yet visible. This phenomenon is partly as a result of the small plots on which most vegetable crops are grown. In Akwa Ibom State, farm holdings by individual farmers either males or females are relatively small. For instance, in Etinan Local Government Area, most vegetable growers have small plots of under 0.01 ha. (Annual report, 1993 AKADEP Zonal Office Etinan, Akwa Ibom State). Yet vegetable production has enormous potential for increasing individual well being especially for women in the rural areas. Aseogwu (1984) pointed

out that farmers who cultivate on small hectarages have learnt that one can earn more from growing horticultural crops.

However, the widespread trade on vegetable crops is a recent innovation and is now gaining wider appreciation owing to its demand.

In Nigeria, a wide variety of fresh vegetables are available almost everywhere particularly in Urban areas.

In the light of the above, this investigation aimed at finding out the following:

(a) The gender production levels in selected vegetable in Akwa Ibom State.

(b) The problems that are militating against vegetable production in Akwa Ibom State.

METHODOLOGY

A survey of vegetable production in Akwa Ibom State was carried out between January, 1994 to February, 1995. The method used in the data collection was stratified random sampling based on popular areas of vegetable production in the state. In all, nine local government areas namely Etinan, Eket, Itu, Ikono, Ukanafun, Oron, Nsit Ubium, Essien Udim and Ekpe Atai were sampled acrossed the state.

Two thousand and seventy (2070) farmers were sampled, using structured 21 - item questionnaire. The statistical procedures employed were simple percentages and chi-square analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Gender Participation in the Vegetable Production in Akwa Ibom State.

LOCAL GOVT. AREA	NOS OF FARMERS		TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	
	Males	Females		Males	Females
Eket	60	150	210	28.6	71.4
Oron	75	114	219	34.2	65.8
Etinan	80	160	240	33.3	66.7
Essien Udim	65	154	219	29.7	70.3
Ikono	93	130	223	41.7	58.3
Nsit Ubium	70	178	248	28.2	71.8
Ukanafun	80	140	220	36.4	63.6
Ekpe Atai	72	167	239	30.1	69.9
Itu	88	164	252	34.9	65.1
Total	683	1387	2070	AVE.33.0	67

The result showed that women were the majority in the production of vegetables in each of the sampled areas. The percentages of men and women population that involved in the vegetable production were found to be 33 and 67 respectively. The reason could be that more men engaged themselves in other economic activities like fishing especially in the riverine areas. In addition, women have natural interest to produce vegetable to supplement the food needs of their families.

The findings also showed that the first school leavers and those who could not complete primary school formed 50% (15% males, 35% females) of the vegetables growers in Akwa Ibom State followed by illiterates (15% males, 25% females) while the secondary school leavers and above formed only 10% of the growers, perhaps due to their growing interest in the white collar job. However, they grow almost the same kinds of vegetable on a small scale using a farm size of 0.01 - 0.8 ha.

Table 2: Education Level, Farm Size and Selected Vegetable Produced by Vegetable Growers in Akwa Ibom State

Level of Education	No of farmers Males	Females	Total	Percentage Males	Females	Kinds of Vegetables produced	Farm size Males	Females
Cannot Read Write	311	517	828	15	25	Fluted pumpkin	0.2-0.6	0.01-0.4
Cannot complete Primary/ First Sch. Leavers	311	724	1035	15	25	Okra, Water-leaf and pepper	0.2-0.65	0.25- 0.5
School Cert. and Above	61	146	207	3	7	Fluted pumpkin, tomatoes, pepper and waterleaf	0.5-0.8	0.4-0.7
Total	683	1367	2070	33	67			

The result also indicated that 80% of the vegetable growers embarked on compound production (Table 3). Moreover, they also extended their production to distant farms and swampy areas. The limited swampy areas are mainly used for dry season cultivation hence vegetable scarcity is common during the dry season.

Table 3: Location of vegetable farms and kinds of vegetable produced in Akwa Ibom State.

Kinds of Vegetables Produced	Farm Location	Males	Females	Total	%
Fluted pumpkin, Waterleaf, pepper, Okro, Tomatoes and Garden egg	Compound Production/Distant farm/ Swampy Area	295	633	928	44.8
Fluted Pumpkin, Waterleaf, Pepper, Okro, Tomatoes and Garden egg	Compound/ Distant Farms	262	449	811	39.2
Water leaf, Pepper, Okro Garden eggs & Fluted pumpkin	Swampy Area only	126	205	331	16
Total		683	1387	2070	

The order of estimated quantity of vegetable produced per annum was found to be fluted pumpkin> waterleaf> okro> pepper> garden egg> tomatoes (Table 4).

Table 4: Average Quantity of Vegetable Produced/ Annum by Individual Farmers in Akwa Ibom State.

kinds of percentage vegetables Produced	Estimated Quantity of Vegetables/ annum(Kg)	Nos.of Farmers		Total	Percentage	
		M	F		M	F
Fluted-Pumpkin	2500-5000	350	750	1100	16.9	36
Water-leaf	1200-3500	98	302	400	4.7	14.6
Okro	1000-1500	85	165	250	4.1	8.0
Pepper	500-1000	42	123	165	2.0	5.9
Garden-egg	1000-1500	67	181	85	3.2	0.8
Tomatoes	200- 500	41	25	70	2.0	1.2
Total		683	1387	2070		

M = males F = Females

The farmers in Akwa Ibom are used to the production of fluted pumpkin and moreover, it is the cheapest leafy vegetable consumed in the state. The low production level of tomatoes could be due to the prevalent unfavourable climatic factors such as heavy rainfall and inadequate sunshine in the state during the cropping season.

The common problems facing the vegetable growers in Akwa Ibom State were lack of fertilizer, modern storage facility, inadequate farmland, poor financing and lack of irrigation system (Table 5)

Table 5: Common Problems of Vegetable Problem in Akwa Ibom State

Problems	Number of Farmers						Percentage	
	Positive Response		Percentage		Nagative Response			
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
*Lack of fertilizer	227	580	11	28	456	807	22.0	39
**Use of Modern Storage facilities	38	21	1.8	1.0	645	1366	31.2	66
Inadequate farm land	683	1387	100	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Inadeqate finance	683	1387	100	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Lack of Irrigation System	683	1387	100	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Pest and diseases	683	1387	100	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

M = Males F = Females

*P = 0.05, X^2 = (Males) 1.008 < 3.84, (Females) o.39 < 3.84

** P = 0.05 (Males) 15.97 > 3.84 (Females) 64.05 > 3.84

It was noted that 22% males and 39% females did not apply fertilizer to the vegetable crops. The result further revealed that lack of fertilizer was not found to be difference at 5% probalbility level between the positive and negative responses of both males 91.008 < 3.84) and females (0.39 < 3.84).

However lack of modern storage facility was found to be significantly ifferent at 5% probability level between the positive and negative responses of both ales (15.97> 3.84) and females (64.05> 3.84) indicating that modern storage facility as an outstanding problems common to both males and females vegetable growers. roblems of inadequate farmland, poor financing, lack of irrigation, pests and iseases were common to all the farmers. The existing problems could be due to their oor economic base, poor level of technology and poor attention to vegetable oduction by the state government.

CONCLUSION

The vegetable crops commonly produced in Akwa Ibom State are fluted pumpkin, waterleaf, pepper, okro, garden egg and tomatoes. The production is mostly at subsistence level within house of residence (Home gardening).

The number of females participation in the vegetable production doubled that of males. The average farm size used by the vegetable growers in Akwa Ibom State ranged from 0.01 - 0.80 hectare. However, the males used larger farm size than females.

Vegetable production problems in the state included poor financing, inadequate farmland, poor storage facilities, lack of irrigation system, pests and diseases. Both males and females vegetable growers are facing almost similar production problems. Females played more significant role than males in the production of vegetable in Akwa Ibom State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

(1) provision of irrigation scheme to vegetable growers in the state by Akwa Ibom State Government should be a priority to boost all year round production.

(2) The women in particular should form women vegetable growers society to pool their resources together to enable them solve their production problems.

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