

Role of Women in Agricultural and Rural Development in West Africa

Simperegui Yvette B¹, Miassi Yann ES^{2*} and Dossa Fabrice K³

¹Department of Rural Economics and Sociology, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Parakou, Benin

²Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Cukurova, Turkey

³Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nigeria, Nigeria

***Corresponding author:** Yann Miassi ES, Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Cukurova, 01330, Bacali, Adana, Turkey, Tel: 0905418187396; Email: simpereguiyvette@gmail.com

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In Africa, women perform the majority of agricultural activities. They are the key to the well-being of their families [1]. In Benin, like other West African countries, women are in high demand in the agricultural sector. Agriculture is the main activity of the population, especially in rural areas, with women accounting for 42.2% of the 65.5% of active population [2]. Among the activities carried out by these women we can mention the agricultural exploitation, food transformation, trade in agricultural products [3]. These activities allow them to spend the expenses assigned to them in the household and thus play their roles as foster mothers. Among the expenses we have the expenses of feeding, education of the children, clothing, religious ceremonies, expenses of health [4]. This explains the presence of women in several fields of activity with the aim of diversifying their sources of income and thus ensuring their roles as housewives. This paper highlights the role of women in rural areas.

Role of Women in Agricultural Production

In agricultural production, nearly 70% of the workforce is female [5]. Women participate in sowing, weeding, harvesting, and storing crops [6]. It should be noted that this work is carried out by women and children in the family fields as a caregiver. However, they may also

be labor for money or without remuneration provided that the labor "offered" is returned to them later. Among the main productions, we have corn, beans and soybeans. Women are also found in the production of food crops such as okra, tomato, amaranth, etc which are sold in local markets to feed their family members [7]. As women are highly sought after as agricultural laborers, they represent a potential actor in the production of agricultural products.

Importance of Women in their Rural Households

Women are very dynamic economic agents [8]. In the household, they are expected to assume certain responsibilities that influence their ability to carry out economic activities [9]. These responsibilities include cooking, raising children, child health costs, clothing, water and wood gathering [10]. Indeed, women add a portion of their agricultural products to that provided by the household head to provide food for the family. The other part is sold and the income is used for the purchase of condiments, children's health expenses, children's education and clothing. Women, conscious of the weight of their responsibilities and having no remuneration, are turning to income-generating activities in order to

diversify their sources of income. In the household, although the head of the household provides some of the household's food, there are still important responsibilities for the woman. In addition to the functions listed above, it is also responsible for processing agricultural products before consumption. It must therefore be remembered that, through its multiple functions, women represent the "heart" of the household for which they are responsible.

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