Gender and sweetpotato production in Nigeria

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SPHI 4th Annual Technical Meeting
October 8, 2013, Kumasi, Ghana
Facts about Nigeria


Ethnic groups: 250+

SP production: 3.9 million metric tons per year, 2nd largest producer in Africa

29.5% of under fives suffer from VAD

Renewed interest in sweetpotato research and development with focus on OFSP
Why the need for a gender situation analysis?

• To ensure wider impact of SP on household food security and poverty reduction, we need to understand the social systems supporting sweetpotato production

• Little is known about gender roles and responsibilities

• Strong assumption that men predominate in production and women engage in sale and processing
Objectives of gender situation analysis

Collect information on:

- Gender roles and responsibilities and household decision-making
- Varietal preferences
- Production practices and constraints
- Vine sources

Research questions

Are there differences between men and women in terms of:

- Market orientation? Varietal preferences?
- What are the gender-based production constraints?
- What are the gender-based constraints to accessing vines?
Methodology

- Locations in 3 key SP producing states (Nasarawa, Kwara, Ebonyi) identified to capture diversity of gender roles and responsibilities

- 9 locations, 3 per state

- Fieldwork carried out May 2012-May 2013

- Group interviews conducted with 402 farmers (209 women; 193 men)

- Key informant interviews with 18 women and 18 men
Study locations

Nasarawa
- Predominantly Muslim
- Savannah agro-ecology
- 3rd largest producer of SP

Kwara
- Muslim and Christian
- Forest agro-ecology
- 4th largest producer of SP

Ebonyi
- Christian
- Forest agro-ecology
- 5th largest producer of SP
Who grows sweetpotato? Changing gender trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nasarawa</th>
<th>Kwara</th>
<th>Ebonyi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who grew SP</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Mainly men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditionally?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% female farmers,</td>
<td>20-40*</td>
<td>30-50*</td>
<td>60-75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* Range for LGA

Increased cultivation by both male and female farmers with commercialization from early 2000:

- Increase in number of women/men growing the crop
- Larger farms
- Focus on marketable varieties

Nasarawa: “Men were not releasing enough sweetpotato for household consumption; they were selling most of the sweetpotato they produced”

Ebonyi: “We (men) started growing sweetpotato when we realized we could make money from it”
His, hers or theirs?

• Crop grown on individually owned plots by men and women

• SP income controlled by the individual

• Husbands expected to provide bulk of sweetpotato for home consumption; wives “help”

• Nasarawa/Kwara- men provide most SP for home consumption
• Ebonyi– women provide most SP for home consumption
Allocation of sweetpotato roots harvested, first season 2012, Dorowa, Nasarawa

Female informant
- Harvested 350 kg
- 90% Sold
- 10% Food

Male informant
- Harvested 625 kg
- 80% Sold
- 20% Food
Allocation of sweetpotato roots, first season 2012, Edembia, Ebonyi

Women (n=3)
- Sold: 70%
- Food: 30%
- Average harvest: 933 kg

Men (n=2)
- Sold: 85%
- Food: 15%
- Average harvest: 2750 kg
Ranking of sweetpotato as source of income

Group ranking

Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obi, Nasarawa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayaoja, Kwara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igosun, Kwara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agbamu, Kwara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idemibia, Ebonyi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amagu, Ebonyi</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukawu, Ebonyi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4=most important source of income
Other key sources of income

- Men: yam (all states), cassava (Kwara), maize (Kwara), rice (Ebonyi)

- Women: cassava (all states), melon (Nasarawa), maize (Kwara), rice (Ebonyi)
### Who provides labour for sweetpotato activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Nasarawa</th>
<th>Kwara</th>
<th>Ebonyi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men’s farms</strong></td>
<td>Hired male and female labour</td>
<td>Hired male and female labour</td>
<td>Hired male and female labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives (planting, weeding, harvesting)</td>
<td>Some help from wives (harvesting and transporting)</td>
<td>Wives (weeding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women’s farms</strong></td>
<td>Hired male and female labour</td>
<td>Hired male and female labour</td>
<td>Hired male and female labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some help from husbands (sourcing vines, harvesting and selling)</td>
<td>Some help from husbands (making beds)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both men and women rely on hired labour for land preparation, planting, harvesting, transporting. In an increasingly commercialized system.
Preferred varietal characteristics

- High yielding
- Early maturing
- Storability (does not spoil/rot quickly)
- Not easily attacked by insects or rodents
- Large roots
- Not too sweet
- Does not produce gas (Ebonyi)
- Marketable
- White fleshed (Ebonyi)
- Low oil absorption during frying (Nasarawa)
- Sticky when pounded
- Smooth skin, easy to peel
- Cooks quickly

- Little difference in characteristics mentioned by men and women
- Women more likely to mention cooking qualities in addition to agronomic and market qualities
- No difference in number of varieties planted by gender (2-4)
- All varieties grown for both consumption and sale by both men and women
Vine sources

On-farm sources:
• Leave some roots in field to sprout at start of rains
• Plant vines in wetlands (Kwara, Ebonyi)
• Plant vines near water source close to house (Ebonyi, Nasarawa)

Most farmers regularly source vines from off-farm sources due to:
• Drought
• Cattle grazing

Village based commercial production
Vines sold from home and markets
River banks commercial production
Requires transport by motorbike or small pick-up
## Gender related production constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Gender aspect</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funds for hiring labour, inputs</td>
<td>Women have fewer income earning opportunities</td>
<td>Smaller farm size</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low yields due to low input use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing household labour</td>
<td>Women have little control over husbands’ labour for land preparation, harvesting etc</td>
<td>Smaller farm size</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to hire male labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing vines from river bank sources and markets</td>
<td>Limited mobility, fear of being cheated by male vine multipliers, cost of transportation</td>
<td>Ask husbands to buy vines, delayed planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to suitable farm land (Nasarawa)</td>
<td>Women have no control over land; less integrated into male social networks</td>
<td>Have to lease land, smaller farm size, lower production</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for designing gender equitable SP programs in Nigeria

• Investigate gender roles and responsibilities in project locations, avoid generalizations

• Focus production interventions at individual producer level, taking into account gender related constraints:
  - Develop credit facilities that meet women’s needs
  - Introduce labour saving technologies e.g. tractors and approaches that allow women to access them
  - Strengthen local level vine multiplication to improve women’s access to quality vines

• Provide training for husbands and wives on joint resource management for improved livelihoods, food security and child nutrition and nutrition education
Gender in SPHI–food for thought

- How can we integrate gender more seriously and resource gender related research and interventions?
- Do all initiatives in SPHI carry out a gender situation analysis and use the results in project design?
- Do SPHI projects incorporate interventions that seek to promote gender equity (e.g. credit, labour saving technologies etc)?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION