

## Gender Participation of Melon Farmers in Ibarapa Area of Oyo State, Nigeria

Stella O. Odebode

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,  
University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

**Abstract:** Melon is a very useful economic crop for local consumption and industrial purposes. It is useful industrially in the manufacturing of margarine, soap, pomade, adhesives, candles and lubricants. The essence of this study is to analyze gender roles in melon production activities in Oyo state. A simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty out of the one thousand, two hundred registered melon farmers of the Farmers Development Union of Ibarapa local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria. Data collected were gender disaggregated through frequency counts, percentages and T-test analysis. Personal interviews were carried out using interview schedule containing both closed and open ended questions based on the objective of the study. The results revealed that both male and female farmers engage in melon production activities [Male 99%, Female 97%]. The result also showed that tasks performed in melon production activities by both male and female was very high. Most of the adult males are engaged in various tasks which include land clearing, planting and weeding, while the adult females were engaged in seed selection, fertilizer application, seed extraction, washing, seed drying and bagging. T-test analysis showed that there was a significant difference between the male and female level of involvement in melon production among farmers in the Ibarapa area of Oyo state ( $T = 17.65$ ,  $p = 2.358$ ). The policy implication of this study for extension is that there is need to intensify extension efforts in providing information to both male and females on improving melon production. This will help to improve the standard of living of melon farmers in Oyo state and Nigeria in general.

**Key words:** Gender participation, melon farmers, oyo state

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a major sector of Nigeria's economy as it provides food and processed products for the populace as well as the provision of raw materials for agro-allied industries. One of the ways of achieving the role of the agricultural sector in Nigeria's economy is through production of vegetables. This will help to enhance the income of the rural and urban populace. The rural economy in Nigeria depends so much on both food and cash crops to improve their standard of living and enhance the income of the farmers<sup>[1]</sup>.

Vegetables in Nigeria are made up of many species and are good sources of vitamins and minerals<sup>[2]</sup> Table 1. They provide food for livestock and human beings and a large proportion of the rural people are involved in vegetable cultivation for subsistence and commercial purposes. This helps to create job opportunities for people<sup>[3]</sup>.

Melon (*Colosynthis citrullus*) has over several years been one of the major vegetable crops grown in Oyo state and its production has always involved men and women. It is known as 'egusi' in Nigeria, though the whole fruit is commonly referred to as 'bara' in

Table 1: Proximate composition of foods (per 100 grams edible portion)

	Waste g	Moisture %	KJ g	kcal g	Protein g	Fat Total g	Fat Chol g	CAR Total g	BOH Mono g	YDR Poly g	ATES Fibre g	Alcohol g	Ash g
Melon seed, dried, without shell	25	5	2370	567	28.4	52	-	8	-	-	2.7	-	3.6
Melon seed, roasted	-	5	2429	581	27.1	50.3	-	16	-	-	23	-	2.7
Melon seed, roasted, fried ('robo')	-	7	2318	554	40.4	42.0	-	4	-	-	-	-	6.6

Source: Nutrition Composition of commonly eaten foods in Nigeria, Food Basket Publication Series, 1995. Oguntona and Akinyele, 1995

Yorubaland and 'ogili' in Iboland while many people refer to the edible seeds as 'egusi' [4].

In Nigeria, rural women engage in a wide range of farming activities (including melon production) and are responsible in most cases for food production, processing, distribution, home consumption and for sale<sup>[5]</sup>. Gender analysis of roles in melon production will therefore give more information on the activities of men and women's potentials and constraints involved in melon industry. This will be used to package a new technology for melon farmers to improve their productive capacities, thereby enhancing their income welfare and social status. This study also helps to find out have gender roles in melon productions with the view to providing a basis for even distribution of agricultural inputs and credits to melon farmers, thus harnessing the potentials of men and women melon farmers for optimum and sustainable yield..

Furthermore over the years, melon crop has been one of the major vegetable crops grown in Ibarapa area of Oyo state. In Nigeria, women have demonstrated their ability to contribute to agricultural production<sup>[6]</sup>. The FAO<sup>[7]</sup> also reported that 31.6% of all agricultural workers are female. The World Bank Report of 2001 also buttressed the fact that African women work no longer hours than men in agricultural activities.

Therefore, in order to have a meaningful agricultural development, concerted efforts should be made to utilize the potentials of men and women in Nigeria. Hence policies made should have gender implications.

Despite the gender roles played by farmers in melon production, there are problems being faced by the producers. This study therefore provides answers to the following research questions.

- What proportion of melon farmers in the study area are men and women respectively?
- What are the activities involved in melon farming?
- What is the level of involvement of men and women in melon production in the study area?
- What are the sources of information available to melon farmers in the study area?

The general objective of this study is to examine the participation of farmers in melon production in Ibarapa area of Oyo state, Nigeria.

#### **Specific objectives of this study are to**

- 1 to determine the proportion of men and women farmers in Ibarapa area of Oyo state.
- 2 assess the activities of melon farmers in Ibarapa area of Oyo state.

- 3 to determine the level of involvement of men and women in melon production in Ibarapa area of Oyo state.
- 4 to identify the sources of information available to melon farmers in the study area.

**Hypothesis of the study:** This hypothesis was tested in a null form to realize the objectives of the study.

- There is no significant difference between the male and female level of involvement in melon production of farmers.

**Methodology:** This study was carried out in Ibarapa area of Oyo state. The population for the study comprised of male and female melon farmers in Ibarapa area of Oyo state. The major occupation of people in Ibarapa area of Oyo state is melon farming.

**Sampling procedure and sample size:** A simple random sampling technique was used to select 10% of melon farmers from the list of farmers obtained from the Farmers Development Union in six of the seven towns that make up Ibarapa area of Oyo state. On the whole, a total of 120 melon farmers were selected to represent the study population. This comprises of 81 males and 39 females.

**Measurement of variables:** The development variables in gender participation of melon farmers in Ibarapa area of Oyo state. This was measured by asking the respondents to indicate whether they were fully involved, partially involved or never involved in melon production. Moreover, the level of involvement was also measured in terms of the activities of melon farmers (both male and female) that are engaged in melon productions.

**Data analysis:** Descriptive statistics involving the use of frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data, while inferential statistics such as T-test was used to test the significant difference between men and women involved in melon production.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Gender distribution of melon farmers in Ibarapa area of Oyo state

In Table 2 both, male and female respondents engaged in melon production activities. 68% of them are males while 33.0% are females. The reason was that the farmers to cope with melon production practices are using innovations and improvements in melon production activities. This results in an increase in the produce a decrease in the cost of production. Another reason is

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on gender

Gender	Male	81	68.0
	Female	39	32.0
	Total	120	100.0

Table 3: Level of involvement of respondents in melon production

Level of involvement	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Fully involved	95	81	26	22.0
Partially involved	24	18	91	75
Never involved	1	1.0	3	3.0
	120	100.0	120	100.0

that the livelihood of the family solely rests on the males. This may be due to the tedious nature of the activities involved in melon farming.

**The level of involvement in melon production:** 81% of men are fully involved in melon production, while 18% of the men are partially involved in melon production Table 3. On the other hand, 75% of women are partially involved in melon production while 22% of them are fully involved.

This shows that both male and female are involved in the melon production though their levels of involvement are not the same. The difference could be attributed to the special skill involved in some of the activities in the planting, harvesting and processing of the melon.

#### **The level of involvement in melon production activities:**

Table 4 shows the activities in melon production with different levels of performance. The adult men are more involved in a lot of activities in melon production on the farm. These activities include land clearing, land preparation, planting, weeding while the females are involved in seed selection, fertilizer application, seed extraction, washing, seed drying and bagging. However, the results in Table 3 revealed that the level of involvement in melon production activities by men in the study area is very high.

**The level of melon production:** The yield of melon produced by the men is more than the quantity produced by the females. Males produced the total output of 58 bags and the females produced 27 bags per month, with a mean of 7.62 and 6.92 for men and women respectively.

#### **Sources of agricultural information in melon production:**

Most (60%) of the respondents obtain information through contact with friends, neighbors and the Farmers Union. 29.0% of them obtain information on radio while 10% obtain information the print media. This could lead to delay and distortions or misinformation. There is therefore the need for more agricultural extension activities in Ibarapa area of Oyo state Table 5.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on activities performed in melon production

Activities	100%	75%	50%	25%	
Land clearing:					
Male	96	2	-	2	100
Female	20	-	40	40	100
Children	-	33	25	42	100
Land preparation:					
Male	63	30	2	5	100
Female	15	19	11	55	100
Children	-	16	9	75	100
Seed selection:					
Male	32	5	-	64	100
Female	78	20	1.1	1	100
Children	18	-	9	73	100
Planting:					
Male	71	18	5	6	100
Female	20	15	5	60	100
Children	11	30	9	49	100
Weeding:					
Male	56	30	9	6	100
Female	12	19	11	58	100
Children	6	25	19	50	100
Fertilizer application:					
Male	5	2	12	81	100
Female	7	32	17	44	100
Children	6	52	23	19	100
Pod gathering:					
Male	3	9	13	76	100
Female	2	32	30	36	100
Children	9	52	22	18	100
Breaking of pods:					
Male	56	39	3	2	100
Female	20	20	-	60	100
Children	2	15	2	81	100
Seed extraction:					
Male	20	60	-	20	100
Female	73	24	2	1	100
Children	3	5	3	89	100
Washing:					
Male	45	48	4	3	100
Female	8	15	23	54	100
Children	3	15	7	75	100
Drying of seeds:					
Male	17	80	-	3	100
Female	12	28	-	60	100
Children	3	8	-	89	100
Bagging:					
Male	14	37	2	47	100
Female	33	47	-	20	100
Children	-	-	-	-	100

Table 5: Sources of agricultural information

Sources of agricultural information	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Extension agents	2	2.0
Friends	13	11.0
Neighbors	30	25.0
Farmers union	29	24.0
Radio	35	29.0
Magazine	1	1.0
Journals	1	1.0
Literature	9	8.0
Total	120	100.0

**Hypotheses:** T-test analysis of the level of involvement between male and female melon producers shows that

there is a significant difference in the level of involvement among males and females in melon production. This may be due to the specific demand of some of the activities involved in melon production. T-test is 17.65 and  $p = 2.358$  which is more than 0.05. Male melon farmers had the mean of 741.05 and a standard deviation of 28.29. This implies that male melon producers were involved in melon production activities than the females.

### CONCLUSION

This study focused on the gender participation of melon producers (farmers) in Ibarapa area of Oyo state, Nigeria. The findings indicated that most melon producers (male and female) were involved in melon production activities. The production activities that men are involved in include land clearing, land preparation, planting, weeding, breaking of pods while the females are involved in seed selection, pod gathering, seed extraction, washing, drying and bagging.

It is therefore concluded that the production of melon involves the participation of male and female. Males and females carry out specific activities on melon farms ranging from land clearing activities to processing that require high energy performed by men while those that require details and affinity were carried out by women.

There was a significant difference between the level of involvement of males and females in the study area. It is recommended that improved agricultural packages should be extended to women alongside the men to enhance their output. Women farmers should also be given equal access to agricultural inputs such as herbicides, fertilizers, etc.

Finally, males and females should be involved as partners in the production activities of melon for increase in the production of melon, thus improving the standard of living in Ibarapa area of Oyo state, Nigeria.

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