



## **EFFECT OF PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVE ON CASSAVA IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN DELTA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was designed to determine the effect of Presidential Initiative on Cassava in alleviating poverty among rural women in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State. Five research questions guided the study. The population comprised of 1256 registered women farmers. Sample size of 340 respondents was drawn using Cluster sampling technique. Data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire. The result of the analysis revealed that the presidential Initiative on cassava through its strategies alleviated poverty amongst the women farmers in Delta Central Senatorial District, Nigeria by improving their standard of living. The authors recommended that the government should see cassava production as a means of alleviating poverty in the rural area by making more advantageous policies that can encourage sustainable cassava production.

**Keywords:** cassava, poverty alleviation, Presidential Initiative on Cassava, rural women

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cassava is one of the most important food items available in Nigeria and the whole of West Africa. It is a popular product because it is cheap and easy to produce in all tropical regions. It is found to be extremely tolerant to environmental stress which makes it suitable for present farming and food system in Africa. Research has shown that cassava is a leading root crop in developing countries (Bunmade, 1990).

It is one of the major cash crops grown in most parts of Nigeria. Cassava as a food crop in the tropics, accounts for 33% of all staple foods produced in sub-Saharan Africa (Odebode, 2006). Millions of people depend on the crop as a major source of food (energy) as a result of the economic crises in most countries. Also, cassava processing is one of the off-farm activities carried out by the rural women.

Rural women have been identified to make significant contribution to cassava production and processing in Nigeria (Onwudiwe, Onwudiwe, Olajide, Eze and Iyiegbuniwe, 2014). The rural woman helps to prepare, plow, weed and harvest the cassava farm. Apart from production, rural women are the major labour in processing and marketing of cassava root. In spite of the rigorous activities carried out in producing cassava, the production and income generated by these women on cassava production have not been able sustain their livelihood. It was therefore necessary to devise improved techniques capable of increasing the income generating capability of rural women and enhancing acceptability of cassava products. In solving this problem the federal government introduced the Presidential initiative on Cassava (PIC).

The Presidential Initiative on Cassava set in motion the process of achieving an annual income of five billion dollars (US \$5.0 billion) from export of cassava in the next 3 – 5 years. The plan also aimed at building the domestic productive capacity to efficiently, profitably and sustainably satisfy the new

market demand with the quality and quantity required to realize the income target (Presidential Initiative on Cassava Reports, 2003). The need to diversify and expand the alternative uses of cassava viz: ethanol, starch, livestock feed and household flour to realize the benefits derivable from domestic markets and as raw materials for industry, as well as create opportunities for income generation for the rural populace prompted putting in place the Presidential Initiative on Cassava, Production and Export. Following this effort, cassava production has been on the increase from 1999 to date (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), 2004). The initiative also developed ADP multiplication centres throughout the country to enable farmers have access to improve Cassava varieties. It is observed that the presidential initiative has enhanced the Nigerian cassava industry and also had generated a chain of progressive activities on the Nation's economy which has helped many cassava farmers to alleviate poverty.

Poverty is described as a social problem whereby the household income is insufficient to ensure suitable livelihoods, consequently leading to hunger, malnutrition, ill health and mortality from illness (Okunmadewa, 1999). It is however generally agreed that poverty is a condition in which one cannot generate sufficient income required to secure a minimum standard of living in a sustainable pattern (Schiller, 2001). Fortunately, cassava production has been identified as a crop that is economically proficient to farmers and known to be a poverty fighter.

Most women farmers in the Delta State cultivate cassava to sustain livelihood. They use cassava as staple food and meeting the daily needs of families through income generated (Onwudiwe *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the paper examined the effect of presidential initiative on cassava in alleviating poverty among rural women in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The study achieved the following objectives:

To identify the problems faced by rural women in their cassava production efforts prior to presidential initiative on cassava in Delta Central Senatorial District

To find out the effect of the presidential initiative on cassava in alleviating poverty amongst rural women in Delta Central Senatorial District

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Delta Central Senatorial District falls within the rainforest vegetation belt. The area exhibit a very high forest which is associated with tree crops such as oil palm and rubber. The area has well distributed green vegetation for pasturing. The major occupation of most inhabitants is farming. Major crops such as cassava, yam, plantain and cocoyam are grown in the area.

This study adopted survey research design. The population was one thousand two hundred and fifty six (1256) registered women farmers in the study area. Cluster sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of three hundred and twenty (320) women farmers. The process involved the selection of eight existing clans from twenty-one (21) clans officially recognized which is part of the local government councils existing within the area of study. The process of selecting the sample was done in such a way that all the clans and cells in each of the local government areas had equal and independent chance of being selected.

**Table 1: Clans and cells selected for the study**

S/N	Local Government Areas	Eight clans selected	Cells selected	Sample size
1	Ughelli North	Agbarho	Agbarho	40
2	Ughelli south	Effunruntor	Effunruntor	40
3	Ethiope East	Idjerhe	Jesse	40
4	Ethiope West	Kokori	Samagidi	40
5	Okpe	Udu	Egini	40
6	Sapele	Uvwie	Army barrack	40
7	Uvwie	Okpe	Amukpe	40
8	Udu	Okpe	Oha	40
			<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>

Statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation were used for the study. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Items with mean weight of 2.5 and above were accepted while items with less mean weight were rejected

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected for the study were analysed and discussed based on the objectives formulated for the study.

### Problems faced by rural women in their cassava production efforts prior to PIC intervention

The result in Table 2 showed that the respondents agreed with most of the statement items. This indicated that the rural women farmers faced problems in their cassava production efforts. Item 22 (low coverage of extension education programme) has the highest mean weight. This indicates that the rural women farmers prior to PIC intervention had little or no information on how to improve their

**Table 2: Mean responses of respondents on problems faced by rural women in their cassava production prior to PIC intervention**

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Low level of technical knowledge in cassava production	2.09	0.62	Disagreed
2	Low access to information and modern technologies	3.03	0.73	Agreed
3	Low cassava productivity per plot	2.43	0.76	Agreed
4	Low level of mechanization	3.14	0.75	Agreed
5	lack of processing facilities	2.59	0.81	Agreed
6	Inability to take advantage of modern technologies	2.61	0.65	Agreed
7	Traditional production system	2.72	0.53	Agreed
8	Low efficiency of irrigation	2.01	0.61	Disagreed
9	Lack of attention paid to women farmers by the government	3.31	0.72	Agreed
10	Multi-cropping system	1.59	0.63	Disagreed
11	Low awareness level on government intervention programmes towards cassava production	2.03	0.68	Disagreed
12	Low quantity of derivatives when compared to other crops	2.01	0.71	Disagreed
13	Low income generated from sales of derivatives	3.09	0.73	Agreed
14	Poor labour productivity	2.83	0.80	Agreed
15	Difficulty in cassava and cassava product storage due to lack of equipment and infrastructure	3.11	0.75	Agreed
16	Low access to market	2.02	0.62	Agreed
17	Low awareness of marketing strategies	3.00	0.73	Agreed
18	Large amount of waste in post – harvest phase	2.09	0.62	Disagreed
19	Transportation of cassava and cassava products to buyers	3.03	0.81	Agreed
20	Far distance of plots from extension workers	3.00	0.66	Agreed
21	Land fragmentation due to lack of preventive legislation	3.03	0.64	Agreed
22	Low coverage of extension education programme	3.42	0.72	Agreed
23	Gender inequality towards access to land and government incentives	3.09	0.77	Agreed
24	Bad weather effect	2.09	0.83	Disagreed
25	High cost of input	3.09	0.63	Agreed
26	Pest and disease attack	3.00	0.66	Agreed

cassava production and utilization activities. Therefore, there is the need to improve extension education amongst rural women farmers in the study area to increase cassava production. Rural women as producers of food and family supervisors have little contact with extension service organizations; so their problems and needs would rarely reflect extensional information feedback (Swanson, 2002). The result also indicated the women farmers faced marketing and infrastructural challenges. This problem is capable of limiting them to subsistence farming system since much income is not derived from the cassava production activities. In solving this problem strategies such as promotion of e-commerce in agriculture, development of marketing infrastructure in rural areas and empowerment of cooperatives and community based organizations by the government (Hosseini, Atry and Seyed, 2009) will help to improve the commercial activities of cassava production and help to alleviate poverty among farmers.

**Effect of the presidential initiative on cassava in alleviating poverty the among the rural women**

The results in Table 3 show that the respondents agreed with all the statement items. This indicated that the rural women farmers benefited from the PIC intervention of the federal government. It was found that PIC intervention provided strategies for minimizing the problems confronting cassava marketing, processing, production and utilization of cassava. The intervention programme also provided training packages irrespective of gender geared towards benefiting from cassava maximally. These strategies had resultant effect on helping women farmers to adequately cater for their life necessities. The researchers found out during interview with the respondents that these necessities include paying children school fees, purchase of clothing material, pay of house rent, purchase household utensils/needs and paying for health care services. This indicates that the respondents are of the view that the income realized from cassava production is used in taking care of their immediate needs. Schiller (2001) argued that when a person generates sufficient income required to secure a minimum standard of living in a sustainable pattern it means the person lives above poverty. It therefore implies that PIC intervention has helped rural women farmers in Delta Central Senatorial District to alleviate poverty.

**Table 3: Mean responses of respondents on effect of the presidential initiative on cassava (PIC) in alleviating poverty the amongst rural women**

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	PIC provided a political support to enhance public and industrial acceptance of cassava	3.21	0.76	Agreed
2	PIC improved processing and export of cassava in the country	2.94	0.62	Agreed
3	PIC created policy that promoted to add 10% of cassava flour to the wheat flour used in bread, to open additional market opportunities for smallholder farmers	3.26	0.67	Agreed
4	PIC created a potential market for 330,000 t of cassava flour yearly	2.56	0.55	Agreed
5	The initiative created awareness, greater interest and increased investments in the industry by foreign and local investors	3.00	0.67	Agreed
6	The initiative provided microprocessing centers all over the country	2.77	0.61	Agreed
7	The PIC activities indirectly provided substantial job opportunities for youths, technicians, professionals, and artisans in the country	2.98	0.63	Agreed
8	The imitative made substantial investments in new factories for the manufacture of glucose syrup, starch, and HQCF	3.02	0.85	Agreed
9	PIC provided various training on production, processing, marketing, and management of Cassava irrespective of gender	2.91	0.73	Agreed
10	The resultant effect of PIC has made women farmers to cater for necessities of life	3.56	0.82	Agreed
11	PIC has helped to increase household food security	2.91	0.57	Agreed
12	The initiative provided credit facility for women farmers in cassava production	3.11	0.54	Agreed

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The result of study showed that they were problems confronting rural women farmers in cassava production in the area of study. These problems may have restricted the women farmers to be small scale producers of cassava. These problems were minimized by the intervention of the presidential Initiative on cassava. The intervention provided strategies in improving cassava marketing, processing, production and utilization in the area of study. Rural women in Delta Central Senatorial District benefitted from these strategies as it helped them to improve their standard of living or alleviate poverty. The study therefore recommends that the government should see cassava production as a means of alleviating poverty in the rural areas by making more advantageous polices that can encourage sustainable cassava production.

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