



Assessment of Women Agribusiness Cooperatives in Oyo State, Nigeria

Kagbu, J. H. and Issa, F. O.

*Agricultural Extension and Economics Department, National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.
Corresponding mail and phone: jkagbu@gmail.com,*

Abstract

The performance of women agribusiness cooperatives in Oyo State, Nigeria was assessed in this study. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select 6 women cooperative groups (aggregating to 175 individuals); 36 individual women; and 4 institutions across 6 LGAs in two agricultural zones of the State. Findings show that majority (55.6%) of the respondents belong to processing organization and 86.1% participate in community development activities. Various benefits were indicated by the respondents as being gained from cooperative membership. Such benefits include access to credit (51.1%), access to group assets (34%), and financial assistance by the group (14.9%). A considerable number (52.8%) of the respondents did not receive any training. Majority (63.9%, 58.3%, and 55.6%) of the respondents indicated the need for training in cassava value addition, marketing strategies, and agribusiness management respectively. Drudgery (100%), inadequate capital (97.2%), and low return on investment (88.9%) were rated highest among the constraints militating the performance of the cooperatives. The major problems inhibiting women participation in agribusiness cooperatives identified in the study should be ameliorated using appropriate policy options. Government should engender commitment through appropriate legislative appropriation and budget. Also, Government should ensure that regular training and appropriate gender-sensitive technologies are provided for women agricultural activities through relevant research and extension agencies.

Keywords:

Women cooperative, agribusiness, cooperative management

1. Introduction

Agricultural cooperative society has been touted as the appropriate vehicle for harnessing and pooling the resources of millions of small holder farmer producers together in order to enjoy the benefit of large scale production (Onugu and Abdullah, 2010).

Agriculture is the main source of employment and income in rural areas of developing countries, where the majority of the world's poor and hungry people live. Rural women play crucial roles in agricultural activities and in increasing food and nutrition security, as farmers/producers, workers and entrepreneurs (International Year of Cooperatives,

2012). However, rural women have less access than men to the resources and opportunities they need to be fully productive in agriculture and to ensure the food security, nutrition and well-being of their families and future generations. For example, because of legal and cultural constraints affecting land inheritance, ownership and use, worldwide, fewer than 20 percent of landholders are women. In every Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicator for which data are available, rural women fare worse than rural men and worse than urban women and men (Inter-Agency Task Force on Rural Women, 2012). Compared with rural men, rural women have:

- greater workloads and time constraints in both productive and domestic activities: collectively, women from sub-Saharan Africa spend about 40 billion hours a year collecting water (UNIFEM, 2009);

- greater socio-cultural and physical isolation, resulting in poor access to information, communications, infrastructure and markets;

- reduced access to training and education: household data from 42 countries show that rural girls are more likely to be out of school than rural boys, and twice as likely to be out of school than urban girls (UN, 2010);

- less access to knowledge, skills, technological innovations, entrepreneurship, leadership and decision-making;

- greater constraints in access to decent employment and productive work: women are more likely than men to be engaged in low-wage, part-time, seasonal and vulnerable employment (FAO, 2011a).

Presently cooperative is almost a universal form of organization found in most countries of the world and used by people in many ways for the supply of farming and fishing equipment, purchase of production equipment among others. Cooperative idea can be beneficial to people in their every needs of life. The benefits include:

1. To provide the necessary and desirable services of the people concerned
2. To engage in business with the motive of service instead of profit maximization
3. To operate on the basis of self-help where the people involved look towards themselves as a group for the solution to their problems
4. The group of people who have come together to do something that could be difficult for an individual to implement if he is alone
5. Cooperative helps to prevent exploitation by engaging members in agricultural processing.

Women's access to and control of services and productive resources are limited by gender inequality. Women face numerous challenges within the agricultural sector. These include inadequate capital, shortage of female farm extension workers, limited access to market, inadequate storage facilities, and lack of access to appropriate technologies. Despite these challenges, women are still the cornerstone of agricultural production, processing, marketing and utilization forming the bulk of 73% of rural population involved in agriculture (ICA, 2010). Women also supply 70% of agricultural labour, 50% of animal husbandry related activities, and 60% of food processing yet have access to only 20% of available agricultural resources (NBS, 2012). In addition, about 49% of Nigeria's population are

women (Gender in Nigeria Report 2012), 90% of that figure is in the informal sector and 90% of those in the informal sector are involved in agriculture and agro-allied activities. It is therefore not surprising that 65% of women in Nigeria are living below the poverty line as against 35% of men (NBS, 2012). However against all these odds, women still invest 90% of their income in the families or businesses compared to 35% for men (IFAD, 2012).

Agricultural cooperatives, therefore, have the capacity to improve the living standard of the rural people especially women and promote food security of the country (Gebremichael, 2014). Cooperative institutions and especially the agricultural cooperatives are the agencies which hold enormous potential for the development of women, and more particularly the rural women (Dogarawa, 2005). Regardless of the level of development achieved by the respective economies, women play a pivotal role in agriculture and in rural development in most developing countries. Evidently there are serious constraints which militate against the promotion of an effective role for women in development in those societies which were bound by age-old traditions and beliefs (Onje, 2003). Patriarchal modes and practices motivated by cultures and/or interpretations of religious sanctions and illiteracy hinder women's freedom to opt for various choices to assert greater mobility in social interactions. Resulting from these situations, women's contribution to agriculture and other sectors in the economy remain concealed and unaccounted for in monitoring economic performance measurement. Consequently, they are generally invisible in plans and programmes. They were, in fact, discriminated against by stereotypes which restrict them to a reproductive role, and denied access to resources which could eventually enhance their social and economic contribution to the society.

Cooperatives can play important roles in overcoming the barriers faced by women and in supporting small agricultural producers. Evidence shows that efficient cooperatives have the capacity to empower their members economically and socially and to create sustainable employment through equitable and inclusive business models that are more resilient to shocks. Cooperatives offer small producers a range of services, aimed at improving:

access to and management of natural resources; access to productive resources, technology and infrastructure to increase productivity and income generation; access to markets for goods and food distribution; access to information, knowledge and skills development to improve self-confidence and human capital; collective bargaining power in input and output markets; active participation in

decision-making, from the grassroots to policy formulation.

Cooperatives hold much potential to empower these economically weak women and men by enhancing their collective bargaining power in the market, thereby reducing the risks that they face in the market and enabling them to leverage enhanced market opportunities, and by building individual capacities, thus improving members' incomes, leadership skills, and overall socio-economic status (Alkali, 1991; World Bank, 2009).

Women face, more often than not, major obstacles to joining and being active members of typically male-dominated cooperatives (ICA-ILO Gender Package, 2001). Due to unequal gender norms and relations, women have a lower socio-economic status, compared to their male counterparts, which limits their opportunities to access and participate in formal groups (Wodlu *et al.*, 2013). Women's freedom is constrained by men's control over their mobility, by socio-cultural expectations that they are primarily responsible for all domestic work. Their restricted access to, control over, and ownership of land, credit, and information, as compared to men, disadvantage them from meeting conditions of formal group membership and leadership (FAO, 2011b; World Bank, 2009). These dominant gender inequalities contribute to the fact that cooperative organizations are controlled and managed by men. Wealthier, educated, larger-scale, male farmers have advantages over more economically vulnerable farmers, particularly resource-poor women (Baden, 2013, 15). The latter lack the education, knowledge, respect, time, and productive assets to engage meaningfully and to have their voices heard in comparison to these more privileged men (Baden, 2013; FAO, 2011b; Weinberger and Jutting, 2000). Women's equal participation in agricultural cooperatives is both a women's right and important for sustainable and people-centered development. If cooperatives are gender-responsive and inclusive, they can help women overcome gender specific constraints to improve their self-confidence, knowledge, leadership skills, income, access to agricultural inputs, social networks, and position in value-chains. When women are more economically and socially empowered, evidence shows that there are direct and positive impacts on women's household and community decision-making power and on access to and control over productive assets. These changes lead to improved household nutrition, food and income security, broader development outcomes, and a more integrated production of both food and cash crops (Quisumbing, 2003; FAO, 2011b; CSA, 2012). In addition, more inclusive cooperatives play a stronger

social role in creating safe spaces for women and building social solidarity and problem solving capacity, particularly in all-female cooperatives (Gizachew, 2011; Baden and Pionetti, 2011; World Bank, 2009; USAID, 2012).

Women have low productivity because they have no access to farm inputs. Rural women do not have enough money to meet their needs because the lack access to loan. Also, rural women have been neglected by men in terms of membership to cooperative leadership and decision making due to lack of awareness.

The broad objective of this study was to assess the performance of women farmers' group in agribusiness. Specifically, this study:

- i. described the socio-economic characteristics of the women;
- ii. identified the agricultural activities that women cooperatives are engaged in;
- iii. assessed the perception of women towards agribusiness;
- iv. examine the training needs of the women cooperative in agribusiness management;
- v. identify current institutional support for women cooperative development and management, and
- vi. identify the constraints militating against women participation in cooperative agribusiness enterprises.

2. Materials and methods

Oyo State came into being in August 31, 1991 when the state creation excised the present Osun State from the old Oyo State. It covers a land area of 27,000 square kilometers and made up of 33 Local Government Areas and divided into four agricultural zones of Ibadan/Ibarapa, Oyo, Ogbomoso and Saki zones. Oyo State is located on latitude 07°23'17.9"N and longitude 03°53'30.9"E. (Map of the World, 2015).

This survey was carried out in Oyo State between 23rd September and 2nd October 2014. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select 6 women cooperative groups; 36 individual women; and 4 institutions. First, Oyo State was purposively selected being the Zonal headquarters of the South-west zone as delineated by the National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS). Secondly, two agricultural zones were randomly selected out of the four zones in the State. The zones selected were Oyo and Ibadan/Ibarapa zones. Thirdly, three LGAs were purposively selected from each Zone based on concentration of women cooperatives. They were Ido,

Ibarapa East, and Ibarapa Central (from Ibadan/Ibarapa Zone), and Oyo East, Oyo West, and Atiba (from Oyo Zone). Fourthly, two villages were purposively selected from each LGA based on proximity and accessibility of farmers for primary data collection. Fifthly, one women cooperative was randomly selected from each of the community. The sixth and final stage was the random selection of three individual respondents, from each women association/cooperative using the list of membership.

Four institutions were purposively selected based on their involvement in women cooperative activities in the State. The institutions were:

1. Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme
2. Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs
3. Oyo State Ministry of Trade and Cooperatives
4. Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)

Field surveys were conducted in company of team of four zonal staff of the ADP. The data were collected using combination of survey methods and instruments. Checklist was used on the cooperative group in a focus group discussion. Individual farmers were interviewed using pretested, structured interview schedule. Pretested questionnaire was used to elicit relevant information from the institutions.

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages. Farmers' perception of agribusiness was measured using Likert-type scale. Based on the researcher's

observation of farmers' practices, literature reviewed and consultation with extension administrators and field workers, twenty-two declarative statements consisting of both positive and negative items were drawn for testing the construct of interest. They were structured in a five-point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA); Agreed (A); Undecided (U); Disagreed (D); Strongly Disagreed (SD). The statements gave respondents the opportunity to say at which level they were or were not convinced about the agribusiness. Positive statement were scored 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for SA, A, U, D and SD respectively; and negative statements were scored 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for SA, A, U, D and SD respectively. Total perception score was computed for each respondent as the addition of the scores for all the statements.

The mean for each of the items was obtained by multiplying the point scale by the number of respondents in each point scale. Furthermore, perception score was obtained by adding the scores of each respondent for each of the items. The score obtained for each respondent was further dichotomized into low and high perception based on the mean score in each case. Finally, a weighted mean average was computed to measure the total perception of respondents for all the items. An item with weighted mean average of less than 3 (which is the cutoff point) was regarded as having low perception.

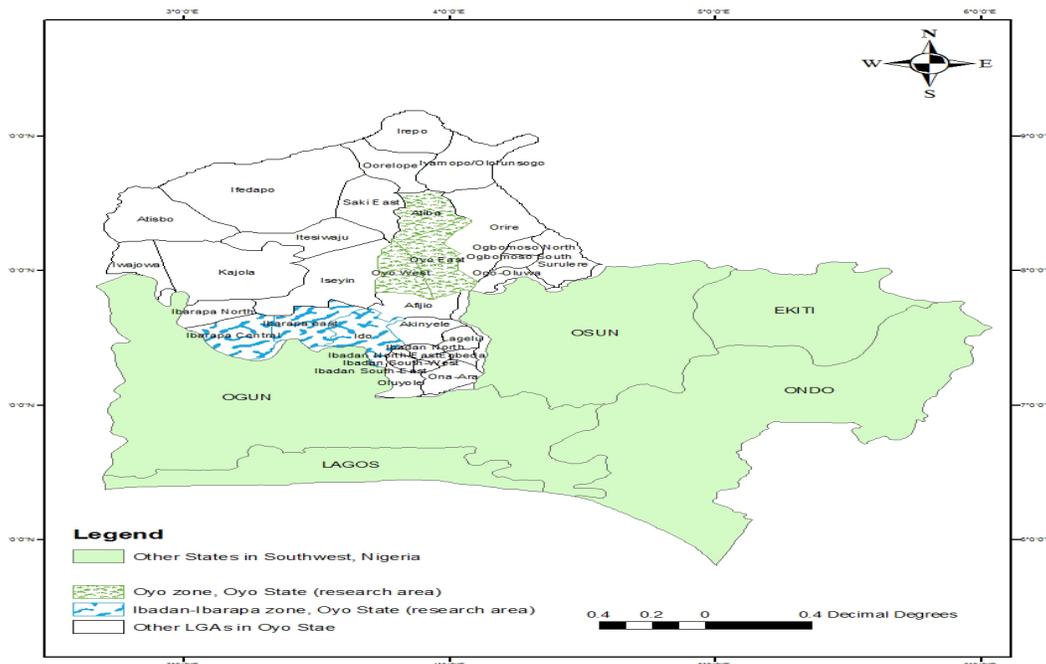


Figure 1. Map of South-west Zone showing the Study State and LGAs

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. Women between the age range of 40 and 49 recorded the highest number (38.9%) of respondents. Majority (86.1%) of the respondents were less than 50 years of age. The mean age of the respondents was 39.5. This implies that the women farmers were youth and agile. Agbo and Chidebelu (2010) and Matthews-Njoku et al. (2003) found similar result. Majority (97.2%), of the respondents was married and had a household size of between 4 and 6 (55.6%). Above 30% of the respondents had secondary education. This indicates that most the women are illiterate. However, majority (58.1%) earned an annual income of equal to or less than 100,000 ₦. This result is an indication that majority of the women are poor. The mean number of years in cooperative recorded 8, implying that respondents had been participating in cooperative for long.

3.2 Cooperative Characteristics

Results shown in Table 2 indicate that women were engaged in different types of cooperative. Majority (58.3%) of the respondents belong to processing organization. Furthermore, various benefits were indicated by the respondents as being gained from cooperative membership. Such benefits include access to credit (51.1%), access to group assets (34%), and financial assistance by the group (14.9%). As indicated in Table 3; majority (86.1) of the respondents participate in community development activities. Payment of development levies was the most frequent development activities which majority (83.9%) of the respondents participated in doing.

3.3 Effect of household duties on members' participation in cooperative activities

Majority (97.2%) of the respondents indicated that household duties did not prevent them in participating in cooperative activities (Table 3). Eboh (1988) recognized that despite women's major responsibilities in the household health and nutrition, women's role in agriculture covers all facets of agribusiness including crop production, livestock production, fishing as well as farm management.

3.4 Training in agribusiness received by respondents

Most (52.8%) of the respondents did not receive any training. Results in Table 4 indicate that some (47.2%) respondents received various types of training. Cassava value addition was the type of training received by majority (70.5%) of those who received training. Cassava production techniques ranked next as indicated by 64.7% of the respondents.

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Percentage	Mean
Age		39.5
20 – 29	11.1	
30 – 39	36.1	
40 – 49	38.9	
50 – 59	8.3	
60 – 69	5.6	
Household size		6
1 – 3	13.9	
4 – 6	55.6	
7 – 9	22.2	
10 and above	8.3	
Years in cooperative		8
<10	36.1	
10 – 19	41.7	
20 and Above	22.2	
Marital status		
Single	2.8	
Married	97.2	
Level of education		
None	11.1	
Primary	44.4	
Secondary	38.9	
Tertiary	5.6	
Annual income (₦)		131,152.500
≤ 100,000	58.3	
101,000 – 200,000	13.9	
201,000 – 300,000	0	
301,000 – 400,000	19.4	
401,000 – 500,000	8.3	

Table 2. Types of cooperative, benefits gained, and participation in community development activities

Variables	Percent
Types of cooperative engaged in	
Multi-purpose Cooperative	7.0
Processing Organization	58.3
Producer Organization	33.3
Benefits gained from cooperative*	
Access to group assets	50.0
Access to credit/loans	75.0
Financial assistance by the group	25.0
Participation in community development	
Don't participate	13.9
Participate	86.1
Community development activities*	
Cooking for men when on community duty	3.2
Environmental sanitation	19.4
Payment of development levies	83.9
Road repair	6.4

*Multiple responses indicated

Linkage with extension agency explains this result as majority of the respondents who received training were trained by the Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme (OYSADEP). Hence, the training indicated herein were not formal intensive training expected by the cooperative. It is important that cooperative members received regular intensive training of various types targeted at improving their enterprise with the aim of enhancing their contribution to nation's food production.

OYSADEP was indicated by 97.1% of the respondents as the institution which conducted training for respondents. This implies that other institutions were not really on ground as expected.

Table 3. Effect of household duties on members' participation in cooperative activities

Whether household duties affect members' participation	Percent
Household duties affect participation	2.8
Household duties do not affect participation	97.2

Table 4. Training in agribusiness received by respondents

Variables	Percent
Training in agribusiness	
No	52.8
Yes	47.2
Types of Training received by respondents* (n=17)	
Cassava production techniques	64.7
Maize production technology	47.1
Cassava value addition	70.5
Soybean Processing	17.7
Record keeping	17.7
Soybean production	17.7
Vegetable production	41.2
Weed control	35.3
Institution that conducted the training* (n=17)	
OYSADEP	94.1
IAR&T	11.8
USAID	5.9
Year in which training was conducted* (n=17)	
2006	11.8
2011	17.7
2012	35.3
2013	41.2
2014	41.2

*Multiple responses indicated

3.5 Training needs of respondents

Majority (63.9%, 58.3%), and 55.6%) of the respondents indicated the need for training in cassava value addition, marketing strategies, agribusiness management, respectively (Table 5). Training and re-training is very crucial to the attainment of the noble aims of agribusiness cooperative. This training must be based on the clientele. The slow pace of moving agriculture from the shackle of peasantry to a commercial-oriented type could be explained by farmers' poor knowledge of agribusiness management.

3.6 Constraints militating against participation in agribusiness enterprise

So many constraints militate against farmers' participation in agribusiness enterprise in the study area (Table 6). Drudgery (100%), inadequate capital (97.2%), and low return on investment (88.9%) were rated highest among the constraints. This result indicates that these constraints were very major. Provision of energy-saving equipment was suggested by all (100%) of the respondents. This is followed by provision of loans/grants as indicated by 97.2% of the respondents (Table 6).

Table 5. Training needs of respondents*

Training needs	Percent	Rank
Cassava products development	69.4	1 st
Marketing strategies	63.9	2 nd
Agribusiness management	58.3	3 rd
Pest Management	52.8	4 th
Safe Handling of Agrochemicals	50	5 th
Improved production techniques	44.4	6 th
Records keeping	33.3	7 th
Loan Management	27.8	8 th
Group Management	25	9 th
Soybean utilization	16.6	10 th
Soap Making	13.9	11 th
Off-season Non-agricultural business	8.3	12 th

*Multiple responses indicated

Table 6. Constraints militating against participation in agribusiness enterprise*

Constraints	Percent	Rank
Drudgery	100	1 st
Inadequate capital	97.2	2 nd
Low return on investment	88.9	3 rd
Inadequate processing inputs	47.2	4 th
Lack of credit facilities	36.1	5 th
Marketing problems	36.1	5 th
Bad roads	27.7	6 th
Poor road network	22.2	7 th
Lack of social amenities	5.6	8 th

*Multiple responses indicated

Table 7. Respondents' Perception of agribusiness

Respondents' Perception of agribusiness (n=36)	P e r c e p t i o n	
	Weighted Sum	Weighted mean
There is pride in the business of agriculture	153	4.3**
Agricultural business is profitable	147	4.2**
Agricultural business is market driven	137	3.8**
There is adequate physical infrastructure (such as roads) for agricultural business	103	2.9*
Marketing of agricultural produce is satisfactory	112	3.1**
Marketing of processed agricultural products is satisfactory	127	3.5**
Extension services for agricultural business are available	145	4.0**
Extension services for agricultural business are useful	152	4.2**
Extension services for agricultural business are timely	142	3.9**
Credit for agricultural business is available	106	2.9*
Credit for agricultural business is timely	96	2.7*
Agricultural business inputs are available	123	3.4**
Agricultural business inputs are timely	121	3.4**
Agricultural business inputs are of good quality	144	4.0**
It generates Employment	143	4.0**
It is associated with drudgery	130	3.6**
It is very risky	133	3.7**
It is capital intensive	151	4.2**
It has a long gestation period	134	3.7**
It requires low initial capital	94	2.6*
It has low return on investment.	103	2.9*
Weighted mean sum		133.5
Weighted mean average		3.6**

*Low perception, ** High perception

3.7 Respondents' Perception of agribusiness

Result in Table 7 indicates a weighted mean average of 3.6 meaning a high perception of agribusiness by respondents. However, respondents' perception of the adequacy of infrastructure for agribusiness was low (2.9). Also, the availability and timeliness of credit for agricultural business recorded low perception (2.9 and 2.7) respectively.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

This study concludes that women are engaged in various cooperative agribusinesses. Women have high favourable perception of agribusiness and contribute to the household consumption, yet they are poorly trained and lack adequate institutional support to transform their businesses. Worst still, women are confronted with lots of constraints which militate against their participation in cooperative agribusiness.

It is recommended that agencies interested in involving women in agricultural development should put policies in place using the identified nature of women involvement in agriculture determined by the study to ensure women involvement in agricultural development. Community

based non-formal rural women agricultural education programmes could serve as veritable foci for successful agricultural education to empower women to take their rightful place in agricultural development. While the major problems inhibiting women participation in agricultural activities identified in the study should be ameliorated using appropriate policy options, for instance engendering commitment by government through appropriate legislative appropriation and budgetary commitment, ensures that appropriate logistic in form of credit is provided and ensuring that land is made available to women agricultural activities through relevant legislation and policy implementation.

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ارزیابی تعاونی‌های کشاورزی تجاری زنان در استان ایو، نیجریه

کابو، ه. اچ و عیسی، اف. او

دانشکده اقتصاد و ترویج کشاورزی، خدمات ملی ترویج و تحقیقات کشاورزی،

دانشگاه احمدو بلو، زاریا، نیجریه

در این مطالعه عملکرد تعاونی‌های کشاورزی تجاری زنان در استان ایو، کشور نیجریه مورد ارزیابی قرار گرفته است. روش نمونه‌گیری، روش نمونه‌گیری چند مرحله‌ای بود. بر اساس نتایج تحقیق، اکثر زنان (۵۵/۶٪) در تعاونی فرآوری محصولات عضو بودند و ۸۶/۱٪ از آن‌ها در فعالیت‌های توسعه اجتماعی مشارکت داشتند. بر اساس نظر پاسخ‌گویان، فواید عضویت در تعاونی‌ها شامل: دسترسی به اعتبارات (۵۱/۱٪)، دسترسی به سرمایه اجتماعی (۳۴٪) و کمک‌های مالی توسط گروه (۱۴/۹٪) بود. تعداد قابل توجهی از افراد (۵۲/۸٪) هیچ‌گونه آموزشی ندیده بودند. بر اساس نظر پاسخ‌گویان نیاز به آموزش به ترتیب در خصوص ارزش افزوده گیاه کاساوا (۶۳/۹٪)، راهبردهای بازاریابی (۵۸/۳٪) و مدیریت تجارت کشاورزی (۵۵/۶٪) تعیین شد. کار سخت (۱۰۰٪)، سرمایه ناکافی (۹۷/۲٪) و نرخ بازگشت پایین سرمایه (۸۸/۹٪) از موانعی بود که عملکرد تعاونی‌ها را با محدودیت مواجه نمود. در این تحقیق، مشکلات عمده بازدارنده مشارکت زنان در تعاونی‌های کشاورزی تجاری مشخص شد که باید با استفاده از گزینه‌های سیاستی مناسب اصلاح شوند. دولت باید از طریق طرح قانون مناسب و تخصیص بودجه مطلوب در این زمینه اقدام کند. همچنین، دولت باید اطمینان حاصل کند که آموزش‌ها به طور منظم و فن‌آوری‌های مناسب حساس به جنسیت برای زنان در فعالیت‌های کشاورزی از طریق سازمان‌های تحقیق و ترویج مرتبط، ارائه شود.

چکیده

کلمات کلیدی:
تعاونی زنان،
کشاورزی تجاری،
مدیریت تعاونی