



RSM2SNF

Research Supporting African MSMEs
To Provide Safe and Nutritious Food

Gender issues along the fish and vegetable value chains in Nigeria: A call for policy action

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Introduction

Food security is a complex issue that encompasses multiple dimensions, including access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food. Despite progress in addressing global food insecurity, many individuals, particularly women and girls, still face significant barriers to accessing food. These barriers include but are not limited to lack of credit facilities, lack of empowerment, lack of modern processing facilities, non-women friendly storage and processing facilities. It also includes taboos and superstitions that forbid women from some agronomic practices (e.g., planting at certain times due to the physiological cycle of women) or norms and belief that forbids women from trading at certain scales and/or competing with male counterparts in processing of fish on a large scale.

This document provides suggestions on alternative approaches in dealing with these challenges according to the nodes along the value chains of fish, tomatoes and GLVs. This document also offers guidance on how to include a gender perspective in policies and programs aimed at enhancing the access of all Nigerians to reasonably priced and nutritious food with a focus on the experience of economic agents operating along the fish tomato and vegetable value chains in the country. This call for policy action, draws on several sources of information including the Nigerian National Gender Policy, the gender component of the National Agricultural Transformation and Innovation Policy, the RSM2SNF

review of the Nigerian policy on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), the National Agricultural Transformation and Innovation Policy (2022), the RSM2SNF Annual Gender Report, the Stakeholders' Engagement report of the RSM2SNF and the Rapid Reconnaissance reports from several RSM2SNF project states in Nigeria.

The overall goal of this document is to assist policy makers who are non-gender specialists in identifying and managing gender issues pertinent to the Fish, Tomatoes (GLVs) Value Chains in Nigeria. It highlights some of the gender biases that exist in these subsectors and makes suggestions to guide action to support gender "mainstreaming" along these value chains.



Understanding Gender Differences in Access to Safe, Affordable and Nutritious Food

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, due in part to their roles as primary food providers and caretakers. They typically do most of the household chores including the provision and preparation of food, and this multitasking role is not often well understood by society. This misperception distorts the expectations of society about women's actual and potential roles in the provision of affordable, safe and nutritious food. It is expedient that proper sensitization on women's roles would do justice to this distortion, so society places a higher value on roles of women, particularly in agricultural production and associated enterprises.

Women in Nigeria are actively involved in the production, processing, distribution and preparation of food, yet they frequently have little control over resources that are key for investing in these enterprises all along food supply chains. These resources include land, and credit, access to gender friendly storage and processing facilities, marketing opportunities that support business, and logistics of transportation from farm to markets.

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An RSM2SNF gender study on previous programs revealed that majority of Nigerian programs combined youth and women's involvement in agriculture rather than treating them as separate initiatives. This led to putting women's needs at risk while youths (mainly males) benefited more from the gains of the categorization. It was believed that women were more involved than men in

the trade, retail, and processing of both fish and vegetables. Findings from the 2022 RSM2SNF Rapid Reconnaissance and Stakeholders' reports confirmed that women were more engaged in the retailing of fish, tomatoes and GLVs while males were found in the wholesale sector. This was partly due to women not being exposed to opportunities that predispose them to expand their businesses and norms that prevented them from engaging in activities that might take them far away from their homes. While it is noteworthy that these roles are highly gendered, some

females were noted to operate in the male dominated areas indicating the feasibility of such engagement. Interestingly a stakeholder perception survey revealed that female respondents were slightly more inclined to believe that women were more involved in the production and retailing of fish rather than in processing and wholesale. This indicates that showcasing the experience and successes of women in activities typically perceived to be male dominated might increase the recognition (among women and men) of the opportunity for engagement; particularly where profitable. A review of literature on extension services revealed that decisions rising from most extension and advisory services concerning men and women rest on the prerogative of men with only a few women involved.

Gender Issues along the fish and vegetable value chains in Nigeria with proposed approaches for better inclusiveness for affordable, safe and nutritious food:

Issues in production:

Current State:

Lack of equal access to resources by men and women

Alternative Approach

Engage with women and girls, as well as men and boys, to understand their experiences and needs in relation to food security.

Support improved access to resources, services, opportunities, and rewards, such as enabling more women to participate in historically male-dominated practices.

Foster the equal involvement of men and women in community representation and decision-making organizations.

Promote women's empowerment, by supporting equal access to land and resources, education, and information.

Current State:

Information on production reaching women too slowly.

Alternative Approach

Advocate to guarantee the timely release of information about production to women; canvass for them to attend all meetings, and have an active forum for taking practical steps and measures.

Provide guidance to ensure that women are not sidelined in taking leadership roles among the farmer and commodity associations

Issues in wholesaling:

Current State:

Harassments from male counterparts and law enforcements agents

Lack of capital and necessary resources necessary for expansion from retailing to wholesaling

Conformity to norms and beliefs

Alternative Approach

Give women, equal rights as men

Support free interaction between women and men, in order to improve women's participation

Improve gender awareness for men and women

Encourage and support women to launch out from relevant practices and norms

Issues in Processing:

Current State:

High costs of inputs for women

Complexity of handling processing machines by women

Alternative Approach

Give equal rights and entitlements to women and men in the processing of agricultural commodities

Ensure the participation of women and men in processing by subsidizing processing materials

Train and support fabricators to manufacture and maintain gender-friendly machines for processing

Train men and women to use modern storage and processing facilities

Issues in retailing

Current State:

Lack of access to working capital and ineligibility of women to access funds.

Lack of space for showcasing of produce

Alternative Approach

Establish and support cooperatives and saving groups for women

Provide loans and credit facilities for women

Introduce flexibility in the conditions for loan repayment by women

introduce flexibility in the release of land and stores for women

Issues in Logistics

Current State:

Limited negotiating power and exploitation

Insecurity

Harassment and violence against women in the market

Alternative Approach

Remove or subsidize taxes on agricultural commodities

Give equal access to men and women in decision making for issues relating to pricing particularly, farm-gate prices

Train and retrain men and women, on the use of online marketing for agricultural commodities

Give men and women equal rights to generate choices and strengthen their bargaining power

Assist and educate community representatives in gender-sensitive service negotiations.

Put necessary security in place along the trade zones

Collaborate with female planners, researchers, and extension agents as well as with representatives of women's organizations to create a safe space for women to voice their opinions.

Addressing Gender Inequities in Access to Affordable and Safe Food

Some key ways for reducing gender inequities include:

- **Strengthening women's control over resources:** Women's access to food and a sense of security can be improved by giving them more power over land, credit, and other resources. This can be done by taking steps to give women, property rights, legal protection and improved access to credit.
- **Increasing the availability of information and services for women:** Women's food security and capacity to make informed food decisions can both be improved by providing them with better knowledge and services on agriculture, food processing, and nutrition.
- **Promoting gender-sensitive agriculture and food policies:** Agricultural and food policies should be developed and implemented in a way that takes into account the different needs and perspectives of women and men. This can be achieved through the integration of gender analysis into policy development and implementation processes.

RSM2SNF rationale to Gender Mainstreaming

The RSM2SNF project aligns with the core values of the National Gender Policy that the majority of gender-based concerns in agriculture are overlooked. This occurs even though smallholder women farmers' experiences with these challenges are crucial to achieving affordable, safe and nutritious food and opines that gender equality and the empowerment of women are achievable by focusing on, and implementing the following objectives:

- Having gender as a key cross cutting theme in all research and stakeholder engagement activities. For example, intentionally accounting for gender in the specification of research questions and paying attention to gender when interpreting results.

- Ensuring balanced gender representation across all segments of the research
- Identifying and ensuring the participation of women among the MSME associations' leadership, whenever the RSM2SNF project engages with them
- Ensuring active engagement of both women and men that represent civil society organizations
- Reaching out to both men and women at every stage of the project, including the dissemination of findings.

The RSM2SNF project strives to demonstrate a bias in favor of gender inclusivity as majority of its meetings and goals center on gender inclusivity in order to shine a light on accurate gender disaggregated data.

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