



Increasing women's access to farm land to improve food security, productivity and welfare in Nigeria

By Emily E. Ikhida, Sunday B. Barka, Mary Oketa

Key messages

- **Land reform to increase women's access to agricultural land can improve food security in Nigeria**
- **Increasing women farmers' access to land can promote effective, equitable and efficient agricultural development.**

Lack of resources constrains Nigeria's women farmers

Nigeria's agricultural production is unable to keep up with its population growth, threatening food security in the country. Women's low participation and contribution to the agricultural sector have been cited as part of the reason for the sector's underperformance.

Despite women providing over 70% of agricultural labour in Nigeria, many women's farming activities are not measured or paid and as such their productivity is not counted. Women also face a variety of constraints to their productivity. Female farmers receive less than 10% of the credit offered to small-scale farmers and are often unable to access agricultural inputs, like high-yield seedlings and fertilizers, due to their high prices. And men are five times more likely to own land than women as customary laws do not recognize women's land ownership.

Recognising the important role of women and the barriers they face, the Nigerian government launched the National Food Security Program (NFSP) in 2016. The NFSP aims to help develop the agriculture sector and improve food security by providing training and modern agricultural inputs, particularly to female farmers.

Policy options to improve productivity, food security and welfare

To identify how best to boost agricultural productivity, food security and welfare in line with the objectives of Nigeria's NFSP, a team of local PEP researchers compared the NFSP production subsidy to three alternative policy options available to the government:

1. Increase the supply of land to female-managed farms
2. Reduce import duties on agricultural commodities
3. Reduce value added tax (VAT) on agricultural commodities.



Photo: International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)

Research project

A team of local PEP researchers sought to evaluate the impact of Nigeria's National Food Security Program (NFSP) on agricultural productivity and food security. Using a computable general equilibrium (PEP-CGE) model and a social accounting matrix (SAM) updated to 2016 data, the project team examined the economy-wide impacts of the policy interventions of the NFSP and three alternative policy options. Data sources included the Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the World Bank's Living Standard Measurement Survey Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) for Nigeria in 2019.

Key findings

Increasing women farmers' access to land is the most effective and economically efficient policy option for achieving the goals of the NFSP, in particular for boosting agricultural development and food security.

| Policy options ranked | | Policy options | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------|------------|
| Criteria | Variables | NFSP | Land reform | Reduce import duties | Reduce VAT |
| Efficiency | Initial financing costs | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| | Macroeconomic costs vs benefits | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Equity | Impacts on household welfare | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Effectiveness | Agricultural Productivity | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Feasibility | Subjective (author's perception) | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Acceptability | Subjective (author's perception) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |

Note: The efficiency, effectiveness and equity evaluations are based on results from a CGE model analysis

Out of the four policy options, **increasing women farmers' access to land would:**

- **Increase agricultural productivity the most**
- **Lead to the most economic growth (GDP at market prices)**
- **Improve household welfare as food and other commodities become the most affordable**
- **And significantly increase wages for rural households and hired female labour.**

While the current policy of the NFSP production subsidy appears the least costly financially, it is the most inefficient policy option if the overall economic cost-benefit of the policy scenarios are considered. Achieving the goals of the NFSP through structural/land reform is the least costly overall.

However, the feasibility and acceptability of this policy option may be challenging, due to administrative constraints and cultural factors. Given the government's role as the custodian of land under the current land tenure system, the land reform policy can be achieved with due consultation and engagement with key stakeholders.



Photo: IITA

Policy road map

1. Legislation by the National and State Assemblies:
 - To implement the policy on land reform, both the National and State Assemblies must work together to **amend the Land Use Act to accommodate land access to female farmers.**
2. Executive Order Pronouncement by the President:
 - The Presidency could sponsor an Amendment Bill to amend the current Land Use Act to accommodate a policy on land reform to increase land supply for female farmers in Nigeria.
3. Restructuring the NFSP by the relevant Government Agencies:
 - The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Central Bank of Nigeria and the Ministry of Women's Affairs should work with state governments in restructuring the NFSP program to specifically target female farmers.
 - For example, **the NFSP should clearly state the percentage of land increase for women farmers,** among other provisions.
4. NGOs such as the Nigerian Association of Women in Agriculture, Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN); and Nigerian Association of Agricultural Economists (NAAE), etc. must be mobilized to drive the policy reform, particularly by sensitizing the population and creating awareness.