INTRODUCTION

- Food security has till date not been achieved in many parts of West Africa and there is a growing literature that suggests lack of gender equity in food production processes partly accounts for this. Yam is an important food and cash crop for most families in West Africa. Nigeria and Ghana produce about 83% of the crop in West Africa (Amusa et al., 2003).
- Yams are also a valuable component of root tubers which have been recognised as immense contributors to food security in Asia, Africa and the world. They are a direct source of income, access to household food supply and they lead to a reduction in imported food (Scott, 2000 & Armah et al, 2010).
- Despite the importance of yam for food security and income, research and support for yam production has been limited thus exacerbating the challenges and processes partly accounts for this. Yam is an important food and cash crop for most families in West Africa. Nigeria and Ghana produce about 83% of the crop in West Africa (Amusa et al., 2003).
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RESEARCH PROBLEM

- Though women have been recognized as food producers especially at the household level, they still face limitations (Aidoo, et al, 2012).
- Gendered divisions of labour and lack of equity in access to inputs and technology related to food production, explains the differences in yields between women and men farmers and determines the benefit to families and communities.
- Interventions that enable women and men to meet the long term nutritional needs of their households would enhance food security.

RESEARCH AIM

- This paper uncovers the issues surrounding the limitations women face in yam farming in West Africa.

METHODOLOGY

- The Community Action for improving farmer-saved Seed Yam (CAY-Seed) project sought to test the effectiveness of an integrated crop management approach using selected yam viral and nematode disease control measures, combined with improved agronomic practices in reducing seed yam losses and increasing yam productivity.
- Data is from baseline quantitative survey of 720 households and mid line focus group discussion with men and women farmers in eight communities in Ghana and Nigeria where the CAYSEED intervention was implemented.

FINDINGS

- CAY-Seed found that food security of household is the biggest factor facilitating seed yam production (66%). Different roles are played by men and women in the various stages of the production of seed yam and yam farming in general.
- Men perform more roles than women as seen in the graph below.
- There is a strong view that yam is a “male” crop.
- The roles are gender based in yam production is mostly situated in the norms, behaviours and in cultural practices of the communities and the farmers attest to this.

CONCLUSION

- The introduction of modern trends and practices as under CAY-Seed has resulted in higher involvement of women in traditionally unacceptable areas of yam production.
- It is expected that women will even be willing to go commercial with the hope of assistance to overcome the various challenges enumerated.
- Other underlying constraints though remain unresolved:
  - Land acquisition is a problem for the farmers.
  - Access to credit.
  - Access to farm inputs.
  - There are also some non-financial challenges- bushfires, changes in the pattern of rainfall in recent times.

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