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## Motivations for agripreneurship among agro-pastoralist women in the district of Nikki (northern Benin)

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### Abstract

Agricultural entrepreneurship is being promoted in West Africa as the solution to food insecurity and unemployment among youth and women. Faced with food insecurity, high food prices, job insecurity, youth unemployment and increasing youth delinquency, Benin government has opted to promote and develop agricultural entrepreneurship. However, the efforts made with the support of international partners are often hampered by challenges such as identifying the entrepreneurial idea, predisposition to learning and risk-taking. This study aims to analyse the factors that motivated women in the agro-pastoralist communities in the Nikki District (Northern Benin) to take up farming, with a view to informing policies geared towards agricultural entrepreneurship among young people and women. A mixed methods approach was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from 140 snowball sampled female agricultural entrepreneurs, which was analysed using content analysis and descriptive statistics. Results showed that women agro-pastoral entrepreneurs are young (33 years old on average), educated or not (50.0 % non-literate, 31.4 % educated and 18.6 % literate) and mostly married (94.3 %). They have set up individual and generally informal agricultural micro-enterprises with a maximum capital of XOF 150,000 (€ 229), from personal savings (70.3 %), loans from micro-finance institutions (21.0 %), donations (5.0 %) or aid from development structures (2.9 %). Women's micro-enterprises have a lifespan of 1 to 20 years (90.7 %), and were inspired by old family activities (52.9 %) or created on personal inspiration (47.1 %). They mainly specialise in agri-food processing (40 %) and cropping (23.6 %), or combine several activities, including cropping, processing and marketing of raw or processed plant, animal, fish or forestry products (36.4 %). Rural women were mainly extrinsically motivated to undertake farming for financial security (96.4 %), personal pride (95.7 %), social prestige (85.7 %) and availability of opportunities (59.3 %). The few cases of intrinsic motivation found among women relate to acquiring skills (95.0 %), learning (90.7 %), discovering (90.0 %), and meeting societal challenges (80.7 %). These findings are useful in informing policies to promote women's entrepreneurship and gender equality for sustainable livelihoods.

**Keywords:** Agripreneurship, agro-pastoralist community, motivation, women