



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Women's empowerment and gender equality in agrifood value chains in SIDS



Meeting the challenge

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are among the most vulnerable countries impacted by food insecurity and malnutrition. Their reliance on remote markets for their food supplies threatens their economies and health. Due to climate change, SIDS are increasingly under pressure and facing challenges which undermine their capacities to produce safe and high-quality food at a reasonable price. An essential part of the solution to improve nutrition and respond to the climate crises is the transformation of agrifood systems in SIDS.

As food producers, processors and traders, women and girls in SIDS are central to **poverty eradication, climate-change-resilience** and **national economic growth**. Yet, they face massive constraints in their access to assets, resources, leadership and decision-making due to deep-rooted **gender inequalities**. They often work in the less profitable activities in the agrifood value chain and in small-scale businesses, with limited capital and opportunities for digital innovation and growth, especially in the present context of economic downturns.

In action

FAO developed an approach for promoting **gender-sensitive and climate-resilient value chains** to support interventions, producing lasting results. The project **Empowering women in food systems and strengthening the local capacities and resilience of SIDS in the agri-food sector (2020-2022)** targeted countries in the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific, supporting 5 550 people, mainly women. The project fostered an enabling institutional environment, increased access to and control over resources, as well as access to innovative and climate-resilient services, technologies and practices. All targeted countries now have roadmaps to consolidate and upscale results.

Through the **Dimitra Clubs**, FAO has pioneered a community-led and gender-transformative approach to enhance rural people's empowerment and women's leadership, including in terms of behavioural changes. The approach has supported 76 projects worldwide.

Looking at the evidence

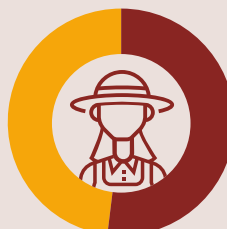
Globally, moderate or severe **food insecurity** was **10% higher** among women and girls in 2020, compared with 6% in 2019.



In SIDS, working-age women are **22%** more likely to live in extreme **poverty** than men.



In SIDS, women represent **52%** of the labour force.¹



In SIDS, women constitute **more than half** of the workforce in service to **tourism**.²



Comparative advantage

FAO's support for SIDS to address food and nutrition-security is guided by the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS (GAP), which is implemented sub-regionally through the [Interregional Initiative on SIDS](#), and nationally through Country Programme Frameworks.

FAO implements regional and country-focused initiatives through projects and policy advice, contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment. Guided by its [Policy on Gender Equality](#), it builds on its extensive experience in the context of value-chain operations. This enables women to **unlock their entrepreneurial potential**, making agri-businesses more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. It also improves production through **innovation** and climate-resilient agriculture (as well as nutrition); the **reduction of food loss** through circular economy; and it enhances access to markets for **inclusive rural transformation**. FAO consolidates its experience in implementing community-led, participatory approaches to overcoming gender discrimination, and in building more **gender-equitable agrifood systems**.

“Thanks to the women's empowerment initiative, I am beginning to play a vital role in the financial management of my household, improving the quality of life and the well-being of my family.”

Mouniati Houmadi
Producer in Comoros

Best practices and results

- 1** The [Palau's Sustainable Tourism Value Chain Programme](#) has provided women with economic opportunities, valuing local heritage related to food and the environment, including a carbon calculator for the tourism sector.
- 2** In Cabo Verde, FAO supported the development of the [Gender Equality Strategy in the Fishery Sector 2022–2026](#), enhancing the entrepreneurial capacities of women operating along the fisheries value chain, facilitating access to training, labour-saving technologies, equipment and service provision.
- 3** Since 2015, almost 8 500 Dimitra Clubs have been set-up in 15 countries around the globe, reaching 253 170 rural people (60 percent rural women and at least 20 percent young people).

Expected results

- **To strengthen the enabling environments for gender-responsive and climate-resilient value chains** through inclusive policies and regulatory frameworks. This is based on evidence and participatory processes, and designed according to the agreed international commitments on gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability.
- **To support value chains operations** mainly managed by women through advisory and financial services, climate-resilient and labour-saving technologies, mechanization, and risk-sensitive practices to strengthen their capacity to implement sustainable solutions, including strategies which enhance circular economy.
- **To facilitate the empowerment of women and communities** through gender-transformative approaches and gender-responsive climate action to contribute to inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood value chains.
- **To generate evidence-based knowledge** to support value-chain actors and practitioners, including small-scale producers and processors, family businesses, micro and small rural enterprises; as well as to support service providers and governmental institutions through technical assistance and policy guidance.

Contact

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Contribution to the SDGs



Partnerships to scale up impact

- the private sector, including processors, retailers and business associations;
- the United Nations system (UN Women);
- government agencies for development cooperation;
- Barbados – Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Central Fish Professors Association, StewardFish project, and the Barbados Rabbits and Ruminants Management Services;
- Cabo Verde – Ministry of the Sea, fishery associations, EMAR-School of Sea, the Costal Fisheries Initiative;
- Comoros – Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment, Girls & Tech Association, Appui à la Micro Entreprises (AMIE);
- Palau – Slow Food, Coalition of Fragile Ecosystems, Bureau of Agriculture Palau, Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism, Mountain Partnership; and
- Haiti – Ministère de l'Agriculture, des ressources naturelles et du développement rural, civil society organizations and producers' organizations, community radio stations.



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