



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Achieving gender equality by empowering women in agrifood systems



Meeting the challenge

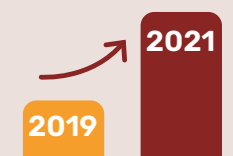
Despite their critical role in agrifood systems, millions of rural women face significant challenges to **access resources, information, services and opportunities**. They cope with excessive **work burden** and are **underrepresented** in institutions and decision-making processes. Moreover, they experience **higher rates of food insecurity** and are **disproportionately affected** by health, economic and environmental crises. Closing the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agrifood systems employment would **increase global gross domestic product** by 1 percent (or nearly USD 1 trillion). This would **reduce global food insecurity** by about 2 percentage points, reducing the number of food insecure people by 45 million.¹ Empowering women and maximizing their potential to equitably participate in agrifood systems is not only critical to increasing their productivity and socio-economic status, but also essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In action

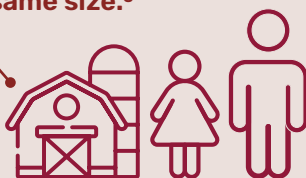
- At global level, FAO produces evidence, data, analyses, good practices and recommendations on women in agrifood systems to inform agrifood policies, programmes and investments. FAO's 2023 report, **The status of women in agrifood systems**, is a flagship example of this area of work.
- FAO builds synergies across different technical areas (e.g. community engagement, social protection and disability inclusion, among others), which can be utilized to upscale interventions for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- At country level, FAO implements gender-responsive and **transformative approaches**, such as the **Women's Empowerment Farmer Business School**, to engage communities and local institutions in changing discriminatory gender norms and practices.
- FAO conducts gender assessments of national policies and legal frameworks and offers related **capacity development and technical support** to promote gender-responsive policymaking on aspects such as women's land rights.

Looking at the evidence

In 2021, **31.9%** of women were **food insecure** compared to **27.6%** of men – the gap increased from 1.7 to 4.3 percentage points between 2019 and 2021.²



In low- and middle-income countries, female-managed **farms** are on average **24% less productive** than male-managed farms of the same size.³



Men have greater ownership or more secure tenure rights over agricultural **land** than do women in **40 of 46 countries** for which data is available.⁴



Only **19%** of the agricultural and rural development policy documents analysed across 68 countries include **gender-related goals**.⁵



Comparative advantage

FAO has extensive expertise in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in agrifood systems and rural development to **eliminate poverty and promote inclusive rural transformation** for a better life. It specializes in advocating for gender equality and incorporating gender considerations into agricultural, rural development, and social protection policies, programmes, and legislation. It has a strong competency in offering capacity-development and gender-sensitive methodologies for collecting and using sex-disaggregated data in agriculture and rural development. As custodian agency for several SDG indicators related to women's land rights, FAO provides programmatic support to Members for monitoring and reporting on progress.

Furthermore, with a wide geographical presence, FAO serves as an ideal platform for **South-South** learning and **knowledge-sharing** on gender equality and socio-economic empowerment of rural women and girls. In many countries, FAO is the leading United Nations agency working with rural women and their organizations, and thus is well-positioned to establish strategic partnerships among a wide range of stakeholders.

“I have now experienced the benefits of a balanced family tree, where both the husband and wife work together for the common good of all.”

Daniel, participant of the Women's Empowerment Farmer Business School, Kenya

Best practices and results

1

Rigorous quantitative and qualitative evidence generated by FAO on the status of women in agrifood systems continues to inform policies, programmes and investments of a wide variety of stakeholders.

2

Policy and legal assessments relevant for agriculture and rural development in over 80 countries are helping to identify substantive gaps, inform policy processes and enhance gender-related capacities of governments.

3

Since 2014, the **United Nations Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment** has reached almost 80 000 beneficiaries in seven countries, boosting women's productivity, food security, social status and decision-making power.

Expected results

- **Women's secure land tenure rights and access to land** are strengthened by fostering gender-responsive policy, legal and institutional frameworks (including customary systems); improving the capacities of relevant land tenure actors and enhancing women's ability to claim their land rights.
- **Women's economic empowerment** is accelerated through gender transformative approaches that address discriminatory social norms, increase women's agricultural productivity, access to resources and services, markets and income-generating opportunities, and foster their leadership and agency to influence decision making and policy processes at all levels.
- **Women's entrepreneurship, participation, benefits and working conditions** in agrifood value chains are improved through better access to innovative resources, climate-resilient services, labour-saving technologies and digitalization.
- **Institutions, organizations and governments** are informed and supported through the dissemination of cutting-edge evidence, good practices, and analytical findings; and capacitated to implement gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions that contribute to closing the gender gap in agrifood systems, while simultaneously tackling the root causes of gender inequalities.

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Contribution to the SDGs



Partnerships to scale up impact

- the United Nations system (UN Women, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Food Programme, the World Bank);
- regional organizations (the European Union);
- academia and research organizations (CGIAR, etc.);
- non-governmental organizations (Care International, Amplio, KIT Royal Tropical Institute);
- local institutions, civil society organizations and producer associations;
- ministries of agriculture, gender and land, as well as national governmental bodies, including institutions of statistics; and
- the private sector and foundations (the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation).



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