



Improving the Productivity and Livelihoods of Women Smallholder Farmers

A Collective Action within Key Focus Area (KFA) 2: *Turning Knowledge and Innovation into Enterprise*



Photo: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam

Women play crucial roles spanning the entire value chain in smallholder agriculture. They are farmers, agribusiness operators, innovators and educators. They combine these with the demanding roles of mothers and in managing household nutrition.

Several studies show that women are responsible for the production of most of the food consumed in developing countries. For example, in South East Asia, women provide up to 90 percent of labor in rice cultivation. In Pakistan, 80 percent of livestock is managed by women and two-thirds of women are employed in agriculture. In Kenya, women make up 75-89 percent of the agricultural labor force. In Tanzania, women are 80 percent of unpaid family labor in agriculture.

As prominent as women are in the agriculture of developing countries, they are usually neglected in the planning processes and many benefits fly past them because most policies assume all farmers are men. In practice, women farmers lack access to irrigation facilities and tend to rely on rain-fed agriculture. They also have poor access to inputs (fertilizers, seeds and equipment), to extension (most extension agents are men), to credit/insurance, and to markets for their products. They either own

small pieces of land or have no land at all. In Africa, women receive 7 percent of extension services, 1 percent of all agricultural credit and own only 1 percent of the land. Invariably, women farmers consistently produce less per hectare than their male counterparts in developing countries.

As FAO states, there is a significant global gender gap in agriculture, which translates into a costly lost opportunity to improve the quality and quantity of the world's food supply. If women had the same access to, and control over productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent (100-150 million). Closing the gender gap would generate significant gains for agriculture and for society. Besides production, women could also be engaged in processing, marketing and the use of ICT for value addition, and determining market prices.

Thus, taking women into consideration in policies and planning, is not just a political priority but an economic imperative. Women have to be taken into consideration in the whole process of planning, technology development, dissemination, development of policies for capacity building, and access to inputs and output markets. This is what ensures that they have a good chance to improve their productivity and livelihoods with cascading effects on the livelihoods of their households.

What we will do together

For this to happen, GFAR is catalyzing a Collective Action on [Improving the productivity](#)

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and livelihoods of women smallholder farmers using women-friendly and climate-smart production systems, processing and marketing systems.

This Collective Action will lead to the development of Innovation Platforms which will comprise all relevant stakeholders for selected commodities of importance to groups of women in different regions of the world. It will benefit

Innovation Platforms have been widely tested to be more effective than conventional approaches in taking the perspectives of women and other neglected groups into consideration. They have been proven to be effective in:

- Identifying the needs of women farmers for production and processing technologies and continue to develop women friendly technologies, including those that add value, help to aid drudgery and address household nutrition
- Identifying partners willing to work with women groups and bringing them to the forum for collective action;
- Identify and link women farmers to markets and help women's groups participate fully in agricultural value chains;
- Identify policy gaps and recommend women friendly policies in agricultural research and development;
- Assessing and designing agricultural development programming to ensure programs are gender aware and gender transformative;
- Improving the availability of gender disaggregated data for policymakers and citizens;
- Designing and implementing an appropriate training and empowerment program for women farmers;
- Fostering more experimentation and systematic evaluation of mechanisms to improve women's access to agricultural markets, credits and inputs.
- Learning from women-centered training processes and sharing knowledge widely

from ICT, social media, rural radio and other communication mechanisms to enhance productivity and increase income.

Interested members of GFAR are encouraged to commit to this Collective Action. They will work together with other partners to identify commodities and systems of common interest, develop functional Innovation Platforms and commence work with resource poor farmers as the central focus.

Those committed to date including Farmers' Organizations, Private Sector networks, and Universities, will work with other Partners in GFAR and Partners in the Gender in Agriculture Partnership (GAP) undertaking multi-stakeholder processes examining needs and opportunities in specific countries, in association with investment agencies. Following a mapping of the partners who have so far committed to this Collective Action, it can be launched in countries proposed to include Ghana, Egypt, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. Other countries that find the theme relevant are welcome to become involved in these actions.

The program will be supported with ICT, social media and rural radio, and will work through a three-pronged capacity building program aimed at:

- 1) improving the technical aspect of production, or processing along the value chain, leading to an increase in production and income
- 2) developing entrepreneurial skills leading to better businesses management and life skills
- 3) delivering training to selected trainers who will pass on their skills to a multitude of others.

You are invited to join Partners in GFAR including FAO, CGIAR, UN Women, GAP, Palestinian Farmers' Union, Barli Development Institute for Rural Women, APAARI and FORAGRO in this Collective Action.

For more information, contact GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org