The State of Food and Agriculture

Women in agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Rome, March 2011
The agriculture sector in developing countries is underperforming, in part because women are denied the resources and opportunities they need to be more productive.
Gains from closing the gender gap

- **Productivity gains**
  - 20 to 30 percent on women’s farms
  - 2.5 to 4 percent at national level

- **Food security gains**
  - 12 to 17 percent reduction in the number of hungry
  - 100 to 150 million people lifted out of hunger

- **Broader economic and social gains**
  - Better health, nutrition and education outcomes for children
  - Higher human capital, which promotes economic growth
Employment rates by sector

Note: The ILO, KILM data covers only a subset of the countries in each region. Definitions of adult labour force differ by country, but usually refers to the population aged 15 and above. Employed includes self-employed, employed, employers as well as contributing family members. There is no distinction between formal sector employment and informal sector employment.
Women are a key resource in agriculture

![Graph showing employment by sector and gender in different regions](image)

**Source:** ILO.

Share of employed population by sector and gender
Women farmers produce less...

Gap between yields on male- and female-controlled plots in Burkina Faso

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Sorghum</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>All crops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>-41</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
because they operate smaller farms...

Average farm size (ha)

- Female-headed households
- Male-headed households

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...and use less fertilizer
Policies can make a difference

- Good agricultural policy must consider gender differences
- Ensure equality for women under the law
- Invest in the human capital of women and girls
- Address the multiple constraints of women in agriculture holistically
- Provide public services and technologies to free up women’s time
For more information

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