



Eastern and Southern Africa
Small Scale Farmers' Forum
ESAFF - UGANDA



POLICY BRIEF

Women who farm on a small-scale are pushing for a fairer deal. How can we remedy the gender disparities that exist in the agricultural sector?



It is possible to enhance crop yields by as much as 30 percent by providing women farmers with the same access to productive resources like land, technologies, and capital as males in order to help feed a growing population."

March, 2023.

Introduction

It is impossible to attain food sovereignty for all people unless the structural inequities that exist within food systems are first acknowledged and then remedied. Women who are a part of agricultural social movements have been fighting for a long time to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are properly incorporated into the policies and legal instruments that are supposed to guarantee the rights to food, land, work, and social security.

There has not been a fair distribution of benefits between men and women in the agriculture industry or in farming methods. Even in the 21st century, there is still a gender gap in the agricultural industry. Disparities

between men and women are visible at every stage of the agricultural value chain. The progress that women achieve in agriculture and, as a result, in trade is still being hampered by structural barriers and deeply ingrained gender inequalities, such as those that exist in regards to land access. In this policy brief, we highlight the key limitations that women small-scale farmers face. We also explore key actions that would contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, and we investigate whether or not more can be done to improve the situation of women in agriculture through the use of these instruments. The fight against gender inequality is a crucial component in the effort to make agriculture more sustainable.

Background

Small-scale farmers control the majority of the agricultural sector in African countries, despite the fact that agriculture is the sector that most significantly contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP) of these nations. Although they only make up 12% of the total cropland in the globe, small-scale farms are responsible for the production of an estimated 80% of the food that is grown in Asia and Africa. Small-scale farmers are extremely vulnerable and are frequently disregarded by policy measures, which leaves them impoverished and hungry despite the fact that they play an essential part in contributing to global food security. In the majority of African countries, agriculture makes up seventy percent of the workforce, and about 33 million small-scale farms are responsible for providing the majority of the continent's food. The majority of the labour that is required to produce, prepare, and sell their produce is carried out by women, placing them at the forefront of the agricultural labour force. Due to the fact that women small-scale farmers often take care of their households in addition to their farms, it is impossible for them to achieve the same level of agricultural output as males because of the commitments they have to their families and communities.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women comprise nearly fifty percent of the agricultural labour population; nonetheless, the plots they manage produce approximately twenty to thirty percent less food than those managed by men. According to the findings of a study conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), if women around the world had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent, which would result in an increase of 2.5–4 percent in total agricultural output. Improvements in agricultural productivity alone might eliminate hunger for 12–17 percent of the population, or anywhere between 100 million and 150 million people.

Agriculture in Uganda is responsible for one quarter of the country's gross domestic product and employs a significant percentage of the working population (66 percent). The rate of population increase in Uganda is one of the highest in the world, and experts predict that the country's total population will at least double by the year 2050. Women play an essential role in many aspects of society, including the agricultural and cattle

industries, where they are change agents and resilience builders. In spite of the fact that women play a significant part in agriculture, there are still a great deal of obstacles and biases that we have to do rid of in order to completely benefit from their participation.

According to the findings of the Demographic and Health Survey conducted in Uganda in 2020, females accounted up 48.2% of the labour in the agricultural sector. On the other hand, the number of women in agroecology and agriculture who both have access to and make use of the necessary technologies is substantially lower. Only 22.9% of women surveyed reported having access to and making use of potentially productivity-boosting agricultural technologies such as improved seed varieties, agrochemicals, and irrigation. In a similar vein, just 23.2% of women surveyed stated that they were familiar with and utilised agroecological strategies, such as crop rotation and intercropping. Based on these statistics, it is clear that there is still a significant gender gap in Uganda when it comes to access to and utilisation of technological advances and environmentally responsible agricultural techniques.

Studies conducted in rural regions have shown that there has been a significant fall in household income, a drop in informal cross-border commerce, and increased levels of food insecurity. A large number of women rely on agriculture or informal trade for their means of subsistence. These effects are keenly felt by refugees, the vast majority of whom are women and who predominantly find employment in the agricultural and informal sectors.

In the rural agricultural sector of Uganda, women play an important role and provide a proportion of labour that is significantly greater than the regional average for crop production. They also make up more than half of the people employed in agriculture in Uganda, and a higher percentage of women than males are employed in agriculture (76 percent versus 62 percent, respectively). Women have long been an integral part of Uganda's economic landscape. Women everywhere are the ones who are tasked with the responsibility of preparing food for their families and are involved in the many stages and procedures of the food processing process. In a lot of different cultures, it falls primarily on the shoulders of the women to provide sustenance for their family.

Women farmers working on a small-scale face significant obstacles

Despite the fact that women on farms and in households in general play significant roles in the production of food, the processing of food, and the feeding of families, it is important to note that they perform these functions while facing numerous constraints, and as a result, they are almost never able to reach their full potential in relation to the substantial efforts that they put into the agricultural sector.

Women suffer a disproportionate amount from the effects of poverty and hunger, and they also have less access to proper education and healthcare than males do. The gender asset gap contributes to a reduction in agricultural output, which is further exacerbated by social conventions that systematically restrict the available possibilities. Additionally, women's discrimination and low levels of human capital are restricted, meaning that their time commands a low return compared with that of men. According to some reports, women make up nearly half of the world's small-scale farmers and are responsible for producing seventy percent of Africa's food supply; however, women only control less than twenty percent of the land around the globe.

There is still a significant problem with sexual assault and domestic violence in many places. In addition, being poor almost often goes hand in hand with having a violent partner in the household. In point of fact, instances of violence are more prevalent among women who are afflicted with poverty. According to some estimates, more than half of the women living in Uganda have been victims of some kind of physical or emotional abuse at the hands of their spouses.

Although both sexes continue to have a low utilisation rate for extension services, women are more likely to avoid using them than men. Because of their low education, limited financial resources, and restricted amounts of free time, rural women may have difficulty gaining access to knowledge through technological means. Because they do not have access to financing, producers are unable to assume the risks and front-end expenses involved with the innovations and investments that are necessary to improve their productivity, income, and well-being. In most situations, women have very little influence over their assets, including home property and collateral. In addition, gender disparities in access to and acceptance of new and existing technologies are caused by a number of barriers, and the adoption of these technologies may be limited by women's lower capacity for risk absorption.

It is still the case that a disproportionately high number of women participate in low-productivity activities, such as unpaid home labour. So, the gains of the liberalisation of trade have not been dispersed between men and women in an equitable manner.

As a result of discrimination based on gender, women frequently lack access to information and networks, and they are routinely underrepresented in rural institutions and organisations, which further diminishes their ability to have a voice and participate in decision-making. Because of this, their ability to engage in and have an impact on the governing systems at the local, national, and international levels is negatively impacted. Even within their own households, women may discover that they lack the ability to exert any impact on

decision-making. In spite of the significant contribution they make, they do not always have a say in the most crucial decisions that must be made, nor do they have control over the amount of money that is earned as a result of their labour.

Land tenure is essential for having access to the economic benefits of certification; however, women are frequently excluded from these benefits because they have less statutory land rights than males do. This is one reason why certification is so important for women.

It may be possible, for instance, to greatly equalise resource allocation within households by using low-cost strategies that reduce the restrictions of child care on female managers. One approach includes community-based child care interventions; however, we require additional information regarding the effectiveness of these programmes.

Interventions that bring extension services closer to home dwellings, enable access to market information through mobile phones, or allow greater access to transit may also be helpful given the increased expenses of travel incurred by women.

The vast majority of the policies and actions in the agriculture sector do not take into account gender dynamics, and the mechanisms that are in place to combat gender inequality are woefully inadequate. Throughout the stage of implementation, the interventions, for the most part, lack the required mechanisms for guaranteeing fair distribution of services between men and women and for taking affirmative action for groups that are disadvantaged.

Higher average temperatures, increasing sea levels, and more extreme weather events will all have an effect on harvest levels, livestock output, fisheries, and aquaculture as a direct result of climate change. This has huge repercussions for agriculture and the security of our food supply. From the year 1950, heat waves have been noticeably hotter and have lasted for a significantly longer period of time. Each year, new temperature extremes that are lethal break records. It is now generally accepted that the effects of climate change do not equally affect people of different genders.

What ESAFF Uganda has done to remedy the gender disparities that exist in the agricultural sector?

1.

ESAFF Uganda has positioned women as drivers of their own development using the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS). In order to improve livelihoods in ways that gives most benefit to women, there is always a need to establish multi stakeholder consensus on the cultural and business imperatives of promoting gender justice and prioritizing the needs and interests of the weakest and most vulnerable parts of the chain. ESAFF Uganda uses the GALS methodology as one of the techniques to bridge the gaps in gender exclusiveness in communities. This community-led empowerment methodology gives women as well as men more control over their lives and catalyze and support a sustainable movement for gender justice.

2.

Promoting women in Farming as a Business (FAAB). Using the FAAB methodology, ESAFF Uganda promotes women small scale farmers in business through providing oriented techniques like building their capacities in business planning and management, market analysis, basic accounting, use of ICT among others to help them attain better and sustainable livelihoods. ESAFF Uganda developed KilimoMart Application to address the current market challenges and provide access to markets and information for organic small-scale farmers, especially women. The Application also promotes interaction between consumers and small-scale farmers as well as different stakeholders. The name KilimoMart means Agriculture (Kilimo) Market (Mart). The Market Application provides information on the market in Uganda. KilimoMart is focused on building the skills of small-scale farmers in Farming as a Business and value addition, especially women and youths and empowering them in overcoming economic challenges through marketing their products on the App. KilimoMart focuses on organic products given the health implications related to inorganic products.

3.

Protecting women and girls land rights. ESAFF Uganda recognizes the ability of women and girls to exercise and protect their rights to access and control of land despite the discriminative cultural norms therefore the organisation builds capacities of women to understand their legal rights and create awareness on land right issues in communities. Through lobby meeting and dialogues, ESAFF Uganda creates platforms for women and girls to engage with local, national and regional leaders on issues related to land rights. Over 60 percent of the women who have ever participated in these engagements understand their land rights and can loudly speak about them, though many women and girls aren't fully enjoying these rights.

4.

Promoting women participation in national budgeting processes and social accountability. Few women in rural areas knew that they had a right to hold government accountable. Using the PETS/PSAM model, ESAFF Uganda builds the capacity of women in public expenditure tracking and encourages women to take part in budget processes from village to national level. This process has built confidence of women to engage with local leaders and hold them accountable.

5.

Improving and protecting women seed security. Accessing good quality seed among farming communities has become a challenge, women in most cases suffer the biggest challenge of poor quality and inadequate seed. ESAFF Uganda ought the need to build capacities of women in multiplying saving and distributing good quality seed as well as generating experiences for strengthening the informal seed sector. Women groups in Gulu district have established seed multiplication gardens and seed banks which they use to multiple and share seed among themselves. This has reduced the financial burden that comes with buying seed from the market and sometimes with uncertainty.

6.

Women using media to influence policy and practice change. Women recognize that media interventions potentially play a major role in influencing practice and policy change. ESAFF Uganda empowers women through availing media platforms for engagement like radio and TV programs that women small scale farmers use to set the agenda for the press, the public, and policymakers through highlighting what issues are newsworthy at a particular time. Women have also used the media to influence policymakers through shaping public opinion on women's rights, which in turn, exerts pressure on policymakers at local and national level to respond.

7.

Women in Leadership. The participation of women in leadership and decision making continues to be limited, yet it remains a top priority and critical in achieving gender equality. ESAFF Uganda has played a significant role in empowering women for leadership both in ESAFF Uganda structures and beyond because women recognize that only when they have full access to decision making positions will laws, policies, and budgets reflect the needs of women. Some rural women have used ESAFF district structures to elevate to political offices in the sub counties.

Important policy suggestions

It is more necessary than ever before to lend support to the economic empowerment of women in view of new problems and new tendencies affecting global markets. Trade has the potential to be a powerful tool for advancing women's economic empowerment. Since fewer options present themselves on the global market, there is a pressing need to locate new prospects for women in other markets. The elimination of these disparities would not only lead to an increase in the income of female farmers, but it would also be beneficial to families, communities, and economies. It would also encourage the kind of inclusive growth that makes entire nations more robust.

Help female business owners expand their operations and expand into more lucrative markets by providing them with financial and other forms of support. Targeting women whose enterprises have the potential for expansion is necessary in order to fulfil the requirement to provide skill training, as well as to encourage the potential for innovation among women and to facilitate their access to capital and markets.

Reduce the stress associated with caregiving by making use of high-quality child care options. The information gleaned from the research suggests that making available various child care options can not only increase women's participation in the workforce but also raise earnings. There is also a need to engage men in equalising care responsibilities; evidence from microcredit and entrepreneurship programs in Uganda shows that couple training can improve household power dynamics and increase economic wellbeing. There is a need to engage men in equalising care responsibilities.

To eliminate the barriers that prevent women and members of other disadvantaged groups from gaining access to services, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and other agencies should incorporate affirmative action into all of the sector activities.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) issued General

Recommendation regarding the rights of women who live in rural areas, and governments should make its implementation a top priority. It comprises the rights to participate in and profit from rural development; rights to health; rights to education; rights to work; rights to economic, social, and public life; rights to protection from violence; and rights to land and natural resources.

Make ensuring that women have the same access as men to essential agricultural resources like land, water, cattle, equipment, seeds, and organic fertilisers. This will help ensure gender equality in the agricultural sector. This is an essential component in increasing their potential for productive and entrepreneurial endeavours. In accordance with the laws of the country, the government ought to initiate reforms in order to provide women with equal rights to economic resources. These rights ought to include access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources.

The provision of governmental services, infrastructure, and social protection programs as well as the encouragement of shared responsibility within the household and family are all ways to acknowledge and appreciate unpaid care and domestic work.

Boost the utilisation of enabling technology, particularly information and communications technology, in order to advance the cause of women's empowerment.

To ensure that all policies and practices are non-discriminatory and give equitable access to resources and opportunities, the government should ensure that they implement practices and policies that are equitable and inclusive. It is also necessary to foster an environment that recognises the value of variety and promotes participation in order to foster an atmosphere of respect that acknowledges and honours the distinctive histories, experiences, and skills possessed by every individual.

Conclusion

The African Union has committed to providing more assistance to female smallholder farmers through the Malabo Declaration and the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), however many African nations have not yet reached this goal. Women small-scale farmers have not been given appropriate priority in the policies and programmes that have been implemented by African governments and development partners. As a direct result of this, small-scale farmers are forced to suffer the unfavourable effects that stem from the lack of assistance and commitment shown by governments.

A crucial component of the solution to the problem of insufficient food supply is empowering and providing assistance to female small-scale farmers. Nonetheless, declining agricultural output is a primary driving force behind expanding poverty, increased vulnerability, and food insecurity among small-scale farmers. Women in many societies have extensive indigenous knowledge of the various local plant species. As a result, they are in a better position than men to provide their families with a diverse range of foods that are high in nutrients, thereby

expanding dietary variety and reducing the risk of malnutrition at the household level. This indicates that civilizations are contributing to low levels of diversification in food production and food intake, as well as poverty and malnutrition, by continuing to marginalise women in society. In addition, because of the dynamic nature of food supply networks, which are being represented by the rise of supermarkets rather than offering new opportunities for small-scale farmers, it is possible that these farmers may become marginalised as a result of their exclusion from lucrative markets.

Although there has been some progress made towards the development of women small-scale farmers, there are still a number of barriers that prevent agricultural innovations from functioning for women small-scale farmers. Small-scale farmers have been left in a state of poverty and food insecurity as a result of a lack of a conducive climate and political will, which has been aggravated by the advancement of immediate development solutions. Efforts to improve global food security must include a significant focus on empowering women who are engaged in subsistence agriculture.

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About the ESAFF Uganda

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which took place in South Africa in 2002, was the impetus for the formation of the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF). This was done in an effort to build a platform that would bring together small-scale farmers in order to form a social movement that would influence favourable agriculture policies and practises at the global, continental, regional, national, and local levels.




ESAFF Uganda is working to improve the capacity of small-scale farmers to make decisions based on accurate information and to participate actively in the development process. ESAFF Uganda now has a membership of 12543 farmer groups with 384056 individual small-scale farmers in 54 districts (under the administration of 30 historical districts' forums). Of these farmers, 67 percent are women. ESAFF Uganda is also part of a broader network of small-scale farmers in the other 15 nations in eastern and southern Africa, including South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa, Lesotho, DR Congo, Madagascar, Seychelles, and Mozambique.

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