



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



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**WOMEN
FORUM**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

8TH MARCH 2025

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KAMPALA | UGANDA

On March 8th, as the world commemorates International Women's Day 2025, we, the small-scale women farmers under the **ESAFF Women Forum**, raise our voices to demand accelerated action for gender equality, land rights, and economic justice. This year, we unite under the call to **"Accelerate Action: Land and Fair Economic Opportunities for Women"**, recognizing the critical role of women in agriculture in shaping a just and resilient food system.

We honour and celebrate all women in their diversity—women in agriculture, rural women, and those championing change in their communities. We pay tribute to those who came before us, those standing beside us today, and the future generations who will carry forward the fight for gender equity. We reaffirm our commitment to advancing the rights and dignity of women farmers, ensuring that they have equal access to land, productive resources, markets, and decision-making spaces.

This year marks 30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a global framework for gender equality adopted by 189 governments, including Uganda, at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. While some progress has been made in education, economic empowerment, and resource rights, persistent inequalities—land rights violations, climate injustice, and digital exclusion—continue to threaten these hard-won gains.

For small-scale women farmers, true gender equity remains out of reach due to deep-rooted barriers in accessing, owning, and controlling productive resources like land and seeds. In sub-Saharan Africa, women own significantly less agricultural land than men in 43 out of 49 assessed countries. In Uganda, while women make up 70% of the agricultural workforce, they own only 27% of registered land, and female-headed households account for 22% of all agricultural households. Discriminatory customary practices further limit women's ability to contribute to food security, climate resilience, and economic transformation.

To create an equitable, resilient, and just food system, urgent legal and policy reforms are needed to protect women's land rights and expand their economic opportunities.

Over the years, ESAFF Uganda has implemented transformative initiatives such as the Land Rights Support Centre (LRSC) and the Agroecology Business Hub (ABH) to empower small-scale women farmers by providing, Access to accurate land rights information, Free legal aid and land dispute resolution, Affordable credit and financial services, Market access, business incubation, and training and Capacity strengthening for economic and social empowerment.

To ensure that women small-scale farmers can fully own, control, and benefit from land and economic opportunities, we urge the Ugandan government, civil society, and development partners to take the following decisive actions:

- 1). Enhance rural digital infrastructure and literacy programs to enable women farmers to access market and land information, advocate for their rights, and expand economic opportunities.
- 2). Ensure financial inclusion by providing grants, affordable credit, and tailored financial services for women small-scale farmers to invest in agriculture and business expansion.
- 3). Launch inclusive social media campaigns in partnership with NGOs and media houses to raise awareness about women's struggles and successes in agriculture and land ownership.
- 4). Localize essential services such as legal aid, shelters, psychosocial counselling, and healthcare to ensure rural women and girls can access justice and protection against gender-based violence.
- 5). Integrate the Beijing Platform for Action into national policies and programs to empower young feminist farmers and create gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies.
- 6). Support and protect grassroots women-led movements advocating for legal reforms, challenging discriminatory norms, and pushing for inclusive policies that uphold women's land and economic rights.

By implementing these reforms, Uganda will demonstrate its commitment to gender equality, land justice, and economic transformation, ensuring that women small-scale farmers are at the forefront of sustainable agriculture and climate resilience. Today, ESAFF Uganda releases this call to action, urging all stakeholders to join us in advancing women's land and economic rights.

Throughout the day, ESAFF Uganda will share stories, experiences, and initiatives on social media. We invite everyone to join the conversation using **#AccelerateAction4Women** and help amplify the voices of women farmers.

Together, let us **Accelerate Action** for a just, inclusive, and resilient food system led by small-scale women farmers!

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Learn more:  www.esaffuganda.org

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About ESAFF Uganda

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) was formed during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002 in South Africa. This was in an effort to create a Forum to bring together small-scale farmers into a social movement to influence favourable agriculture policies and practices at global, continental, regional, national and local levels.

ESAFF Uganda became operational in 2008 and has since become the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda. ESAFF Uganda works to enhance the SSFs' ability to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in development processes. ESAFF Uganda currently has a membership of 12588 small-scale farmer community organizations in 54 districts representing over 765,560 individual small-scale farmers of which 67 percent are women.

ESAFF Uganda is also part of a bigger network of small-scale farmers in 15 other countries 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.

ESAFF Uganda is also part of La Via Campesina (LVC) which is the largest peasant organization in the world.