



WFO Policy on Women in Agriculture

Coordinated by the International Secretariat

Globally, women play a central role in the agricultural sector, engaging in a myriad of ways as producers, laborers, marketers, and entrepreneurs. This is of course, coupled with duties and responsibilities over family nutrition, child-care, and food security which are still mainly conducted by women.

In the achievement of global food security, the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) recognizes the pivotal role of women farmers and advocates for the empowerment of their role in agriculture. According to FAO estimates, women are responsible for more than 50% of food production worldwide. This includes up to 80% of food production in African countries, 60% in Asia and between 30 and 40% in South America.

Global trends have seen a recent increase in female-headed households along with female-headed farms due to a variety of factors. **Across the developing world**, women are often left with the responsibility of farm management, performing all duties that pertain to a farm manager, along with family care and household maintenance. However, often due to gender bias and women's low social standing due to the patriarchal nature of many societies, they are rarely legally or socially recognized as head of the farm. Men's absence is most often due to either death, migration in search of additional income through urban employment or men enlisting in the army in times of conflict. Women often accept and assume the magnitude of their duties and receive a minimal amount of recognition for their contributions. They are seldom granted land tenure rights and often have less access to vital production inputs such as: land; financial services including credit, savings, insurance; access to markets and storage; and other services and technical support, than their male counterparts and are often denied access to education and agricultural extension programmes. Many studies demonstrate when women have access to education and improve their social and economic standing, they can ably cater for their children's education and household spending on nutrition increases. Their social and economic empowerment has impacts in many realms for example child health outcomes improve and small farms become more productive, economically viable and sustainable.

Rural women are therefore especially affected by various forms of poverty. Poverty of time: taking care of their farm and their family gives them less time for recreation, repose and even time to work. Poverty of work: women's work is often less productive due to injustices of the basic accesses cited previously. Poverty of business certainty: women often have less access than their male counterparts in formal contracts of work, property, and professional training and information. Poverty of social networks: The quality of social and technical infrastructure makes the access to social networks more difficult for women.

The challenge we aim to address through the creation of a WFO women's committee, representative of the world's farmers, is to raise awareness on the value of women's work and the need to improve their skills in order to maximize their potential as farmers and agents of change. The committee's work aims to improve the position of women in the agricultural value chain and in particular ensure equal treatment between women and men in the agricultural sector in terms of the economic, working and social conditions.

The establishment of an international committee for women farmers will encourage and foster solidarity and cooperation among women and men farmers, especially between those from developed and developing countries. The committee's work will also focus on strengthening the capacities of women farmers through their full and active participation in farmers' organizations, in decision-making bodies and in WFO activities

The committee aims to actively ensure the representation of women in delegations speaking for farmers at national and international level and support the effective participation of women farmers in relevant programs. It will also ensure that national and international decision-makers take into account women farmers' needs such as access to land, credit, knowledge, technical support and market

opportunities when drawing up agricultural policies. The aim is to achieve policies that are effective and efficient in promoting the socio-economic empowerment of women farmers allowing gender-balanced conditions in agriculture. In this regard, the committee will promote, analyze, and disseminate among its network any relevant research that will inform the decision makers.

In order to operationalize our aim, we will promote the status of women farmers all over the world, creating awareness about their working and living conditions especially at the national and international level in relevant dialogue and policy making forums, and in relevant international organizations. The committee is also dedicated to sharing best practices and promote their scaling-up. Actions to empower women farmers are central to WFO's position on global food security. WFO promotes the development of farm programs that address the particular needs of women farmers, including investment in women farmers and their access to land tenure, production inputs, education, training, credit and market opportunities. WFO also advocates for the creation of women farmers' observatories within national governments in order to develop gender disaggregated data in regards to status and production revenues.

The committee, together with the rest of the Organization, is **calling for concrete action to be taken in terms of political and financial commitments on behalf of the international community** recognizing that the achievement of gender equality generates faster rural development, economic growth and stability through agricultural-related employment, increased food security and overall well-being of rural populations.