FAO Agri-Gender Statistics Toolkit – the focus on gender in agriculture

A new FAO toolkit aims to sharpen the focus of anti-hunger and development efforts by helping countries gather more accurate information on differences between men and women in agriculture.

The **Agri-Gender Database**, developed by FAO in response to a request from the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS), offers step-by-step, example-driven guidance on how to collect gender statistics, or sex-disaggregated data, on agriculture, livestock production, fisheries and forestry.

The database is designed for a wide range of users who influence development planning, from agricultural statisticians and researchers to policy planners and gender advocates.

Improving planning

"Gathering statistics on how women's socio-economic conditions differ from those of men in the context of their agricultural work – and on other issues like their access to resources and exposure to food insecurity – is essential to improve the planning and sustainability of development policies and programmes," said Diana Tempelman, Senior Officer for Gender and Development with the FAO Regional Office for Africa.

"With more specific information, policy-makers can provide greater support to those who lack access to, and control over, agricultural resources. They can help women to achieve greater equality and food security," Tempelman said. *"In the past, users and producers of agricultural statistics have noted that the information compiled often did not reflect the actual roles and responsibilities of women in agricultural production."*

Twenty years of research

The methodology for gathering such information, as illustrated in the toolkit, was developed over two decades of research and direct technical support to national agricultural census teams and offices in numerous countries in Africa.

"Very often, when people look for gender-related data, they look for it in relation to social issues, education, health, and legal aspects of people's lives. Very rarely do they think of agricultural statistics-gathering as a tool for collecting gender data. The Agri-Gender Database will help them in this regard," says Tempelman.

The first edition of the toolkit includes examples of gender-relevant questions and table formats used in agricultural censuses in 15 African countries between 1993 and 2006. It shows users how they can formulate questions and tables to better reflect the roles, activities, responsibilities, opportunities and constraints faced by men and women in agriculture.

Asking the right questions

The contribution of women and girls to agricultural production is often underreported because data on much of what they produce is obtained from records of land holdings, which are formally headed by men. One of the key changes in data-gathering advocated by the Agri-Gender Database is the use of information gathered not only according to each land holding or household, but as reported by males and females within each household. The majority of women involved in agriculture – around 80 percent – work in households headed by males.

Data collected in Tanzania revealed differences between male- and female-headed households in the use of agricultural credit for purchasing supplies, likely linked to a shortage of male family members in the latter, due to men's migration to the cities. *"Female-headed households predominantly use whatever little credit is available for labour or seeds, which may increase production, but not necessarily their productivity. Male headed-households on the other hand, are more likely to buy fertilizer or agro-chemicals, which are productivity-enhancing inputs."*

Similarly, the 2005/2007 agricultural census from Niger showed that chicken rearing is no longer the female dominated activity it was in the past. The census showed that women only owned 32% of the chicken, with children owning 22% and men owning 46% of the chicken. One explanation here could be that men find it easier to find finances to invest in large numbers of chicken for this lucrative business, while women remain operating with 5 to 10 chicken in their backyard, thereby loosing their past position in the business.

This kind of information could enable planners to tailor their efforts to support those who lack access to adequate productive resources.

A 'living document'

The database covers topics like agricultural population and households, access to resources, production and productivity, labour and time use, the destination of agricultural produce, income and expenditures, membership in farmer organisations and indicators for food security and poverty.

The toolkit is designed to be "a living document," as it will be revised to incorporate observations and comments from users and significant developments in the field of agricultural and gender statistics.

To access the Agri-Gender Database:
www.fao.org/gender/agrigender
http://agri-gender-toolkit/the-database/en