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Gender equality

KEY FACTS

- Women comprise, on average, 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent in eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- Women own, on average, 19 percent of landholdings, significantly less than men in every region of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa the average is 15 percent, ranging from less than 5 percent in Mali to over 30 percent in Botswana, Cape Verde and Malawi. In countries of North Africa and West Asia for which data are available, women represent less than 5 percent of all agricultural landholders.
- In rural areas of developing countries women are less likely than men to work in wage employment. In rural areas of Ghana almost 15 percent of men and less than 4 percent of women receive a wage; in rural Bangladesh 24 percent of men and 3 percent of women work in wage employment; and in rural Ecuador almost 30 percent of men and 9 percent of women are employed for wages.
- If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent.
- Ensuring that women have the same access to agricultural resources as their male counterparts could lift 100 to 150 million people out of hunger.

Ensuring equal access to resources

Social and economic inequalities between men and women undermine food and nutrition security and restrain economic and agricultural growth. Ensuring equal access of men and women to agricultural resources, services and opportunities for employment would boost agricultural production, food security, economic growth and the well-being of families, communities and countries.

Gender gaps in agriculture and rural employment

Compared with their male counterparts, women:

- operate smaller farms, on average only half to two-thirds as large;
- keep fewer livestock, typically of smaller breeds, and earn less from the livestock they own;
- have a greater overall workload that includes a heavy burden of low-productivity activities such as fetching water and firewood;
- have less education and less access to agricultural information and extension services;
- use less credit and other financial services;
- are much less likely to purchase inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and technical equipment;

- if employed, are more likely to be in part-time, seasonal and low-paying jobs; and
- receive lower wages for the same work, even when they have the same experience and qualifications.



Training both women and men in forestry.

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FAO's approach to gender equality

To ensure food security and increase the effectiveness of agricultural development strategies, FAO promotes gender equality and the economic and social empowerment of rural women. One of FAO's strategic objectives for 2010-2019 is to promote the equal access of women and men to resources, services, decision-making and employment opportunities in rural areas.

FAO's gender programme provides:

- Policy and programme assistance to policy-makers and development planners in formulating gender-sensitive agricultural and rural development policies and strategies. FAO has supported the development of gender-sensitive national action plans for the agricultural sector in 30 countries.
- Capacity development to strengthen the integration of socio-economic and gender

issues in agricultural and development policies and strategies. FAO has trained more than 5 000 development specialists working at the field, institutional and policy levels in over 120 countries.

- Support for the generation of sex-disaggregated data to combat the persistent invisibility of rural women's contribution to agricultural, economic and social development. FAO has supported 40 countries in developing gender-sensitive agricultural statistics and assisted over 15 countries in incorporating sex-disaggregated data in agricultural censuses. FAO supported the analysis of sex-disaggregated data for the *World Census of Agriculture 2005–2015*.
- Knowledge generation and sharing of information related to social and rural gender issues in agriculture and food security.

- Coordination and technical support in planning and implementing gender-sensitive agricultural policies and programmes. FAO coordinates and leads the work of the UN system on gender equality and rural women in agriculture. Under the United Nations Joint Programmes for food security and agricultural and rural development, FAO is providing technical assistance to 18 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Near East, to ensure that gender issues are fully integrated.

FAO also works directly with rural women, men and children to strengthen their agricultural and livelihood skills. For example:

- In Asia, Africa and Latin America, FAO's

Livelihood Diversification and Enterprise Development programme trains groups of men and women farmers in marketing, financial management, business planning and value chain development to enable them to respond to new market opportunities.

- In Africa and the Gaza strip, FAO opened 545 Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools for over 20 000 vulnerable children and young people, where they learn farming and life skills.
- In Africa, FAO established listeners' clubs to give rural women and men better access to information and means of communication and to enable rural women to come together to share their experiences and knowledge.

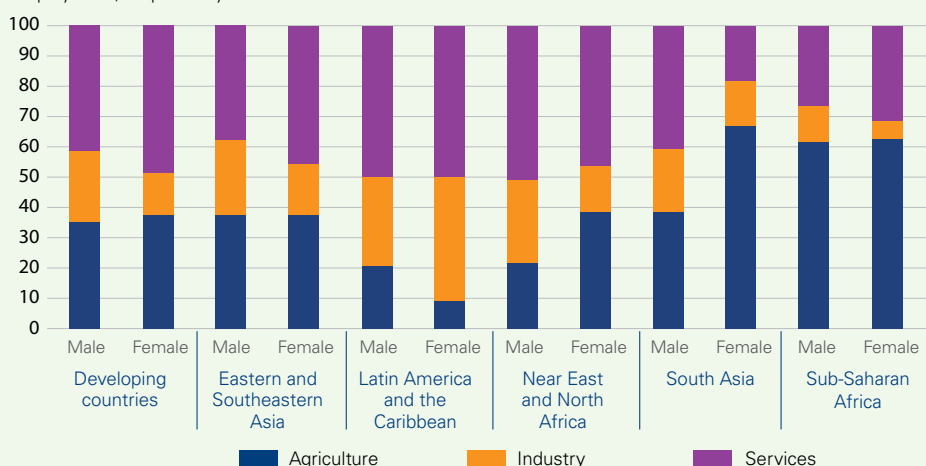
Resources on gender and agriculture

FAO is a recognized authority on gender and agricultural information. It researches, collects, and analyses information and data on gender issues in agriculture and food security, and generates timely information products and tools for policy-makers, extension agents and other development specialists. These include:

- *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: women in agriculture, closing the gender gap*;
- gender and land rights database, on issues related to gender inequalities in access to land at the country level;
- agri-gender statistics toolkit, on the collection and use of sex-disaggregated agricultural data;
- socio-economic and gender analysis toolkit, on integrating socio-economic and gender issues in agriculture and rural development at community, institutional and policy levels;
- gender website, a collection of resources, including multimedia, and information on gender, agriculture and food security;
- analytical report on the gender dimensions of rural and agricultural employment; and
- policy briefs on key issues related to gender, employment and rural poverty.

Distribution of male and female employment, by sector

Percentage of male and female employment, respectively



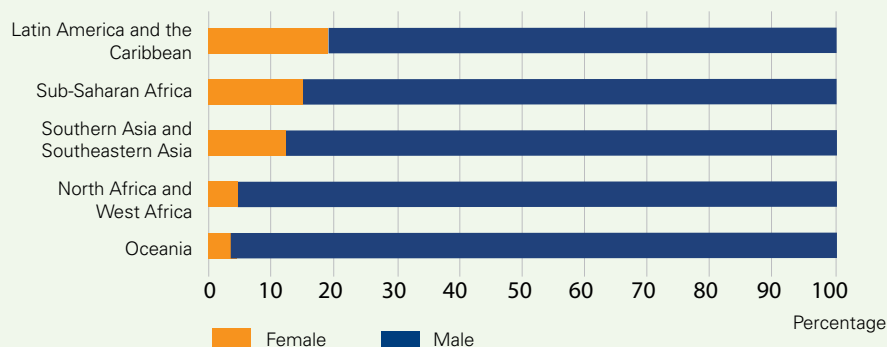
Note: the data cover only a subset of countries in each region. Definitions of adult labour force differ by country, but usually refer to the population aged 15 and above.

Source: ILO, 2009.

Gender balance in staffing

FAO has adopted the goal of achieving gender parity among all categories of staff. As a result, the overall percentage of professional women in FAO has significantly increased, from 16 percent in 1994 to 34 percent in 2011. In recognition of the need for additional measures to attract and retain qualified professional women, including in senior management positions, FAO is issuing a strategic action plan for gender representation.

Share of male and female agricultural holders in main developing regions



Note: regional aggregates do not include all countries due to lack of data.

Source: FAO, 2010



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