

Thursday, 15 October 13:30– 15:00

Iran Room

Launch: The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity #46

ORGANIZERS

UN-Women

World Bank Group (WB)

UNDP-UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI)

Malawi

Abstract: UN Women, UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative Africa and the World Bank propose the launch of a joint study which costs the gender gap in the agriculture sector, using data for Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. The publication demonstrates how closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity can raise agricultural output and GDP and lowering poverty. The findings provide guidance on factors that need to be targeted in order to close the gender gap by improving opportunities for women farmers, and how agricultural and related policies and plans should be contextually designed. The study directly supports the African Union’s International Year of Women and Development strategy by suggesting effective steps towards sustainable impacts. It illustrates the need for an integrated approach to gender equality and agriculture development in order to achieve sustainable development goals. Hence framed, the report represents a valuable tool for policy makers and practitioners for designing practical agricultural and other policies and programmes. Through these tools, the partners encourage the adoption of sustainable development options and advise on scalable and replicable solutions within a wider African context to elevate women farmers, mostly smallholders comprising most of the agricultural labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa.

KEYWORDS: Gender and Agriculture , Gender Gap , Agricultural Productivity , Poverty reduction

Languages: EN, FR

Summary: Women form a large proportion of agricultural labor force in sub-Saharan Africa and thus play a vital role in ensuring family nutrition and food security. In eastern and southern Africa, agriculture continues to be a key engine for local and regional economies and is a critical source of incomes besides being the basis for food security and nutrition. However gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources inhibit agricultural productivity and reduce food security. At the same time, a changing climate means that there is a shrinking window of opportunity to close the gender gap in agriculture and seize the prospects for promoting women’s empowerment, economic development and societal resilience to shocks, including climate change.

At the side event a new study by UN Women, UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative, and the World Bank measuring the cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda was launched by a high level panel. The panel consisted of, Christine Musisi, Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, UNEP’s Regional Director for Africa, Juliette Biao Koudoukou, representing UNEP and UNDP on behalf of the PEI, Markus Goldstein, Gender Practice Leader and Lead Economist Africa, World Bank, Mr. Chimwemwe Khoswe, Economist, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Malawi. The panel was moderated by Kostas Stamoulis, Director, Agriculture Development Economic Division, FAO and attracted an audience of around forty participants.

The report launched provides a unique quantification of the costs in terms of lost growth opportunities and an estimate of what societies, economies and communities would gain were the gender gaps in agriculture to be addressed. The gender gap costs Malawi USD 100 million, Tanzania USD 105 million and Uganda USD 67 million every year. Closing the gender gap could lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, 119,000 people in Uganda, and approximately 80,000 people in Tanzania every year. The findings of the report are striking and send a strong signal to policy makers in Africa as well as development partners that closing the gender gap is smart economics.

The report also provides guidance as to the factors that must be targeted in order to close the gender gap by improving opportunities for women farmers. It concludes with a set of general policy recommendations of how women’s empowerment, agriculture productivity and economic growth can be addressed in an integrated manner and thereby contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level.

The presentation of the report and the remarks by the panellists generate an interesting discussion with the audience highlighting the need for a cross-sectorial approach to address the gender gap in agricultural productivity and ensure sustainable use of environment and natural resources in the agriculture sector. The usefulness of new economic arguments were emphasized as well as the need to continue to build on existing data and previous capacity building efforts to strengthen a gender and women's empowerment perspective in agricultural and related policies.