



## Roundtable I: Promoting rural women's economic empowerment

Globalisation, rural transformation and technological innovation are happening worldwide, bringing along significant opportunities for economic growth, enhanced food security and better nutrition. However, there is a growing concern that smallholder farmers may be left behind, as they often lack the means needed to benefit from globalisation. Women are particularly disadvantaged, because the multiple gender-based constraints they face hold them back from adopting new technologies, increasing their economies of scale, or participating in lucrative markets.

Women's economic empowerment is fundamental to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Accordingly, governments, donors and development partners are stepping up their efforts to promote the economic empowerment of rural women. For example, in 2016, the UN Secretary-General set up the first-ever High-Level Panel for Women's Economic Empowerment. Similarly, FAO, IFAD and WFP are intensifying their collaboration to empower rural women in the context of the SDGs.

Evidence shows that when a woman is able to earn and control her own income, her children and her family will be better off. Studies find that women reinvest up to 90% of their earnings into their families – that's money spent on nutrition, food, healthcare, schooling and further income-generating activities – helping to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Economic empowerment also has a positive impact on women's social and political empowerment, through their increased status, self-confidence and decision-making power in their households and beyond.

The purpose of this Round Table is to provide guidance on how to accelerate rural women's empowerment by increasing their access to economic opportunities such as markets and value chains, agribusiness, rural financial services, and entrepreneurial skills. Attention will also be paid to transformative social protection measures that can reduce women's vulnerabilities, enhance their employment and income-earning capacities, and boost their social status.

In particular, discussion is proposed around the following questions:

- How can we strengthen rural women's access to advisory services, finance, information, and capacities in entrepreneurship and agribusiness, to ensure that women can benefit on an equal basis as men from agri-food systems?
- How can we strengthen rural institutions that increase women's access to markets, collective action, voice and agency?
- How can we increase decent job opportunities for rural women and harness the potential of social protection measures to reduce rural gender inequalities, thereby contributing to women's economic empowerment?