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FAOSTAT ANALYTICAL BRIEF 10

Employment indicators

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Employment in agriculture declined globally by about 15 percent between 2000 and 2018. Yet, agriculture is the second source of employment worldwide with 27.3 percent of total employment in 2018. In rural areas worldwide, one out of every two persons works in agriculture.**
- **Agriculture constitutes the main sector of employment in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa.**
- **Women employed in agriculture are more likely to be engaged as contributing family workers whereas men are more likely to be engaged as own account workers generating an income. Furthermore, the share of female employees in agriculture is significantly lower than men.**
- **The adoption of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) Resolution represents an important change in the definition of agricultural employment and may contribute to lower values in countries where subsistence foodstuff producers are predominant.**

FAOSTAT EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS

Employment in agriculture declined globally by about 15 percent between 2000 and 2018 (International Labour Organization Modelled Estimates, November 2019), to 889 million people, or 159 million less than in 2000. Yet, with 27.3 percent of total employment in 2018, agriculture remains the second source of employment worldwide after the services sector. The lowest share of employment in agriculture in 2018 was observed in Europe, where only 5.5 percent of the employed population had a job in agriculture. However, in Africa, the agricultural sector still remains the main source of employment and provided jobs to almost half of the employed population with 49.3 percent¹. One out of every two persons worldwide working in agriculture is located in rural areas (51.2 percent).

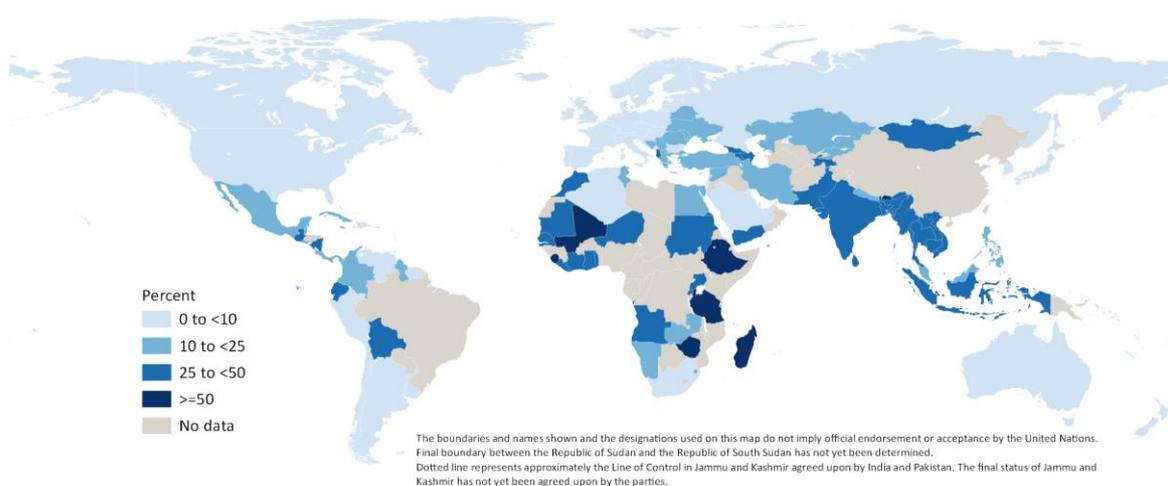
FAOSTAT updates the employment indicators yearly, using data from the ILOSTAT Labour Force Surveys (LFS). The main focus lies on employment in agriculture in rural areas. The International Labour Organization (ILO) publishes a rich set of data from countries on employment in agriculture and other related indicators for the period 1947 to 2019. Furthermore, employment statistics for more than 90 countries are available on a yearly basis for the past five years (2014–2018).

¹ ILO Modelled Estimates, November 2019, accessed on May 2020. The regional figures presented in this brief are in line with M49 Standard.

However, the data does not allow to fully compute trends at regional and global levels due to missing data points.

Overall, in the data released in FAOSTAT on 31 March 2020, close to 70 percent of countries have at least one data point for employment in agriculture during the period 1947–2019. Figure 1 shows the share of agriculture in total employment for the latest year in which data is available in each country for the period 2010–2018. While agricultural employment rates vary, agriculture constitutes the main sector of employment in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 1. Share of employment in agriculture (% of total employment)



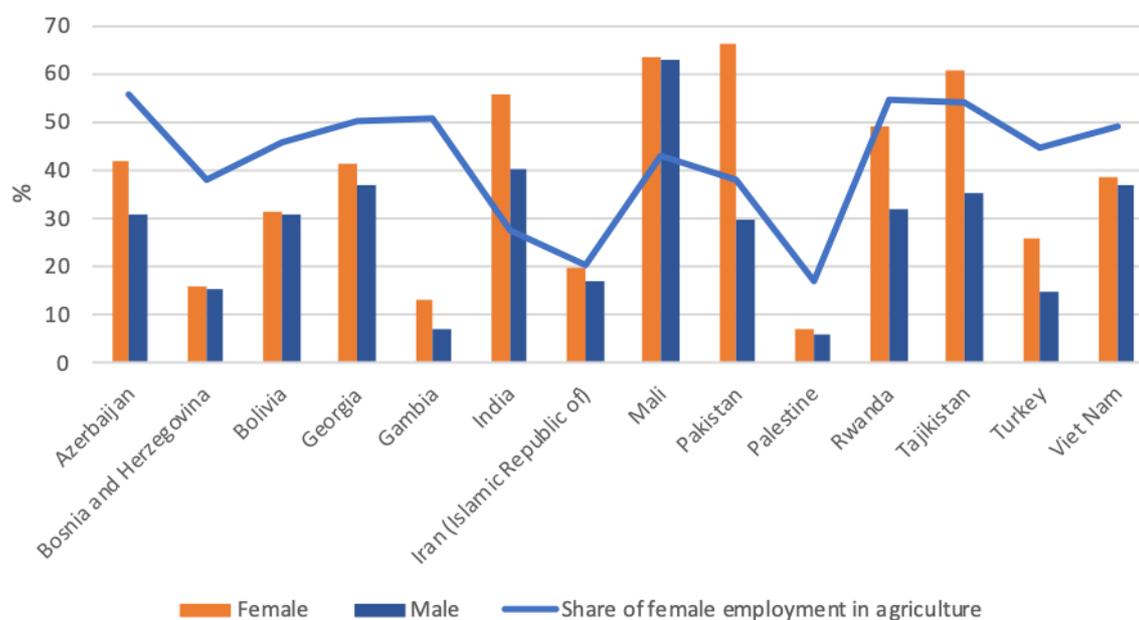
Source: FAOSTAT Employment Indicators, April 2020. Based on ILOSTAT – Labour force Surveys (2010–2018), accessed March 2020.

From a gender perspective, Figure 2 below shows the countries where the agricultural employment rate was higher for females than men in 2018. Moreover, the data indicate that in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Gambia, Rwanda and Tajikistan more than 50 percent of the total employment in agriculture is made up of female workers. However, the relatively high concentration of women in agriculture does not necessarily mean that women and men in this sector enjoy the same status in employment, i.e. having equal chance to derive the same income from their jobs when employed. Indeed, women employed in agriculture are more likely to be engaged as contributing family workers whereas men are more likely to be engaged as own account workers generating an income². Furthermore, in most of the countries, the share of female employees in agriculture is significantly lower than men.

² ILOSTAT data, employment by sex, status in employment and economic activity.

https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer35/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=EMP_TEMP_SEX_STE_ECO_NB_A

Figure 2. Agricultural employment rate by sex (%)



Source: FAOSTAT Employment Indicators, April 2020.

The ILO resolutions on the measurement of employment and related topics allow for the comparability and the harmonization of the employment figures. The first resolution that harmonized statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment was adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 1982.³ In 2013, the 19th ICLS adopted a new resolution for statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization to enable better statistical measurement of all persons in all forms of work and in all sectors of the economy.⁴

Recognizing the importance of measurement of all work paid and unpaid, the 19th ICLS defines work as 'any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use'. This new framework defines five mutually exclusive forms of work: own-use production work, employment work, unpaid trainee work, volunteer work and other work activities. The main change concerning the agricultural sector consists in the exclusion of own-use production workers comprising the production of goods and services for own final use from the employment definition. Based on this, the own-use production workers will be measured separately as a form of work and will therefore no longer be considered as being employed. Consequently, the employment definition refers only to work for pay or profit.

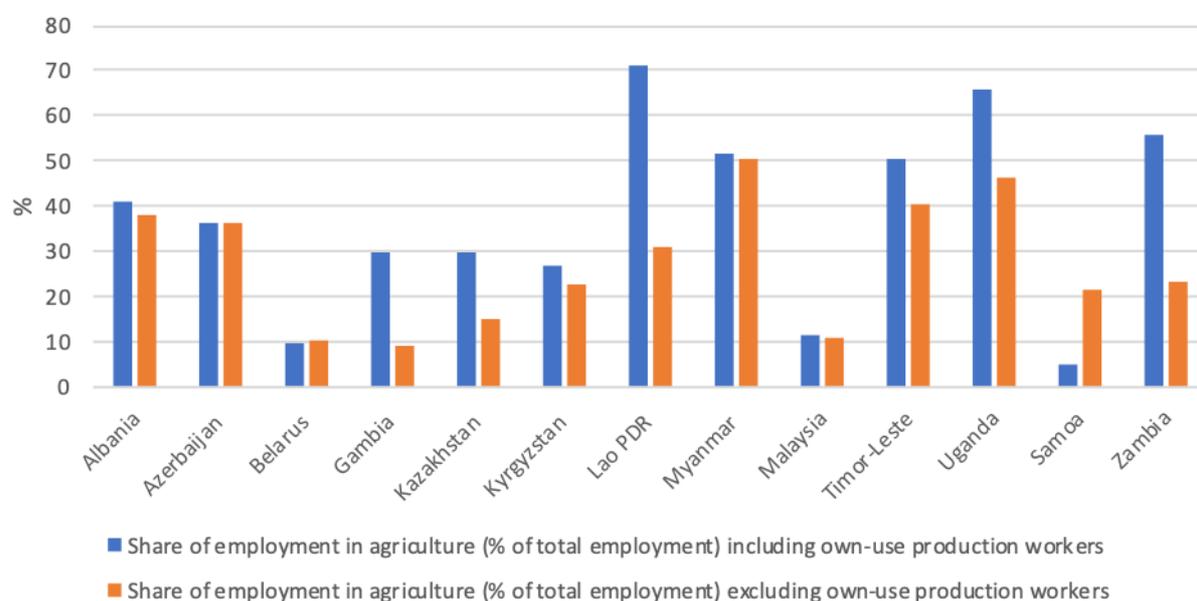
³ International Labour Organization (ILO), 1982. Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment

⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO), 2013. Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization

This is particularly important for agriculture, and for low-income countries, where agriculture is the key sector contributing to household's livelihoods and subsistence foodstuff producers constitute an important subgroup of own-use production workers. In countries and regions with high levels of subsistence farming, traditional labour market indicators – such as unemployment rates or population to employment ratios – might change. Since subsistence workers will no longer be part of employment but will be captured separately, the new definition of employment may contribute to a decrease of the measured employment in agriculture in countries where own-use production work is widespread.

The degree of implementation of these new standards varies by country and will increase over time with upcoming surveys. So far, data from 13 countries can be retrieved whose employment figures exclude own-use production workers but were previously calculated based on the old definition. Figure 3 shows the share of employment in agriculture as a percentage of total employment in selected countries, using the figures where the employment definition includes/excludes the own-use production. Employment in agriculture has dropped significantly between the two data points in Gambia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Uganda, Zambia when excluding the own-use production workers from the employment figures. In most other countries however, the data do not change significantly. The disseminated data does not allow to observe the employment figures for the same year using different definitions. Therefore the numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 3. Share of employment in agriculture (% of total employment) including/excluding the own-use production workers in selected countries, LFS results*



Source: ILOSTAT database, accessed in May 2020.

***Note:** The selection of countries is made based on the availability of agricultural employment data including/excluding own-use production workers after 2010. The figures for Gambia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Zambia are computed by the ILO microdata processing team, other figures stem from questionnaires as reported by the countries. The data are based on the closest data points before and after the exclusion of own-use production workers: Albania 2015–2017, Azerbaijan 2016–2017, Belarus 2016–2017, Gambia 2012–2018, Kazakhstan 2016–2017, Kyrgyzstan 2016–2017, Lao People's Democratic Republic 2010–2017, Myanmar 2015–2017, Malaysia 2016–2017, Timor-Leste 2010–2013, Uganda 2012–2017, Zambia 2012–2017.

As in the future more and more countries will adapt the new ILO resolution, one can expect the share of employment in agriculture to decrease, especially in countries where subsistence foodstuff producers are predominant. Using the data from the same year based on different definitions would help to fully observe the impact of the new resolution on these figures.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The Employment Indicators released in FAOSTAT on 31 March 2020 cover data from 1947 to 2019 and provide insights on employment in agriculture for more than 90 countries on a yearly basis for the past five years (2014–2018).

FAOSTAT disseminates 18 indicators on employment in agriculture and in rural areas, disaggregated by sex and produced by ILO using Labour Force Surveys.

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