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منظمة  
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للأمم المتحدة

# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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### Regional progress towards gender equality in food and agriculture

## I. Gender equality as a key element of rural development, the eradication of hunger and malnutrition and the sustainable use of natural resources in Latin America and the Caribbean

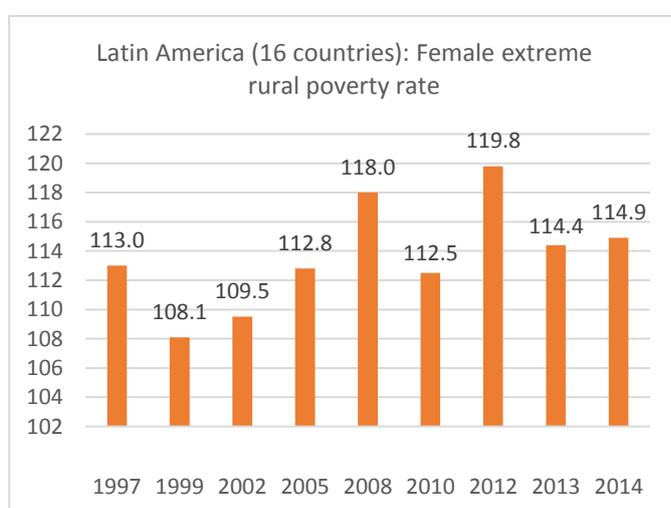
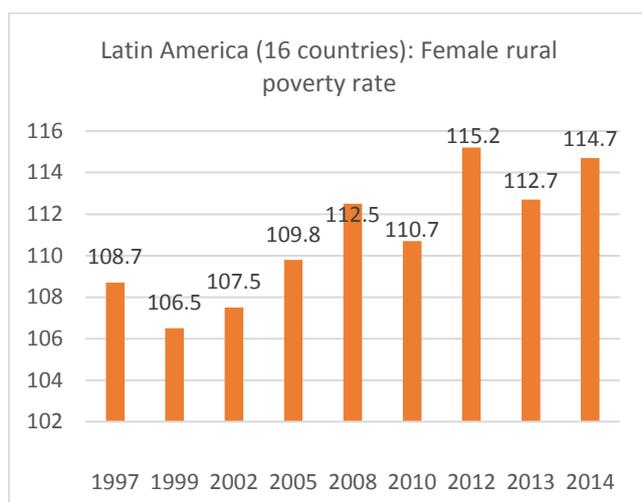
1. The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed the inclusion of all the world's men and women with no one left behind. In this agenda, gender equality plays a fundamental role – not only in the context of SDG No. 5 on Gender Equality, but in all SDGs and each of the targets therein (particularly in SDG No. 1 on eradicating poverty and SDG No. 2 on eradicating hunger/malnutrition and achieving more sustainable farming. In that regard, in addition to the ethical imperative of gender equality from a human rights perspective, there is now an understanding at the international level that the economic and social development needed to eradicate hunger, malnutrition, rural poverty and environmental unsustainability is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment.

2. Women in the region have advanced in recent decades in terms of greater participation in decision-making processes and a modest rise in economic participation. However, the region has been subject to a process of feminization of poverty: the female rural poverty rate<sup>1</sup> rose from 108.7 to 114.7 between 2007 and 2014, while the female extreme poverty rate increased from 113 to 114.9 in the same period.

<sup>1</sup> Female poverty rate is the ratio between [(Number of women in poor households aged 20-59/Number of men in poor households aged 20-59) / (Total number of women in households aged 20-59/Total number of men in households aged 20-59)]\*100. Female extreme poverty rate is the ratio between [(Number of women in extremely poor households aged 20-59/Number of men in extremely poor households aged 20-59) / (Total number of women in households aged 20-59/Total number of men in households aged 20-59)]\*100.

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page; a FAO initiative to minimize environmental impact and promote greener communications. Other documents can be consulted at*





Source: ECLAC, portal for statistical databases and publications (CEPALSTAT).

3. One notable advance over recent five-year periods has been a slight increase in women's participation in economic activity, from 41.7% of working-age women in 2012 to 45.1% in 2014. However, this rise has not necessarily related in an automatic narrowing of the well-being gaps between men and women in terms of their access to production resources, services and job opportunities. The common factors in the life of rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean are a work overload due to the sexual division of labour whereby it falls to them to care for children, older adults and the sick, as well as their production tasks and community support; invisibility of their work in the reproductive, productive and self-consumption spheres; low access to means of production (land, water, seeds and inputs); low quality of their land for farming; difficulties in political participation; limited economic and decision-making autonomy under patriarchal agreements; insecure and seasonal employment (generating economic uncertainty); as well as the low level of social insurance coverage.

4. Throughout the region, women are becoming increasingly involved in protecting their territories and biodiversity and maintaining their communities socioeconomically and culturally in a way that seeks a compromise between their wishes, individual plans and collective living. IN addition, women are the main people responsible for knowledge transmission. This covers passing down the history of their peoples and technical knowledge such as agroecological management, seed selection, the reproduction of at-risk plant species and the medicinal uses of herbs.

## II. The role of FAO in cooperation to achieve gender equality in the region's countries

5. FAO considers gender equality as key to achieving its mandate of achieving food security for all in order to improve the levels of nutrition, optimize agricultural productivity and natural resource management, as well as to improve the living standards of rural populations. With this in mind, FAO has implemented a gender equality policy that provides a framework to guide and assess all its efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

6. It is a matter of urgency to obtain accurate data on the economic status of rural women in order to formulate public policies to end the feminization of poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. FAO has supported the region's countries in strengthening national information systems to promote gender equality in rural areas. The Organization worked with the statistical offices of six countries in the region to develop data-collection methodologies with a gender focus, centred on the definition of a producer and on the questions for gathering land tenure data and general agricultural data. In addition, *Atlas de la Mujer Rural de América Latina y el Caribe*<sup>2</sup> collects and categorizes key data on the status of women living in rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean (including demographic and socioeconomic categories, gaps in accessing goods and services, civic and political deficits and public policies on women's protection and development).

7. Alongside this technical assessment work, FAO has also supported governments and regional integration agencies to raise the profile of and improve communication about the role of rural women in sustainable development. One tangible example was the launch – alongside regional organizations, governments and civil society/indigenous organizations – of the *#Mujeres Rurales* campaign to raise the profile of the situation of Latin American and Caribbean rural women (and their rights and potential in achieving SDGs) on social networks.

8. At the same time, to gather sex-disaggregated data in support of gender mainstreaming in FAO and country programming frameworks, national gender assessments were conducted in rural and agricultural areas of Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama, yielding data that helped to target country activities.

9. FAO supports the design and implementation of public policies within its remit, at both regional and national levels. At regional level, the gender strategy of the Plan for food security, nutrition and hunger eradication of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC FNS Plan 2025) was prepared in consultation with gender mechanisms in the region and with civil society and indigenous community representatives. This strategy has begun to be rolled out nationally in Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

10. At national level, FAO has supported processes for national law-making and public policymaking for the advancement of rural, peasant and indigenous women and the achievement of gender equality. In Paraguay, there is a specific law for rural women geared to their distinctive characteristics. In Guatemala, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food has a gender policy, which is implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women across the board for the first time, and will be mainstreamed in programmes countrywide. In Colombia, FAO has supported implementation of the women's rights and gender approach from the Peace Agreement, alongside the Rural Women's Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

11. These advances pose challenges that have made it necessary to develop training for the technical staff of governments in the region. FAO supports capacity-building through programmes tailored to the scope of its mandate, in such areas as food and nutrition security, social protection systems with a rights-based approach, voluntary guidelines on responsible governance of tenure of

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<sup>2</sup> FAO, 2017, available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7916s.pdf> (Spanish only).

land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security, technical assistance and rural outreach and disaster risk management with a gender focus, the latter in coordination with the Central American Integration System (SICA), which have benefitted dozens of government technicians in the region.

12. FAO has recognized the diversity of rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean by creating specific spaces for working with indigenous women. FAO's High-level forum on empowering indigenous women to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean has resulted in a road map for joint regional work by governments and regional indigenous women's organizations, which FAO will help to implement.

13. Together with the rest of the United Nations System, FAO, in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), is heading an initiative to ensure women's access to land rights and management. Following consultations with governments, civil society and indigenous and peasant organizations in Central and South America, a methodology has been developed to monitor the indicator on women's access to land contained in Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, in the context of FAO's responsibilities as the agency responsible for indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 of the SDGs.