

Women in agriculture—Closing the gender gap for development

Women make essential contributions to agriculture in developing countries, but their roles differ significantly by region and are changing rapidly in some areas.

Women comprise, on average, 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from 20% in Latin America to 50% in Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Their contribution to agricultural work varies even more widely depending on the specific crop and activity.

Women in agriculture and rural areas have one thing in common across regions: they have less access than men to productive resources and opportunities. The gender gap is found for many assets, inputs and services—land, livestock, labour, education, extension and financial services, and technology—and it imposes costs on the agriculture sector, the broader economy and society as well as on women themselves.

Closing the gender gap in agriculture would generate significant gains for the agriculture sector and for society. If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30%. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4%, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17%.

The potential gains would vary by region depending on how many women are currently engaged in agriculture, how much production or land they control, and how wide a gender gap they face.

Policy interventions can help close the gender gap in agriculture and rural labour markets. Priority areas for reform include:

- eliminating discrimination against women in access to agricultural resources, education, extension and financial services, and labour markets;
- investing in labour-saving and productivity-enhancing technologies and infrastructure to free women's time for more productive activities; and
- facilitating the participation of women in flexible, efficient and fair rural labour markets.

Source: [FAO \(2011\). The state of food and agriculture 2010-2011- Women in agriculture closing the gender gap for development. FAO Rome.](#)

Other resources:

[FAO Gender website](#)

[Gender and diversity Program CGIAR](#)

[Women in Agriculture \(IFPRI\)](#)

[International Center for Research on Women](#)