



FAO Conference 40th Session

Rome, 3 - 8 July 2017

Leaving no one behind: Achieving gender equality for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture

Food systems are experiencing rapid and intense transformations, having to feed a growing global population in a context of persisting economic, environmental and social challenges. Agricultural production and rural livelihoods are being increasingly jeopardized by the impact of climate change and continuing depletion of natural resources. This is further exacerbated by challenges such as price volatility, conflicts, crises and migration. Addressing these complex challenges requires integrated and context-specific solutions.

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is inextricably linked to the strengthening of food systems to fight hunger and malnutrition, and improving the lives and livelihoods of rural populations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly recognizes the fundamental importance of achieving gender equality and enhancing women's empowerment by reflecting and mainstreaming gender across all 17 SDGs. Gender equality is also an integral part of FAO's Strategic Framework, where it is addressed as a cross-cutting issue. Without gender equality and rural women's economic, social and political empowerment, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture will not be achieved.

A vast body of evidence exists about the important role that women play in agriculture and rural development, as well as of their strong contribution to food security and nutrition at household and community levels. However, in many regions of the world, rural women continue to face multiple constraints that limit their productivity and undermine their capacity to escape hunger and poverty. Compared to men, rural women typically have more limited access to and control over key productive resources such as land and technologies and to services such as credit and extension. They also encounter widespread inequalities in rural labour markets, forcing many to accept low-status, poorly paid jobs, without legal or social protection. The gender gap in agriculture imposes high costs on overall agricultural production, households' food security and well-being.

In addition, food production and agricultural development in general may be severely and negatively affected due to the risks posed by climate change. Rural women and men including small and family farmers, face serious challenges in their efforts to achieve food security and nutrition as they have to cope with climatic instability and, in the longer run rising temperatures. Understanding the diversity within these communities, in particular the gender dimension, can better guide the appropriate support to agricultural and rural households.

Closing the gender gap in agriculture – with particular attention to improving rural women's access to assets, resources, technologies, services and opportunities, and the promotion of gender-sensitive policy frameworks – could generate significant gains in terms of agricultural productivity and rural peoples' livelihoods in the face of climate change and other risks. Enabling women to become real agents of change and to participate more effectively in agriculture translates into improved agricultural productivity and subsequent reduction in hunger, malnutrition and poverty. It also leads to improved well-being of children and families, thereby building the human capital of future generations and contributing to long-term economic growth.



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Rationale for a Special event on Gender¹

This Special Event will build on the outcomes and the deliberations of several events organized recently by FAO, including the High-level Event on Rural Women that took place on 16 December 2016 and the celebration of the International Women's Day 2017². In particular, the High-level Event highlighted three critical elements:

- The crucial role that rural women play in ending hunger and poverty and their role as agents of change;
- The need for policies and programmes to accelerate rural women's economic empowerment especially in the context of climate change; and
- The importance of promoting transformative approaches to tackle the underlying causes of gender inequality in rural areas.

It is expected that the outcomes of the Special Event, will contribute to discussions of the forum on "*Women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition*", which will take place during the 44th session of the Committee on World Food Security in October 2017.

Objective:

The overall objective is to give government representatives, UN entities, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders a dynamic occasion to reflect on emerging opportunities to promote gender equality and rural women's empowerment at country level including but not limited to the context of climate change and showcase how FAO is supporting countries in this regard.

The specific objectives are to:

- Give government representatives and other relevant stakeholders (CSO, Private Sector, Farmers' Organizations) an opportunity to exchange experiences and lessons learned on good practice to promote gender equality and rural women's empowerment, and to showcase how FAO is supporting countries in this regard.
- Raise awareness on the implications of climate change for the challenges facing rural women in increasing agricultural productivity including issues related to the feminisation of agriculture
- Highlight forward-looking solutions- policies, technologies, institutions- including through the presentation of specific examples by stakeholders on how to accelerate progress in empowering rural women and girls, in order to eradicate hunger, poverty and achieve gender equality along with all the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

¹ This event is proposed based on one of the recommendations made during the 155th Session of the FAO Council (December 2016) that a Special Event on Gender be held during the 40th Session of the Conference, allowing for the dynamic participation of Members [Reference: paragraph 35(c), CL 155/REP].

² The links to these events are provided here:

<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/rural-women-end-hunger/en/>

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/473008/icode/>



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5th July 2017, 12:30 - 14:30, Plenary Hall

Programme

Opening remarks

José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO

Presentation on FAO's technical work on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Kostas Stamoulis, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO

Panel discussion

- His Excellency Hugo Martinez, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador
- Her Excellency Fatimata Dia Sow, Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender of ECOWAS
- His Excellency Ty Sokhun, Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Cambodia
- His Excellency Ali Recep Nazli, General Director of Foreign Relations and EU Coordination of Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey
- Her Excellency Néziha Labidi, Minister of Women and Family Affairs of Tunisia
- Haowa Bello, CEO and Founder of Madame Coquette - Beneficiary of the Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme
- Jessica Vega Ortega, Coordinator of the Yani Tundavii Dikuintí Collective of the Network of Young Indigenous Peoples of Latin America, Focal Point for the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus

Questions and answers

Concluding remarks