

Women's Role in Agriculture

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Introduction

Agriculture is an important engine of growth and poverty reduction across the world. Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture varies greatly from region to region. But regardless of these variations, women are actively involved in various agricultural activities. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women make up 43 percent of the agricultural workforce in developing countries, but for many access to resources and services is severely restricted and they are often left out of decisions regarding use of income even that which they earn. Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the well-being of rural households. The statement is often seen that women constitute 60 to 80 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. Consequently their contribution to agricultural output is undoubtedly extremely significant, although difficult to quantify with any accuracy. It has often been claimed that women produce 60-80 percent of food. In addition to differences in male and female labour participation rates noted earlier, there are also major gender differences in employment patterns within labour markets for several reasons which hold across cultures and regions. Women's roles are diverse and crucial that they vary across regions and countries.

