



Gender Roles in Agriculture: Women's Invisible Contribution

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For a long time, farming has been the mainstay of rural economies all throughout the world. But the work that women do on farms—caring for crops, animals, and families—often goes unnoticed in agricultural statistics and policy frameworks. Women make up almost half of the agricultural workforce around the world. In many developing countries, females are the main food producers and keepers of traditional farming expertise. Even so, their roles are often not respected, not rewarded, and pushed to the side in the patriarchal framework of rural countries. This article talks about the different ways women contribute to farming, the social and economic challenges they confront, and the urgent need to recognize and empower them as equal participants in agricultural development.

Women's Contribution to Agriculture

Women are involved in practically every step of growing food, from choosing the seeds and planting them to weeding, harvesting, and processing the food after it has been picked. They also take care of animals, household gardens, and food storage in many areas. Women do more than just manual labor; they are often very important for making sure that families have enough food and that resources are used in a way that is good for the environment. Women make up about 32% of the agricultural workforce in India. In related fields like animal husbandry, fishery, and forestry, they make up as much as 48% of the workforce. They make up over 60–70% of the food grown in sub-Saharan Africa. Even though these numbers show otherwise, women's job is generally seen as "helping" or "supplementary," which makes their real economic contribution seem smaller than it is.

The Invisible Nature of Women's Work

The gender bias in data collecting and policy recognition is one of the main reasons why women's work in agriculture is still not seen. Even when women run farms on their own or make important production decisions, agricultural surveys generally call males "farmers" and women "helpers." Land ownership patterns also matter; in the world, less than 15% of women own agricultural land. Women who don't have legal land titles can't get institutional loans, subsidies, or government programs because their effort isn't acknowledged in economic terms. In addition, cultural conventions typically make women responsible for both farm work and household responsibilities. This "double burden" makes it harder for them to get training, become leaders, and start their own businesses. Because of this, women's work is not valued, their views are not heard, and they are not able to make decisions.

Barriers to Women's Empowerment in Agriculture

Women farmers encounter many different kinds of problems, including social, economic, and institutional ones.

- Limited Access to Resources: Women generally don't own property and can't easily get seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, and machinery for their farms.

- **Schooling and Extension Gaps:** Most agricultural training and extension services are geared at males, not women, which means they don't take into account women's demands and ways of knowing.
 - **Financial Exclusion:** Women farmers don't often have access to formal financing or insurance since they can't provide collateral or fill out the paperwork.
 - **Social Norms:** Gender preconceptions still hinder women from doing profitable agricultural work by keeping them doing unpaid work and activities that only allow them to survive.
- These impediments not only keep gender inequality going, but they also make farming less productive and food less safe. The FAO said that if women had the same access to productive resources as males, agriculture yields might go up by 20–30%, which could cut global hunger by as much as 17%.

Case Studies: Women Farmers Leading Change

Women are breaking down barriers in farming all across the world. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has helped thousands of rural women in India by giving them access to microcredit, training, and connections to markets. Women's cooperatives in Kenya have also led the way in using organic and ecological farming methods, which have helped both the environment and their income. These success stories show that giving women equal access to land, technology, and decision-making helps whole communities. Women are also very important for making sure that agricultural systems are sustainable and open to everyone. They run community seed banks, climate-smart agriculture, and agroecology projects.

Recognizing Women as Farmers

For agricultural development to be truly inclusive, regulatory and institutional changes need to fix the differences between men and women. Governments should encourage shared land titles, improve extension services for women, and support gender-responsive budgeting in farming. Getting more women involved in farmers' groups and leadership positions can help them have more say in policy discussions. Programs that teach people new skills and increase their education should also be aimed at women in rural areas so they can learn more about better farming methods, adding value, and digital agriculture. Recognizing and registering women as independent farmers instead of unpaid family workers is an important step toward making them more visible and giving them more power.

Conclusion

Women have an important role in agriculture, yet their work is still not acknowledged or reflected enough. Recognizing their work, knowledge, and leadership is not only a way to promote gender equality, but it is also a way to boost productivity, food security, and rural development. A gender-responsive agricultural system that gives women the same access to resources and authority to make decisions can change the future of farming. The unseen forces that have kept agriculture alive for hundreds of years should be seen, heard, and valued in the global food system.

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