

## Women's equality in agrifood systems could boost global economy by \$1 trillion: FAO

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Tackling gender inequalities in agrifood systems and empowering women reduces hunger, boosts the economy, and reinforces resilience to shocks like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals a new report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

The status of women in agrifood Systems report, the first of its kind since 2010, goes beyond agriculture to provide a comprehensive picture of the status of women working across agrifood systems— from production to distribution and consumption.

The report highlights that globally, 36 per cent of working women are employed in agrifood systems, along with 38 per cent of working men. However, women's roles tend to be marginalised and their working conditions are likely to be worse than men's—irregular, informal, part-time, low-skilled, or labour-intensive. Likewise, women engaged in wage employment in agriculture earn 82 cents for every dollar that men earn.

Women also have less secure tenure over land, less access to credit and training, and have to work with technology designed for men. Along with discrimination, these inequalities create a 24 per cent gender gap in productivity between women and men farmers on farms of equal size.

Notably, the study underscores that agrifood systems are a more important source of livelihood for women than for men in many countries. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, 66 per cent of women's employment is in the sector, compared with

60 per cent of men. In southern Asia, women overwhelmingly work in agrifood systems (71 per cent of women, versus 47 per cent of men), although fewer women than men are in the labour force.

“If we tackle the gender inequalities endemic in agrifood systems and empower women, the world will take a leap forward in addressing the goals of ending poverty and creating a world free from hunger”, says QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General in the foreword of the report.

Indeed, the study explains that closing the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agricultural employment would increase global gross domestic product by nearly \$1 trillion and reduce the number of food-insecure people by 45 million.

Similarly, benefits from projects that empower women are higher than those that are just mainstream gender. The authors explain that if half of the small-scale producers benefited from development interventions that focused on empowering women, it would significantly raise the incomes of an additional 58 million people and increase the resilience of an additional 235 million.

“Efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems depend on the empowerment of all women and gender equality. Women have always worked in agrifood systems. It is time that we made agrifood systems work for women”, adds Qu.