FEED THE FUTURE
The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Feed the Future is the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative. At the heart of Feed the Future's strategy is an understanding that investments in women both reduce poverty and promote global stability.

Credit: Alda Kauffeld/USAID

Women play a vital role in advancing agricultural development and food security. They participate in all aspects of rural life—in paid employment, trade, and marketing, as well as tend to crops and animals, collect water and wood for fuel, and care for family members. But women face many constraints in the multiple activities they pursue that limit their contributions and productivity; relative to men, women tend to own less land, have limited ability to hire labor, and have impeded access to credit, extension, and other training services.

Investing in Women and Agriculture

Increasing opportunities for women can have a powerful impact on productivity and agriculture-led growth. A recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concludes that "[c]losing the gender gap in access and use of productive resources" would have a measurable impact on "agricultural output in the developing world." The benefits also improve society as a whole; studies show that women are more likely than men to spend on their family's nutritional needs, healthcare, and school fees for children.

To better empower women agricultural producers to reach their full potential, Feed the Future promotes women's leadership in agriculture, fosters policy changes that increase women's land ownership, and strengthens their access to financial services. Through the initiative, female farmers are encouraged to adopt new agricultural technology aimed at increasing productivity and reducing unpaid work.

Feed the Future builds on best practices and programs from across the U.S. Government and the international community to achieve scale in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Targeted programs and investments seek to enable women farmers in Feed the Future focus countries to access and control physical and financial assets to improve women's agricultural output to achieve production parity with men. The benefits of increased productivity and income for women have the potential to amplify across families and generations.

Did You Know?

- Women make up **43%** of the agricultural labor force in developing countries
- Women farmers are less productive than men due to **less access** to land, water, seeds, training, and credit
- If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase farm yields by **20-30%**
- This increase in agricultural output could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by up to **150 million people**

Credit: USAID

Measuring Gender Equity

In order to better measure returns on investments in women and agriculture, Feed the Future partnered with the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to develop the **Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index**. This innovative and rigorous tool is tracking rural women's empowerment relative to men in five key domains in Feed the Future focus countries.

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index measures women's roles and engagement in the following five areas:

- Decisions over agricultural production;
- Access to and decision-making power over productive resources;
- Control over use of income;
- Leadership roles within the community; and
- Time use.

The Path to Transformational Change

One of the core principles of Feed the Future is accountability through measuring progress toward food security goals. Gender equality and women's empowerment are critical to achieving sustainable development, so Feed the Future monitoring and evaluation systems comprehensively track how programs have impacted women and men, as well as the dynamics between them. This effort will employ three targeted and diverse approaches:

- Disaggregation of data by sex;
- Impact evaluations that examine critical questions related to gender equality, gender integration, and women's empowerment; and
- The development and utilization of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index.

To bring about robust agricultural growth and reduce global undernutrition, Feed the Future is committed to working with host countries to significantly improve the ability of women farmers to reach their full agricultural productive capacity. This requires a systematic, collaborative effort built on impact evaluations, best practices, and pilot programs using innovative and bold approaches for better integration of women into the agriculture value chain. The problem is complex, but Feed the Future is working on creative solutions that will help women and their families attain long-term food security for happier, healthier lives.

Project Highlight: Ethiopia

One Feed the Future-funded project coordinated by the Ethiopian Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development and the District Veterinary Services demonstrates how gender can be effectively integrated into food security programming. In addition to strengthening the resilience of the livestock that are so vital to the country's large pastoral community, this project also works to organize local women into marketing groups and cooperatives and provides them with capacity development services and training.

Through the project, women in these groups have been able to access training in areas such as marketing, record keeping, and literacy, and have been able to obtain credit to run petty trade and small business.