

Women's Place in Agriculture

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ABSTRACT: *Agriculture has the potential to be a significant driver of development and poverty alleviation. However, many nations' agricultural and rural economies are failing, in part because women, who are frequently a vital resource in agriculture and the rural economy, suffer restrictions that decrease their output. We use available empirical data to investigate which regions and to what extent women engage in agriculture in this article. Women make up approximately 43% of the agricultural labor force worldwide and in developing nations, according to statistics. However, this number conceals significant variance in age and socioeconomic status between areas and nations. Time usage surveys, which are more thorough but usually not nationally representative, provide further insight into the significant variability in women's contributions to agriculture between nations and within countries. Female time usage in agriculture varies by crop, production cycle, age, and ethnic group, according to the study. Data from a few time-use studies broken down by activity indicate that weeding and harvesting were mostly female tasks. Overall, rural women's labor load surpasses that of males, with a larger percentage of unpaid household duties such as food preparation and fuel and water collection. Women make a substantial contribution to agricultural and food production, but it is difficult to verify the proportion generated by women experimentally. Women's involvement in rural labor markets varies greatly by area, but they are always overrepresented in unpaid, seasonal, and part-time employment, and the data indicates that women are frequently paid less for the same work as males. Data on rural and agricultural feminization indicates that it is mostly a Sub-Saharan African phenomenon, but it is also seen in certain sectors like as unskilled labor in the fruit, vegetable, and cut-flower export industry. The importance of women's contributions to agricultural and rural businesses in developing countries is reaffirmed in this article. However, women's responsibilities are diverse, and overgeneralization weakens policy relevance and planning. The context is crucial, and strategies must be founded on reliable data and gender analysis.*

KEYWORDS: *Agriculture, Demographics, Employment, Gender, Market Access. Production*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in nations where it is the poor's primary profession, according to the international development community. ³ However, many developing nations' agricultural sectors are failing, in part because women, who play critical roles in agriculture and the rural economy as farmers, laborers, and entrepreneurs, nearly universally confront greater barriers to productive resources than males. National governments and the international community will be better able to accomplish their objectives for agricultural development, economic growth, and food security if they build on women's contributions and take measures to relieve these limitations [1]. In all developing nations, women play an important role in the agricultural and rural economies. Their responsibilities vary greatly across and within areas, and in many parts of the globe, where economic and social factors are altering the agricultural sector, they are quickly changing. Rural women often manage multi-generational families and seek various sources of income [2]. Producing agricultural products, caring for animals, processing and cooking food, working for pay in agricultural or other rural businesses, gathering fuel and water, participating in trade and marketing, caring for family members, and

maintaining their houses are all common tasks for them [3]. Many of these activities aren't included as "economically active work" in national accounts, yet they're critical to rural families' well-being. This article adds to the agricultural gender issue by evaluating empirical data in three areas that have gotten a lot of attention in the literature. Women contribute significantly to agricultural and rural economies in all parts of the globe. However, estimating the precise impact, both in terms of size and type, may be challenging, and there is a lot of variance between nations and areas. The data on women's involvement in agricultural and rural labor marketplaces is summarized in this article. It also examines rural demographic changes, including the gender makeup of rural communities. Women's contributions in the agricultural labor force may be measured using two kinds of data: statistics on their proportion of the economically active people in agriculture and time usage surveys, which track how much time men and women spend on various tasks. Many nations provide data on the economically active population in agriculture, which provides the most complete assessment of women's involvement in agriculture. In this metric, a person is classified as being in the agricultural labor force if agriculture is his or her primary source of income. However, for the reasons described below, these statistics may understate female involvement in agriculture, and care is recommended when interpreting changes over time since advances in data collecting may be to blame for some of the reported changes. In five main areas of the globe, weighted averages for the proportion of women in the agricultural labor force or economically engaged in agriculture[4]. Women make up little over 40% of the agricultural labor force in the developing world, according to these figures, a number that has increased somewhat since 1980 and varies from around 20% in the Americas to over 50% in Africa. Even if these statistics are used as lower limits for women's involvement in the agricultural labor force, they do not support estimates higher than 60%, with the exception of a few nations [5].

Asia is the largest contributor to the world average. Sub-regional averages in Asia vary from about 35 percent in South Asia to almost 50 percent in East and Southeast Asia. China, which has seen a modest rise in the female proportion of the agricultural labor force over the last three decades, dominates the Asian average. In India, the female share has been stable at little over 30%. These big nations obscure developments in other smaller countries, where the proportion of women working in agriculture seems to have risen significantly, surpassing 50% in Bangladesh. In some Asian nations, such as Malaysia, female labor shares in agriculture are decreasing. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women now account for almost half of the agricultural workforce, up from approximately 45 percent in 1980. In Africa, the statistics vary from slightly over 40% in Southern Africa to just over 50% in Eastern Africa. With the exception of Northern Africa, where the female proportion seems to have increased from 30% to almost 45 percent since 1980, these sub-regional averages have stayed rather constant. The sub-regional statistics for Africa hides significant variations in the proportion of female labor in agriculture as well as the trend. In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, manufacturing and services are by far the most significant source of employment for women. In East Asia and South-East Asia, it is likewise the most significant sector for women, although services are almost as important. In South Asia and the Middle East, agriculture is much more significant for women than for males in terms of employment. In East Asia, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, it is slightly more essential for women than for males. Women are considerably more concentrated in the service industry in

Central and South Eastern Europe and Latin America. The chart depicts how regional differences in employment levels and distribution of employment in various industries are significant. However, there is usually a substantial wage disparity between men and women, and the service and agricultural industries are more vital to women than the industrial sector [6]. Many scholars have questioned the gender trends that appear from the employment statistics given here and above, which indicates a variety of possible causes of female labor market underestimation, particularly in agriculture. She observes that, even if they are actively involved in agriculture, rural women in Latin America are more likely to respond that "their house" is their main duty. Other issues emerge as a result of censuses' tendency to place a premium on income-generating activities, underestimating subsistence output, and the fact that agricultural productivity is often classified as fieldwork. Small-scale animal raising, household gardening, and post-harvest processing are often undercounted. Deere concentrates on Latin America's statistics, but comparable concerns apply to other areas as well, including as South Asia. Time usage surveys aim to give a more comprehensive picture of men and women's time use than is accessible from the above-mentioned labor force data [7]. Because they typically include small samples, report on various kinds of activities that aren't always explicitly defined, and utilize different methods, such studies are usually not nationally representative and aren't directly comparable. Despite these limitations, a review of the data from studies that detail the use of time by agricultural activities reveals several intriguing trends. Time-use surveys that include all agricultural operations show significant variance between nations, and sometimes even within countries, although the results are generally comparable to the labor force figures mentioned before. Women's time commitment to agricultural operations in Africa is estimated to vary from 30 percent in The Gambia to 60-80 percent in various areas of Cameroon. Estimates in Asia vary from 32% in India to more than 50% in China. In Latin America, the range is smaller, although in certain areas of Peru, it reaches 30%. Zambia and Peru each include two distinct studies, with variations reflecting various time periods and regions within the nations. Time-use data for India reveals a remarkable degree of within-country heterogeneity. While the national average for women's portion of total time spent in agriculture is 32 percent, statistics from West Bengal and Rajasthan show women's shares ranging from less than ten percent to more than forty percent, respectively. However, in all sectors, younger women provide a greater proportion of total time spent in agriculture by their age group than older women. Girls between the ages of 14 and 18 in Rajasthan, for example, Female time usage in agriculture varies significantly depending on the crop and stage of the production cycle, the age and ethnic group in question, the kind of work, and other variables, according to time-use research [8]. Women are more involved in upland rice than wet rice, and in the administration of immature plantation commodities like cinnamon and rubber than in the same crops at maturity, according to data from Indonesia. Time-use studies allow for a detailed examination of what men and women perform in agriculture, as well as how their responsibilities vary depending on the crop, region, management structure, age, and ethnic group. They provide policy-relevant information on where, when, and how to focus initiatives targeted at women, as well as how to actively include males in the process. Generalizations regarding time usage from one area to another are not acceptable due to the diversity of gender roles in agriculture. Policymakers and practitioners engaged in technological investments, extension services, post-harvest activities, and marketing initiatives may benefit from studies that

address gender roles in their particular geographic and cultural context [9]. A number of the time usage studies break down time consumption by agricultural activity in great detail. Land preparation, fertilizer application, weeding, harvesting, and storage are all included in five of the studies, which comprise six instances. All studies showed weeding to be a primarily female activity, followed by harvesting and fertilizer application, with the exception of Bangladesh, where women's time is almost completely devoted on post-harvest chores for rice. Except for ploughing, women were usually engaged in all other tasks but did not contribute the bulk of labor. Finally, the time-use studies that gathered the necessary data support the common notion that women spend the majority of family time processing and preparing meals. If these elements of food preparation are taken into account, women's labor share in many African nations may easily surpass 60%, and in many Asian countries, it might approach 60%. Women, as previously said, play a major part in the agricultural labor force and agricultural operations, although to different degrees. As a result, their contribution to agricultural production is undeniably substantial, although difficult to measure precisely. It is often believed that women generate 60-80% of all food. However, since most agricultural families have both men and women engaged in crop production, allocating contributions to agricultural outputs by gender is difficult. It is possible to allocate production by gender by assuming that some crops are produced by women and others by men, and then aggregating the value of both women's and men's crops to calculate the percentage of output cultivated by women. This method has been employed by researchers on occasion, particularly in West Africa, where cropping patterns differ by gender. Although there is virtually no macro-level aquaculture-related sex-disaggregated data, studies of women in aquaculture, particularly in Asia where aquaculture has a long history, show that women's contribution to labor is frequently higher than men's. According to reports, women make up 33% of the rural aquaculture workforce in China, 42% in Indonesia, and 80% in Vietnam. However, a thorough examination of Ghanaian agriculture reveals that, although there are gendered cropping patterns, the differences between men's and women's crops do not hold up well enough to be used to infer men's and women's proportionate contributions to production. Furthermore, cropping patterns by gender may vary over time [10].

DISCUSSION

The output of male- and female-headed families may be directly compared, but since the latter have smaller farms and utilize fewer bought inputs, their output is inherently lower. A small sample from a small number of nations where data is available. Female-headed families account for between 3% and 38% of all households and generate between 2% and 17% of total food value. These findings indicate that, if resource consumption and output were equal, female-headed families would produce less than their share would predict. Primary crop production, food crop production, crop and animal production, food processing and preparation, and so on are all examples of food production. It may be assessed in terms of weight, value, caloric content, and other factors. The contribution of women is shown differently depending on the term and measure used. Food production also requires a mix of capital assets, such as labor, land, and money, as well as intermediate commodities and services, such as animal and mechanical power, seeds, fertilizer, and water.

A simple comparison of the length of time men and women labor in agricultural production is often made, but to fully comprehend the contribution women contribute to food production, a more comprehensive variety of inputs must be considered. It's not easy to figure out the gender of the person in charge of these resources: if a crop is produced on property owned by an extended family, ploughed by a man, planted by a woman, weeded by their children, and harvested jointly, what percentage of the crop can be ascribed to the woman? In most cases, however, it is impossible to provide a precise response to the issue of women's contribution to agricultural and food production. Food is not typically produced separately by men and women. The majority of food is generated via a joint effort including both men and women. Quantifying women's contributions to food production necessitates adopting arbitrary assumptions about gender roles in the production process, which are unlikely to be uniform. Males and women are both engaged in harvesting, for example, if men usually do the labor to clear the field while women plant and weed the crops. It is difficult to segregate output by gender in these and other comparable situations. Nonetheless, all of the indirect data given above in terms of labor participation and production using various definitions of gender suggests that women in poor nations are unlikely to produce 60 to 80 percent of the food. In all areas, women play an important part in all phases of the food cycle, although these responsibilities vary by region. If policies and interventions are to be successful, they must take into consideration the diversity of their contributions. Livestock play a significant role in supporting women and improving their financial position in pastoralist and mixed agricultural systems, and women are actively involved in the industry.

Women account for about two-thirds of impoverished livestock caretakers, or 400 million individuals. They share responsibility for animal care with men and children, and some species and activities are more associated with women than with males. Women, for example, are often involved in the management of poultry, dairy animals, and other animals that are kept and fed on the farm. When duties are split, males are more likely to be engaged in house construction, grazing animal herding, and product promotion if women's mobility is limited. Women have a significant impact on the usage of eggs, milk, and chicken meat for domestic use, and they often control marketing and revenue from these goods. Perhaps this is why poultry and small-scale dairy operations have been attractive investments for development initiatives aimed at improving rural women's lives. Women also dominate small-scale pig farming in certain nations. Female-headed families are just as effective as male-headed households in earning revenue from their animals, despite owning fewer animals, perhaps due to labor limitations. In cultures where males have exclusive access to land, women find cattle ownership especially appealing. While women play an important part in small-scale animal production, less is known about their involvement in intensive production and the market chains connected with big commercial businesses. During the last 40 years, demand for animal products has risen considerably faster than demand for agricultural staples, owing to increasing incomes, especially in Asia and Latin America, and this trend is projected to continue.

While pastoralist and small-scale mixed farming systems continue to be essential in fulfilling the requirements of rural customers, meat, milk, and eggs from intensive commercial systems are increasingly being used to meet the demands of expanding urban populations. Because of the

varied roles, responsibilities, and access to resources that are apparent at different stages of the production system and at different points on the production and marketing chain, this has significant consequences for women's involvement in the cattle industry. For two reasons, the data indicates that women's involvement in fulfilling these shifting expectations may be diminishing. The first is that when cattle businesses grow, males increasingly take control of decisions, revenue, and, in some cases, the whole operation. This is not a uniform occurrence – many medium-sized duck-breeding businesses in Vietnam, for example, are run by women – but it is frequent and may be explained by women's restricted access to land and finance. The second significant reason is that when the livestock industry intensifies and concentrates, all smallholders encounter difficulties, and many go out of business. This is especially true for pig and poultry farmers, although it is not limited to those animals.

Given women's restricted capacity to establish their own companies, this suggests that they would choose to work for others rather than for themselves. Women are visible wherever painstaking semi-skilled work is to be done, such as in the production of day-old chicks, in the provision of services, and in slaughtering, processing, and retail, but little information is available about the extent of their involvement compared to that of men, or their control over resources. In 2008, approximately 45 million people worked full-time or part-time in the primary fishing industry across the globe (FAO fishery database). In addition, the secondary sector, which includes post-harvest activities, employs about 135 million people. According to data given to FAO by 86 countries, 5.4 million women worked as fishermen and fish farmers in the primary sector in 2008. This accounts for 12% of the total. Women made up 21 percent and 24 percent of all fishermen and fish farmers in two major producing nations, China and India, respectively. Because of the strenuous labor required, as well as women's home obligations and/or societal conventions, women have seldom participated in commercial offshore and long-distance catch fisheries. Subsistence and commercial fishing from small boats and canoes in coastal and interior waterways is more prevalent among women.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

We gather empirical data on women's involvement in agriculture in this article, laying the groundwork for a later examination of gender disparities in agriculture and the possible benefits from eliminating these gaps. The following are the major findings: Women make up approximately 43% of the worldwide agricultural labor force, and 43% of that in developing nations, although this number hides significant differences in age and social status between regions and countries. In many African and Asian nations, women make up 50% or more of the agricultural workforce, although this is not the case in others. Time usage studies, which offer a more complete evaluation of how men and women use their time, highlight the variability in women's contributions to agriculture between nations and within countries. Rural women's labor load is greater than men's, with a larger share of unpaid home tasks such as food preparation and fuel and water collection. Women make a major contribution to agriculture and food production. However, since agriculture is typically a family affair involving a variety of resources and inputs that cannot be easily allocated by gender, it is difficult to verify experimentally the proportion generated by women. Women's involvement in rural labor markets varies greatly by area, but

women are overrepresented in unpaid, seasonal, and part-time employment, and research indicates that women are frequently paid less for the same work as males.

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