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SAHEL QUARTERLY



Gender Equity: Driving Transformation For Food and the Planet

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EDITORS' NOTE



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The Sahel consulting team is excited to present the 30th issue of the Sahel Quarterly, themed 'Gender Equity: Driving Transformation for Food and Planet'.

Gender equality has become and continues to be a prominent feature in global development strategies. Notably, women represent up to 52% of the total population in the agricultural sector and are responsible for approximately 50% of the agricultural labor on farms in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)¹. Women are crucial actors in every phase of the agricultural value chain and are also on the front lines of building resilient food systems. However, despite the significant contribution of women to agriculture and agribusiness, the productivity gap between men and women farmers and Agri-entrepreneurs persists across the continent.

This edition critically explores obvious and hidden gender inequality issues, limitations, and biases affecting the growth, and potential of women in securing the future of sustainable food production and distribution on the continent. As you will read in this edition, gender gaps span across the entire food chain; from policy making to ownership, access, and control over productive resources. Most importantly, a sizeable part of this edition puts forward practical solutions, viable recommendations, and key considerations toward attaining gender equity and the transformation of the sector. We also highlight some experiences and success stories of women in the different areas and aspects of agriculture in Nigeria.

To achieve a food-secure Africa, a multisectoral approach that:

- Actively tracks gender gaps, and produces and shares relevant data to showcase and promote gender equity in agriculture and its potential to impact productivity, livelihoods, and the economy.
- Strengthens reforms to improve women's access and control of productive resources.
- Links women to support systems and structures in every critical point in the value chain: from farming to storage, logistics, processing, marketing and distribution of products.

This edition is dear to our hearts as gender equity is at the center of our work at Sahel Consulting. We hope that you will find this quarterly interesting and informative, and that it will serve as a useful reference for you each time you think of the intersection between gender equity and transformation in the future of food and environment in Africa.

1. Women in Agriculture: The untapped Opportunity in the wake of Transformation, AFDB, October 2015 https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Events/DakAgri2015/Women_and_Agriculture_The_Untapped_Opportunity_in_the_Wave_of_Transformation.pdf

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

- 06 ————— Figure 1 - Distribution of Agricultural Land Area for Female, Male and joint Ownership
- 06 ————— Figure 2 - Striga Infested Farmland

ARTICLES

- 04 ————— Exploring the Impact of Women in Policy and Management in the Agricultural Landscape
- 06 ————— Promoting Food & Nutrition Security by Addressing Gender Gaps in Land Rights
- 09 ————— Actualizing Financial Inclusion for Women Dairy Farmers – The ALDDN Case Study
- 11 ————— Transformative Approaches to Addressing Gender Gaps in the Agricultural Value Chain
- 13 ————— Women’s Access to Agricultural Inputs: Panacea for Improving Agricultural Productivity & Food System Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa

SAHEL AND NOURISHING AFRICA UPDATES

- Sahel in the News
- Sahel Consulting Speaks
- Sahel Capital Speaks
- Nourishing Africa Speaks

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF WOMEN IN POLICY AND MANAGEMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

BY ANTHONIA TAIWO-AJAYI & MARK WAZIRI

The active participation of women across all value chains and processes in the agricultural landscape is critical for the economic and social development of any nation. Women contribute over 50% of food production worldwide and over 80% in Africa, through their roles as farmers, processors, service providers, and entrepreneurs. However, the representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles across the globe and particularly in Africa is very low. This is alarming, especially in Africa where women represent a significant fraction of the workforce and actively shape the food eco-system.

Across the world, women are mostly found leading in sectors directly concerning family, children, youth, elderly and disabled, social affairs, environment, energy, vocational training, and women affairs, this leaves a huge gender gap in the agricultural landscape. Gender equity in leadership and policy is vital to address the unique needs of men and women, and tailor policies, interventions, and programs correctly for all stakeholders. Research has shown that women are marginalized, especially in the agricultural space where they farm less valuable crops², consistently work lower-paying jobs, have limited access to productive labor, and operate less capitalized firms. A major contributing factor to this is the low representation of women in policy and decision-making roles in Agriculture.

To further understand the depth of these limitations, their impact on actors in the landscape, and the effects on the food eco-system in Africa, we spoke with three phenomenal women in leadership roles within the public and private sectors in Agriculture.



Mrs. Sugra Mahmood, a Deputy Director in the Federal Department of Agriculture, a key technical department in the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), took us through her journey in the Agri-sector.

She attended a mixed secondary school, which built her confidence, and has gone a long way in building her career in the agricultural space which is male-dominated. She is grateful that she has moved up the ladder and is able to implement gender-based policies professionally and personally.

Q: What are your views on gender gaps in labor force participation?

R: One of the challenges is the low representation of women

in policy and management. Women, most times are not at the table when decisions are made or are at times brushed aside even when they give suggestions, because of the higher representation by men. She further mentioned that an edge men have over women is experiential knowledge. This is due to the reproductive cycle where women get to give birth, heal and then get back to work. During this period, their male counterparts would have gone on some training and gained more experience. However, the system has failed to recognize that women are doing a service with great importance to the nation by bringing forth, raising, and sustaining the workforce for the economy. Childbearing should not be seen as a setback instead; Women should be celebrated for this service and be given access to information and other resources to grow at par with their male counterparts in their careers. With persistence and personal development, women can grow above male peers in the organization and get all promotions when due.

Q: What are some pathways to bridging the gender gap in governance?

R: Mrs. Mahmood used the agricultural sector as a case study, a space where women are mostly found in the midstream or downstream and not at the top where decisions are made, There is a huge gap with women in governance. To mitigate the gender stereotype in the agricultural space, there is a gender arm in the ministry which is amplifying gender mainstreaming. Some of the activities of the gender unit include capacity building, promoting gender mainstreaming in departmental activities and programs, and establishing a National Gender Steering committee which comprises of MDAs, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs, and Private partners in the sector.

Q: Strategies/recommendations for enhancing women's engagement in policy and decision-making in the agriculture landscape

R: Mrs. Mahmood noted that women can make their mark by doing the following:

- Incorporating a growth mindset that seeks mentorship in all their dealings

2. Ndubuisi Francis, 'World Bank: Gender Disparity in Earnings Holding Back Nigerian Economy', (May 2022) (Online) <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/05/11/world-bank-gender-disparity-in-earnings-holding-back-nigerian-economy/>

- Consistently and persistently investing in personal development and improving competence, becoming experts and all-rounders in all that they do
- Putting succession plan at the back of their minds, mentor successors to keep the train moving.
- Putting in place a better reward and punishment system

We spoke with Ms. Jummai Bappa, who is a Gender Advisor on the Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDDN) Project. Jummai shared recommendations stemming from her experience working in the gender space and closely with women farmers.

Q: What are some prominent challenges that women farmers face in Nigeria?

R: Women farmers lack access to seeds and fertilizers, not only because they are women, but because they are poor. There are not so many women in decision-making roles, hence it is very difficult for their voices to be heard and listened to, yet a lot of the food consumed by most rural households is produced by female farmers, given that the male farmers mostly sell their own farm produce.

Q: What is the status of the agricultural policies we have in place?

R: With regards to agricultural policies that affect women, we do not need to develop new ones, but instead revise and update the existing ones. Women's issues are trivialized, and their voices are not heard because they do not have the critical mass in policy making. There are a lot of policies that have not seen the light of day because they have been ignored. Also, there are issues with policy implementation, and it would be good to know if the policies are weak and due for revision.

In conclusion, Jummai noted that MDAs do not have an existing culture where seniors support and mentor their juniors to build their confidence and competence.



Lastly, the team had a conversation with Mrs. Umami Bakar, the Director of Participatory Communication for Gender Development (PAGED) Initiative on possible ways to bridge gender gaps in the workplace and harness the potential of the female workforce. PAGED is a non-profit organization working in communities experiencing conflict to amplify voices for equal opportunity and participation in society. Umami shared some insights on how women's inclusion and position in the workforce have evolved.

"The structure of the modern-day job was set up to suit the man's lifestyle and women had to step in for men who had gone to war when World War 1 started. However, the structure was not adjusted to suit the women, given that it was supposed to be temporary. After the war, women had tasted the life of work and there was a need for them to be

included in the system. They had to fight to get back into the workspace, and until now the structure has not changed as much as it should to accommodate the needs of women.

Gender roles have hardly changed. They have evolved a bit in western countries, but have not been fully adapted in Africa, given the conservative nature of Africans and the belief that women are responsible for the house chores and upbringing of children. In the modern-day workplace, women have had to work twice as hard as men, and that is why women's representation at management levels is low. Thankfully, there was a significant shift in 2020 to the remote work structure, a consequence of covid 19. This made things easier for the women, as there is now an opportunity to properly integrate and manage work and home support.

Women must be supportive of other women; mentor them and lend a voice where necessary. They must move past negative maxims and limit statements and stereotypes. They must continuously seek personal development to increase competence and improve their chances to earn higher compensation and hold higher positions. Everyone must understand that changing the status quo starts from the very beginning in how we raise our girl and boy children at home, and in the workplace where the female potential must be harnessed.

In conclusion, providing an enabling environment for both men and women stakeholders and actors in the agricultural industry and sector requires an all-inclusive atmosphere. Women like men must be aided to advocate and contribute to policy formation and the design of interventions that capture and address the unique needs of women, ensuring equity for all.



PROMOTING FOOD & NUTRITION SECURITY BY ADDRESSING GENDER GAPS IN LAND RIGHTS

BY FOLAKE F. ADEBOTE

Rural communities remain the main contributors to agricultural production and food supply in Africa, and to these farmers, arable land is the most important asset that supports productivity and enhances incomes and livelihoods. Autonomy over farmland determines what is planted, and how much is planted, which significantly shapes the food and nutrition ecosystem. Land access, ownership, and control is critical to global food security such that one of the key targets of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 is to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, through secure and equal access to land. In Nigeria, under federal and state laws women have the right to possess and inherit land, but barely 10% of recorded landowners are women³.

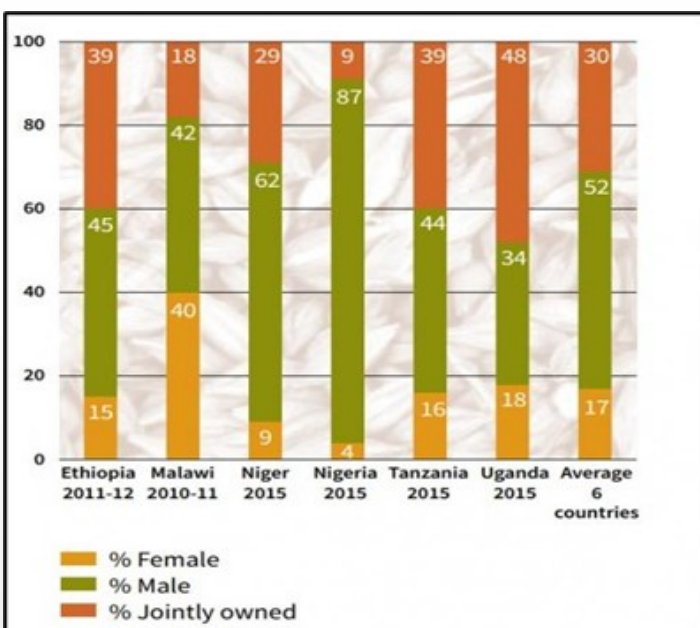


Figure 1: Distribution of agricultural land area for female, male and joint ownership

Several African countries have made admirable attempts to implement land reforms that bridge gender disparities but customary rules, religious and cultural practices continue to impede women's access to land via inheritance or marriage. Men control most property rights, and women may only get access to land via a male relative, such as their father or spouse. In addition, women sometimes have no control over their earnings and are often forced to pass over their income to a man who makes decisions for the household.

More often than not, a woman must have the financial means to purchase and manage her farmland, unlike their male counterparts who may inherit land from their parents and, on behalf of their spouses. Women provide 70% of food production and constitute over half of all agricultural workforce, and 80 to 90% of food processing, storage, and transportation, as well as hoeing and weeding⁴.

Mrs. Mercy Nnanna, Secretary of the Small-Scale Women Farmer Organization of Nigeria (SWOFON), FCT Chapter, farms cassava, maize, and cocoyam in Chukuku Community, Kuje Council, FCT-Nigeria. She shared her experience as a female farmer who has been unable to inherit and own land of her own.



Figure 2: Striga infested farmland

I live in Abuja because here I can rent or buy land to farm. Back home in Eastern Nigeria where I am from, women are not allowed to own land. Where I currently reside, people mostly rent out land that is either severely depleted and

infertile, inaccessible by feeder roads, or infested with Striga. I cannot afford to buy land, so I always rent for 2-year tenures at a time. I spend a lot of money on herbicides and organic fertilizers, to treat the soil for over a year in order to achieve improved farm yield.

Considering the amount of investment required in boosting soil fertility to achieve a significant yield, renting land for one year would only result in a huge loss. Renting land for farming is rigged with numerous challenges. Last year, a woman in this community rented land to farm cassava. She invested so much into boosting the soil fertility and other necessary pre-planting activities, and her crop grew very well. She was looking forward to a bountiful harvest and good profit. Suddenly the landowners, came to eject her, demanding that she uproot all her cassava, and even though she was willing to pay more to secure her usage of the land

3. Ensuring Women's Land Rights in Nigeria Can Mitigate Effects of Climate Change, by guest blogger for John Campbell, 10th April 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/ensuring-womens-land-rights-nigeria-can-mitigate-effects-climate-change>

4. Women Struggle to Secure land Rights: Hard fight for access and decision-making power, by Mary Kimani, Special Edition on Women 2012. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-women-2012/women-struggle-secure-land-rights>

After her ejection, the owners went on to plant cassava of their own on the land.

It is a no-brainer that if women contribute over 70% of agricultural productivity and keep facing the setbacks imposed by their inability to own and control land. The entire sector is doomed to suffer. If I owned land back home in the East, I may have planted cash crops instead or alongside cassava, maize, and cocoyam which I farm here, but without ownership, I can't plant crops with long planting cycles. So, you will find that that is a niche dominated by men.

I hope that the government of Nigeria will domesticate its land rights laws, rather than merely documenting them. They should work with community heads and leaders in educating the community about what is right and enforcing the supremacy of federal laws over customary laws and cultural norms. Also, as a means of protecting women who must rent land to farm, more civil society organizations should work with women farmers across communities in Nigeria to educate them on their rights, and on how to prepare handwritten contracts covering their lease period.

Benefits of Gender Equal Land Rights for Food and Nutrition Security:

Household Dietary Diversification and Improved Child Nutrition: Access to assets, especially land, increases women's bargaining power within the family, allowing them to play a more active role in determining the production and consumption choices that contribute to the household's overall well-being. Research has shown that landowning mothers are less likely to have extremely underweight children and adult household members tend to have more caloric availability, dietary variety, and body mass index (BMI)⁵. Because women tend to prioritize the nutrition and overall well-being of the family in their decisions, female influence on agricultural decisions for home consumption may result in a continent-wide increase in crop diversity and improvement in household nutrition.

“I have seen that when we women are empowered with access and control over land for farming, we are able to increase our productivity and income. This additional income helps us provide support for our husbands and household so that our children can go to school, they can eat better, and our community can make more progress economically” - Comfort Sunday, Woman Farmer Juwa Community, Abuja, Nigeria

Increased Agricultural Productivity and Economic Development: Due to the persistent threat of land loss,

female farmers are less likely to adopt modern Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) or make long-term investments such as soil development and conservation, adequate irrigation systems, and crop diversification. This provides a glimpse of the unrealized food production potential of African women farmers. Eliminating the restrictions imposed by discriminatory community land ownership systems and customary law would unlock the potential within food systems and alter the future of food globally. Evidence shows that secure land tenure is strongly associated with higher levels of investment and productivity in agriculture – and therefore with higher incomes and greater economic well being⁶.

Recommendations and Key Considerations

- **Policy Enforcement:** There is an urgent need to domesticate, enforce, and create awareness of gender-transformative policies, reforms, and interventions enacted by the government. For instance, Nigeria's Agricultural Promotion Policy 2016 – 2020, the National Livestock Transformation Plan 2019 – 2028, and the Nigeria National Gender Action Plan all identify land as a major constraint for women farmers, recognize its importance to agricultural productivity and development outcomes, and propose pathways to facilitate women's access to land for agriculture. Also at the state level, policies like the state of Anambra's Malpractices Against Widows and Widowers (prohibition) law (2005) exist, but are not enshrined nor enforced. More advocacy is required by donor agencies, women's rights groups and relevant MDAs in enforcing these policies and overpowering cultural and customary barriers that discriminate against women in agriculture.



5. Land & Empowerment: The Importance of Female Land Ownership for Food Security, by Maja Schling – Nicholas Pazos, 24th March 2022. <https://blogs.iadb.org/sostenibilidad/en/land-and-empowerment-the-importance-of-female-land-ownership-for-food-security/>

6. Gender Gaps in Land Rights, FAO 2018. <https://www.fao.org/3/i8796en/i8796en.pdf>

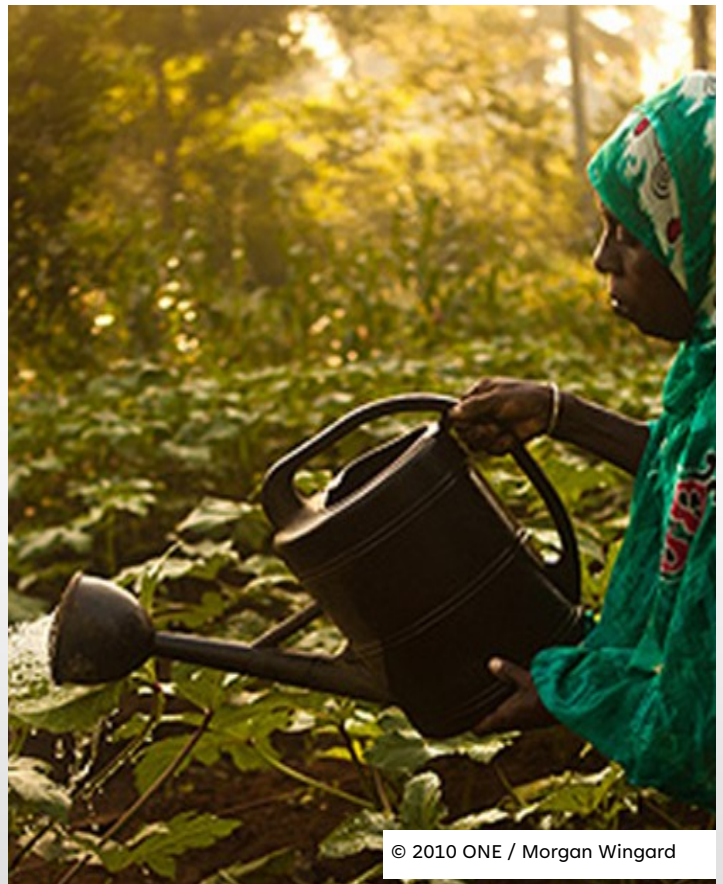
7. Closing Gaps, Increasing Opportunities: A Diagnostic on Women's Economic Empowerment in Nigeria, 2022 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank

- **Replicating Successful Interventions:** African countries should understudy programs, techniques, and reforms that have proved effective in empowering women for land ownership and access, in other countries within and outside Africa. In Uganda for instance, the small incentive of subsidizing the cost of land title where a wife is registered as a co-owner, increased the demand for co-titling by 50%. Also circulating an educational video raised the demand for co-titling by 25%. This shows that policymakers can leverage low-cost interventions to boost joint titling. In Ethiopia, the 2000 revised family code required the equal division of assets between spouses upon divorce and this shaped perceptions and norms on asset division in no-fault divorces. By 2009, 80% of women reported expectation of equitable divisions of land upon divorce⁹.
- **Promoting Awareness for Gender Equity:** Extension services must be integrated with education and sensitization on opportunities, policy information, and interventions for securing women's land ownership rights. Continuous education and sensitization of women and men at the community levels, on the ripple effects and economic benefits for all when women are empowered with assets that boost their productivity, is important in bridging gender gaps in land rights. Fathers should learn of the benefits of empowering their daughters through inheritance, and husbands should learn the power of documenting wills that favor their wives' chances of retaining land ownership in event of their demise. This will help shun oppressive cultural norms, and every small win will take the continent closer to attaining food sufficiency and security. For effective delivery of this integrated extension service, there is a need for collaborative efforts between extension service providing MDAs such as FMARD, and other MDAs, like the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, civil society networks, and private sector parties like FIDA, with mandates that are focused on empowering women with equal rights to land and economic resources.
- **Reducing Risks in Land Lease:** Sanctions should be put in place to protect women who access farmland through rent/lease arrangements, from unlawful withdrawals of farmland before the end of their leases. Also, to reduce the production cost, and encourage the investment of women in GAPs, portions of arable land can be earmarked by the government and made

available to women farmers under specific agricultural programs.

- **Strengthening Women Agencies:** The formation and strengthening of women farmer organizations, networks, agencies, and associations like Small Scale Women Farmers Organization of Nigeria (SWOFON), Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN), in Nigeria must be encouraged, supported, and financed. Interventions are more impactful and widespread when driven through such women agencies. Also, the voice of each woman is better amplified through agencies and associations.

For a continent with an abundance of resources and potential, there is still a long way to go towards ending hunger and securing the future of food in Africa. There is more than ever an urgency and demand to harness every potential, particularly that of its vibrant workforce – male and female equally. Productive resources, enabling policies and empowering interventions must reach and affect every class of persons. Marginalization is too costly; hence everyone, including women, must be empowered to feed Africa.



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8. Closing Gaps, Increasing Opportunities: A Diagnostic on Women's Economic Empowerment in Nigeria, 2022 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank

ACTUALIZING FINANCIAL INCLUSION FOR WOMEN DAIRY FARMERS

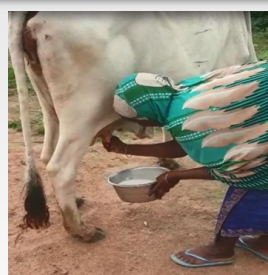
BY TOLULOPE BABAJIDE

Dairy products are consumed in every household in Nigeria and regarded as a ‘must-have’ protein for growth. The market demand for milk is at 1.45 billion litres per annum⁹, however the local production is incapable of meeting such demand given that 90% of total annual milk production is from cattle in low input, low yielding pastoral systems and traded in informal value chains.

In creating real-time solutions to the challenges faced in the local dairy sector, Sahel Consulting has since 2019 conducted market analysis, built business cases and designed contextualised programmes that would bring real change and institutionalise sustainability. The Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDDN) is the second phase of the Nigeria Dairy Development Programme (NDDP) which aims to catalyze a vibrant local dairy sector in an inclusive way that improves the livelihoods, productivity, nutrition, and empowerment of smallholder women dairy farmers and the communities in which they live. The gender transformative program has six components (Farmer Organisation, Productivity Improvement, Infrastructure Improvement, Financial Inclusion and Income Diversification Support, Training and Extension/ Behavioral Change and Policy to Support a Thriving Sector).

Smallholder women dairy farmers are major producers of milk in Nigeria. They are mostly responsible for collecting the milk and taking it to the informal markets to sell at low prices. In formalizing the local dairy sector, women dairy farmers must be strategically equipped to participate favorably within the formal dairy sector. The story in the next line is one of the ALDDN’s women dairy farmers.

Hafsat Sani is a 22 years old (married) smallholder dairy producer in Tsauni Local Government in Kano State. She is one of the female beneficiaries of the Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDDN) program which is catalysing a vibrant local dairy sector in Nigeria and improving the livelihoods of the dairy farmers, particularly women and the communities where they live. Before the implementation of the program, Hafsat would wake up early to milk cows in her household and then proceed to the local market to hawk milk (occasionally in various forms- madara and kindirimo). Most times, she struggles to find buyers for her produce – this usually puts her in a difficult situation- given the high perishability of milk. She is either forced to sell at pittance or hurriedly go home to use the unsold dairy products for household consumption.



With the ALDDN program, Hafsat no longer treks long distances to sell milk but now supplies to L&Z Integrated Farms (one of the five processors under the program). Every morning, the processor through designated community milk collectors, takes milk from Hafsat and the rest of the women dairy

farmers in her community. At the inception of the program, the business transaction between Hafsat and the processor was cash-driven. Based on the volumes of milk supplied by the female dairy farmers and the agreed selling price, they are paid cash which they immediately use to buy household groceries such as maize flour, with none going into their savings or being invested in other income-generating activities.

ALDDN’s Financial Inclusion and Income Diversification component set out to change the narrative around the cash-driven business relationship between the women dairy farmers and the processors to a fully digitalized model, a model that equips women dairy farmers with tailored bank/ e-wallet accounts, hands-on financial literacy and capability skills. These are anchored on the three areas of women’s economic empowerment – Voice, Choice, and Agency. With this model, women dairy farmers receive daily milk payments from the processors into their bank/ e-wallet accounts.

The program through strategic partnerships with financial service providers- specialized departments of traditional banks (One Woman of Sterling bank), payment service banks (HopePSB), and fintech (SoftCom- founder of Eyowo), has across the program sites (Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau and Jigawa states) opened bank/e-wallet accounts for women dairy farmers as well as equipping them with contextualized financial literacy and capability skills.

Financial inclusion remains a key hindrance to achieving significant economic growth in any country. Nigeria has a persisting 38%¹⁰ financial inclusion gap, with most of the unbanked populations in rural areas such as the ALDDN beneficiaries.

9. LiveGaps- CSIRO Research 2020. Retrieved from <https://research.csiro.au/livegaps/findings/livestock-production/dairy-production-in-nigeria/>

10. EFINA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria 2020 Survey, EFINA report, June 3, 2021. <https://a2f.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/A2F-2020-Final-Report.pdf>

Challenges Encountered

In achieving this enormous feat of democratizing financial services to local dairy farmers, particularly women, the program faced several challenges that were not envisioned during the design of the program.

Formal identification among the women dairy farmers was a major challenge that inhibited their early adoption of financial services. A significant number of women dairy farmers do not have a formal means of identification such as the National Identification Number (NIN). Following the 2020 Nigerian government's directive of making NIN registration a prerequisite for SIM card ownership, this has made the use of un-registered sim cards more dominant within the ALDDN communities (rural and remote areas). This was a hindrance to the verification of the identity of the female dairy farmers during bank/e-wallet account opening activities.

In responding to this challenge, ALDDN is currently partnering with Hope PSB- a Nigerian payment service bank offering a bouquet of services including NIN registration. With this offering, the program is now able to register the women dairy farmers for NIN while concurrently opening e-wallet accounts. Another challenge the program faced was the female dairy farmers' lack of financial literacy. This explains the significant level of distrust in digital financial services among this demographic. Most of these women have never had a bank account and consider mobile money to be a novel concept. A significant number of the women dairy farmers would consider opening bank accounts if there were an actual brick-and-mortar location nearby. The program partnered with Sterling Bank in co-designing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials. The visual representation of the benefits and use of digital financial services across the communities in the ALDDN program sites is intended to gradually influence the behaviour of women dairy farmers.

In addition, there is considerably low ownership of mobile phones among women dairy farmers. Many women dairy farmers do not consider ownership of mobile phones (basic feature phones) as a tool for financial services, hence the low priority for the purchase. While there has been a proposition in favour of the program buying phones for the farmers, this was not explored as research has shown that there is no considerable increase in usage of financial services by women who are given phones by development programs. However, ALDDN rolled out electronic payment trials across some of the sites where there has been a high level of distrust. With the trials, community-based POS

agents are stationed across the communities where milk is collected by the processors- milk payments are made directly into the e-wallet accounts of the women dairy farmers, and with alerts received, cash-out transactions are offered.

Key Considerations

Financial inclusion allows the poor to participate in economic activities and provides the opportunity to address or mitigate challenges posed by poverty and other emergencies. There is a need to engage with key players at every level as well as stakeholders to advocate for accessible and affordable financial services, strengthen linkages between the Self-Help Group (SHG) models and cooperatives that are closer to the women at the community level, and ensure that financial inclusion is embedded in all interventions as building blocks to sustainable development.

Making financial services work for women farmers (crop or livestock) is anchored on the prioritization of digital financial literacy and capability. It is critical for programmes such as ALDDN to partner with financial service providers for the design of language-based and acceptable learning materials.



In addition, men should be seen as allies. The success of any gender transformative programme is reliant on how participatory the men are in the various components. In the ALDDN programme, 'men as allies' approach have successfully improved the women's uptake and usage of financial services while also increasing their household decision-making power.

Conclusion

One major lesson that has been learnt in the ALDDN program is that when women farmers are provided resources, they have the power to become major contributors to national economic growth as well as guarantee food security.

TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING GENDER GAPS IN THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN

BY CHINELO CHUKWURA

Nigeria's agricultural value chain has about 80% of smallholder farmers and a few commercial processors plagued by inadequate inputs, obsolete technology, inadequate access to relevant data and knowledge, limited exposure to high productivity practices, weak market linkages, inefficient supply chains such as storage and logistics, with high levels of food wastage, and an acute dependence on rainfall and poor financing¹¹. Women are at the worse end of this dilemma, as cultural norms, and poorly targeted interventions leave women unable to access the resources, inputs and support services they need.



A recent World Bank report stated that women farmers produce 30% less than their male counterparts. The women are more focused on producing and processing fresh foods such as vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy products, and fish, which do not gain any form of value addition

and are sold off in local markets¹². Some of the challenges include limited access to information, capital, and technical and entrepreneurial skills, and they often lack the confidence to engage in more complex activities. As a result of this, they are largely absent from bulk marketing activities, higher value-added products, and export markets. This situation limits women's ability to gain economically from the sector's development.

For example, in Burkina Faso the Association Féminine pour le Développement Buayaba is a national NGO gathering over 3,200 women across 42 rural organizations. This NGO aims to empower women economically and socially through various activities such as providing literacy training and education, training in agricultural and processing techniques, and technical advice to start and develop small social businesses. Its member organizations engage in a variety of value chains, including shea butter, cereals, horticulture, livestock, and other products.

In Nigeria there have been active measures taken to implement the Agricultural Transformation Agenda, which involves identifying a focused set of agricultural commodity value chains to transform and create the conditions for transformation. Agricultural Transformation efforts also occur in other parts of Africa. Some country-specific strides include the floriculture growth in Ethiopia, horticulture

development in Kenya, improved rice yields in Senegal and Mali, rapid and material malnutrition reduction in Rwanda, vertical integration and agro-processing in Morocco, and cotton production in Burkina Faso.⁶ These show that localized transformation in Africa is possible, and points the way for large-scale shifts in African agriculture. The focus then is to understand how institutions, markets, and training systems can extend opportunities to women.



Sahel Consulting interviewed Atinuke Lebile, Co-Founder CatoFoods. CatoFoods is a fast-growing, food company dedicated to improving household nutrition and livelihoods through agricultural value-added services leveraging technology to

scale up production.

Q: How would you describe your journey as a woman in agriculture?

R: It has been a very challenging and interesting journey at the same time. My coming into agriculture was initially out of a let's see what will come out of it mindset. This has now grown into a real passion that seeks to solve or address post-harvest losses and malnutrition through efficient production and processing.

It has been challenging because it is a sector that accords more to men. Inequalities, in the distribution and access to productive resources, the challenges of stakeholders not taking you seriously because you are a female and farm laborers who charge ridiculously high rates. On the other hand, I have also accessed some opportunities and platforms targeted toward women and these have been beneficial to my business.

Q: What has been your experience with access to finance?

R: It has not been easy, I started my business with personal savings and family funds. However, today, there are funds in form of grants and loans that are tailored toward women in agribusiness and women-led organizations.

11. The agricultural value chain, challenges and digital opportunities in Nigeria, Henry Ugochuke, 24th July 2020, <https://theamateurpolymath.com/2020/06/24/the-agricultural-value-chain-challenges-and-opportunities-in-nigeria/>

12. Agricultural Value Chain Development: Opportunity or threat for women's employment. FAO, ILO Policy Brief 4, 2010, <https://www.fao.org/3/i2008e/i2008e04.pdf>

Q: As an Agri-entrepreneur, which aspects of your business have you found most challenging?

R: It has been marketing and sales generation. Competing with imported alternatives and larger brands is not easy. To tackle this I introduced contract manufacturing and packaging for Agri-startups supplying local and foreign markets.

Q: What strategies have helped your business scale in spite of the numerous challenges?

R: Agricultural enterprises must be market driven because continuous processing depends on an effective sales and marketing strategy and extensive market linkage. New product development and quality assurance are key to maintaining a strong brand in agri-business. Subscribing to mentorship has also played a vital role in my business growth.

Q:What is the role of government in promoting women inclusion in Agri-business?

R: The government has what they call "intervention funds" to make allocations to support women-led businesses or startups. Government MDAs should patronize more

women-led businesses. In addition, access to finance at low -interest rates, inputs and subsidies, and tax holidays should be legislated for women-led businesses.

The gaps in information and analysis on gender and markets and women's empowerment in agricultural value chains must be addressed and resolved for increased production and food security. More initiatives such as the AFAWA (Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa) need to be created and adequately implemented to eliminate unequal access to productive resources, new technologies and infrastructures. We need development of women-led policies and programs to improve women's benefits and participation in value chains and to facilitate the inclusion of women in rural labor markets in a flexible and efficient way



WOMEN'S ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL INPUTS: PANACEA FOR IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY & FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

BY GRACE OMINI

In Africa, women have always played a pivotal role in agriculture. Female farmers continue to contribute to agriculture's share of GDP, despite being less likely to access agricultural inputs than their male counterparts. To maximize agricultural productivity, farmers need access to quality inputs, and disparities have historically existed between men and women in terms of access to quality seeds, fertilizer, labor, farm machinery, finance, and other critical inputs. Agricultural input shortages and rising prices in the wake of unpredicted disasters such as the COVID 19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis further worsen the already existing inequalities in access to farm inputs and impede Africa's development of a sustainable food system.

Given women's significant contribution to agricultural production in Africa, it is critical to recognize, and promote women's role in agricultural development to achieve food and nutrition security and a resilient community¹³. Global development strategies now place a high priority on gender equality, and both the United Nations Agenda 2030 and Africa Union's Agenda 2063 recognize its importance for inclusive and sustainable development. Women play key roles in every part of the agricultural value chain and are known to reinvest a much higher portion of their income in their families and communities than men¹⁴, making them crucial to the resilience of food systems¹⁵. Creating a level playing field for them is key to unlocking opportunities beyond increased productivity to improved food security.

Giving women equal access to agricultural resources as their male counterparts would increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent, and agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent.

FAO

Implications of gender gaps in access to agricultural inputs

Women's agricultural labour force participation in Africa ranges from 24% to 56%, with more than 60% of working employed women in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) working in agriculture and providing 60-80% of African food production, but producing 13% to 25% less than their male counterpart. Empirical evidence shows that this gap is due to differences in resource use¹⁶.

The findings of a 2017 United Nations research study conducted in five countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda,



Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania), reveal that gender gaps in agricultural productivity exist not because women are less efficient farmers, but because they have unequal access to agricultural inputs such as family labour, high-yield crops, pesticides, and fertiliser¹⁷. Equalising women's access to agricultural inputs can enhance crop yield by up to 19% and increase agriculture's contribution to GDP across the five nations. It is estimated that closing gender productivity gaps in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda currently given at 18.6, 27.4, and 30.6 percent respectively will yield productivity gains of 2.8 percent, 8.1 percent, and 10.3 percent¹⁸, and giving women equal access to agricultural resources as their male counterparts would increase yields on their farms by up to 20-30 percent, and agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent¹⁹.

13. OECD (2016), "Women's Roles in the West African Food System: Implications and Prospects for Food Security and Resilience", West African Papers, No. 3, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5j1pl4mh1hxn-en>

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18. Gender equality in Agriculture: What are really the benefits for Sub-Saharan Africa? Adamon N. Mukasa and Adeleke O. Salami. AFDB Africa Economic Brief. Volume 7, Issue 3, 2016. https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEB_Vol_7_Issue_3_Gender_equality_in_agriculture.pdf

19. The State of Food and Agriculture. FAO, 2011. <https://www.fao.org/3/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

Researchers have identified factors such as prices, transportation costs, limited access to information about technologies and markets, and limited access to finance to access farm inputs. Limited financial resources prevent women from purchasing quality and certified seeds, using new technologies and innovations, and mobilizing efficient farm labour, especially for key planting and harvesting period²⁰.

There is frequently a significant lag between the time they incur costs and the time they can generate income from their produce, with the lack of collateral requirements further restricting their access to credit²¹. Household domestic work and child care responsibilities place further constraints on their productivity as they limit their mobility, access to information via extension advisory services and time devoted to farm work.

Bridging the gap in women's access to agricultural inputs

Accountability in advancing opportunities for African women through gender-sensitive policies, approaches and mainstreaming are key considerations for closing the gap in women's access to agricultural inputs, and not just making gender issues as appendages to the generalized development programmes²², Empowering women farmers through access to farm inputs along with providing training and information has been proven to have a unique ripple effect that not only improves their productivity and household nutrition, but also enable them to make positive impacts on their communities and future generations.

Greater efforts must be made in several areas to provide an enabling environment conducive for optimizing women's productivity. These areas include,

- **Promotion of the integration of smallholder women farmers into groups:** Adopting women-focus group program models that promote the formation of women clusters, associations, and self-help groups, has been proven to be a viable platform for improving financial inclusion and increasing women's access to agricultural resources. The group approach, apart from helping women farmers overcome the resource and financial constraints in input purchase and capital investment they face in operating individually, enables them take advantage of economies of scale for labour, insurance against risks, crop diversification and access to partnerships.
- **Inclusive Agri-financing systems:** Women require targeted financial services to access finances, use labour-saving agricultural inputs and improve their

access to labour, particularly male labour²⁴. These customised innovative solutions will boost women's capacity to make independent and informed decisions about their income, and significantly close the gender productivity gap.

- **Improved access to training, information, and technology:** Training is a key step that offers women farmers' opportunity to take advantage of new technology. Given gender disparities, women should be given access to knowledge and technology that is tailored to their specific needs when implementing agricultural development projects. There should be consideration for 'women-friendly' alternatives in agricultural research and innovations. Extension services should offer specialised agricultural training and targeted support services to assist women in balancing their dual roles as farmers and family caregivers²⁵.
- In addition to exploiting women's strengths, interventions should reduce women's drudgery in household chores and improve childcare, so that women have more time to devote to farming. Using a gender-blind approach to design interventions will miss out on key constraints, their consequences, and important opportunities to transform agricultural systems, enhance productivity and improve people's lives²⁶.

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Conclusion

Women are the backbone of agriculture and rural development in sub-Saharan African. Identifying and implementing measures to address gender gaps in farm input access is critical to household food security and women's agricultural productivity. By building support

systems for women farmers within a gender-sensitive policy context, we can leverage women's significant contributions to agricultural transformation for sustained food system resilience.



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SAHEL IN THE NEWS

Cassava Seed Business Summit

The Building an Economically Sustainable and Integrated Cassava Seed System, Phase 2 (BASICS-II) project held its second annual edition of the cassava seed business summit. The virtual summit themed: “Financing and Insurance Opportunities for the Sustainable Growth of the Cassava Seed System”, was held on Friday, 27th May, 2022, with over 130 cassava entrepreneurs, seed system experts, and stakeholders in attendance. The summit featured two panel discussions that addressed the challenges affecting the sustainability of the cassava seed systems and explored the financing opportunities for seed entrepreneurs in the value chain.

Sahel Knowledge Series

Sahel Consulting held its maiden edition of the Sahel Knowledge Series themed ‘The Role of the Seed Sector in Food System Transformation’, on Friday, 20th May 2022. The knowledge-sharing platform was established to raise awareness of the transformative initiatives and programs in the food ecosystem among key actors and stakeholders and encourage partners to share ideas and innovations that support and promote the development of the agricultural sector. Walter de Boef – Senior Advisor Seed Systems, Wageningen Center for Development Innovation (WCIDI), was the key speaker, and over a hundred participants were in attendance.

Sahel Scholars’ Conference 2022

Sahel and Nourishing Africa held its annual Sahel Scholars’ Conference. The virtual conference which took place on Wednesday, 11th May 2022, targeted students and youth across Africa. It showcased trends in the food and agriculture sector and highlighted opportunities for career development. The conference focused on the theme ‘The Climate/Food Nexus: African Youth Leading Sustainable Solutions’ and drew participants from 19 countries, and featured astounding industry experts within the agriculture, food, and climate ecosystem in Africa.

National Seed Platform Webinar

The Collaborative Seed Program (CSP) held its quarterly seed platform meeting on Tuesday, 26th April 2022. The webinar is part of the program’s strategic pathway in establishing and institutionalizing a functional national seed sector platform to improve sector coordination and governance. The webinar which was themed ‘The SEEDCODEX: Improved Seed Quality Assurance. It had over seventy-nine (79) participants in attendance, including seed sector experts and key stakeholders from the National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC), Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Mpedigree Networks Kenya Limited, Wageningen University and Research, Maize Association of Nigeria, Premier Seed Nigeria, and Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS).

SAHEL CONSULTING SPEAKS

- **Flag-off Program:** Our Managing Partner, Temitope Adegoye delivered a goodwill message at the flag-off event of the National Pasture Development Program (NAPDEP), organized by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), on Tuesday, 28th June 2022.
- **ARCN Research Meeting:** Temitope Adegoye shared vital findings on 'Reorienting public agricultural research and development to achieve sustainable, nutritious, and climate-resistant food systems in Nigeria', at a meeting organized by the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), on Wednesday, 22nd June 2022.
- **World Resources Institute Podcast:** Our Executive Chair, Ndidi Nwuneli spoke on the topic 'Big Ideas into Actions: Africa's Growing Food Crisis', on Thursday, 16th June 2022. Alongside other industry experts, she discussed building resilience in Africa's food systems considering climate change, conflicts, and the cost-of-living crisis.
- **World Milk Day:** Temitope Adegoye spoke at the World Milk Day Conference organized by the Commercial Dairy Ranchers Association of Nigeria (CODARAN). The conference themed 'Catalyzing a Milk Revolution in Nigeria through Strategic Investments in Dairy Development' was held on Wednesday, 1st June 2022.
- **AGRA at World Economic Forum:** Ndidi Nwuneli served on a panel alongside other leaders in the food system where she spoke about the opportunities and challenges in the implementation of support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national pathways for food systems transformation. She showcased the roles of SMEs in transforming the food ecosystem by leveraging Sahel Consulting's experience with the Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDDN). The panel was held on Wednesday, 25th May 2022.
- **Twitter Space Discussion:** Our manager, Aisha Hadejia participated in a panel discussion where she spoke on the topic 'What kind of jobs do young Africans need?'. The session was organized by One Africa and held on Wednesday, 25th May 2022.
- **Catalyzing Change Week 2022:** Ndidi Nwuneli participated in the Catalyzing Change Week 2022, organized by Africa Forward. She moderated an important panel discussion on Africans taking the lead in solving our own development challenges and shifting funding flows to local organizations run by community leaders, on Wednesday, 11th May 2022.
- **National Livestock Transformation Summit:** Temitope Adegoye spoke at the National Livestock Transformation Summit organized by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). The summit themed 'Positioning the Nigerian Livestock Industry for the 21st-century economy: A critical look at National Livestock Transformation Plan' was held on Tuesday, 26th April 2022.

SAHEL CAPITAL SPEAKS

- **AVCA Conference:** Mezuo Nwuneli, Our Managing Partner, participated in a panel discussion where he spoke on Balancing Commercial Return and Impact, at the African Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (AVCA) annual conference. The event was held in Dakar Senegal, on the 27th of April 2022.
- **Africa CEO Forum:** Mezuo participated in a closed-door strategic round table at the Africa CEO Forum in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, discussing food security and how the African private sector can push for self-sufficiency. The event was held on the 13th of June 2022.
- **Climate Symposium:** Mezuo spoke at a virtual USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean Regional climate symposium focused on discussing strategies for developing Climate-Resilient Food Systems. He shared Sahel Capital's experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa on private investment support to scale up agribusinesses. The event was held on the 15th of July 2022.

NOURISHING AFRICA SPEAKS

- **April 2022 First Thursdays:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo and OladunmadeOtitoola spoke at the April Edition of First Thursdays on “Managing Risks and Building Resilience in Agribusiness” on April 7, 2022.
- **Bobab’s Africa Agri-Tech Development Forum:** Ify Umunna spoke on “Supporting Agricultural Innovation and Food Manufacturing with Effective Trade and industrial Policy” at Bobab’s Africa Agri-Tech Development Forum on April 7, 2022.
- **Sahel Scholars' Conference:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo spoke about Nourishing Africa at the 2022 Sahel Scholars' Conference on May 10, 2022.
- **Catalyst 2030 Nigerian Chapter Launch:** Ify Umunna spoke during the unveiling of the Nigerian Chapter of the Catalyst 2030 at the 2022 Catalysing Change Week on May 11, 2022.
- **AL for Agribusiness Workshop:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo spoke at the AL for Agribusiness Workshop held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast on May 11, 2022.
- **YAEDP Onboarding Session:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo spoke at the Youth in Agrifood Export Development Program (YAEDP) virtual onboarding session held on May 24, 2022.
- **Nourishing Africa's Twitter Space:** Ify Umunna spoke on "Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security" during Nourishing Africa's Twitter Space held on May 25, 2022.
- **CBN RT200 Non-Oil Export Summit:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo participated in the maiden edition of CBN RT200 Non-Oil Export Summit in Lagos, Nigeria where she engaged delegates about Nourishing Africa's Youth in Agrifood Export Development Program (YAEDP) on June 16, 2022.
- **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM22):** Ify Umunna spoke at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM22) on Innovating for Inclusive and Resilient Food Systems on June 21, 2022, and on Reskilling the Commonwealth for the Future on June 23, 2022.



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