

the FEMALE FACE of FARMING

**Farmers. Workers. Entrepreneurs.  
Care-givers. Bread-winners. Bread-makers.  
Mothers. Wives. Daughters.**



Women are the backbone of the rural economy, especially in the developing world. Yet they receive only a fraction of the land, credit, inputs (such as improved seeds and fertilizers), resources and agricultural training and information compared to men.

Empowering and investing in rural women has been shown to significantly increase productivity, reduce hunger and malnutrition and improving rural livelihoods. And not only for women, but for everyone.

**Let's take a closer look at  
the story of women and agriculture.**



**To see the interactive version  
of the infographic, visit:**

[www.farmingfirst.org/women](http://www.farmingfirst.org/women)  
[www.fao.org/gender/Infographic](http://www.fao.org/gender/Infographic)

A  
STORY  
BY



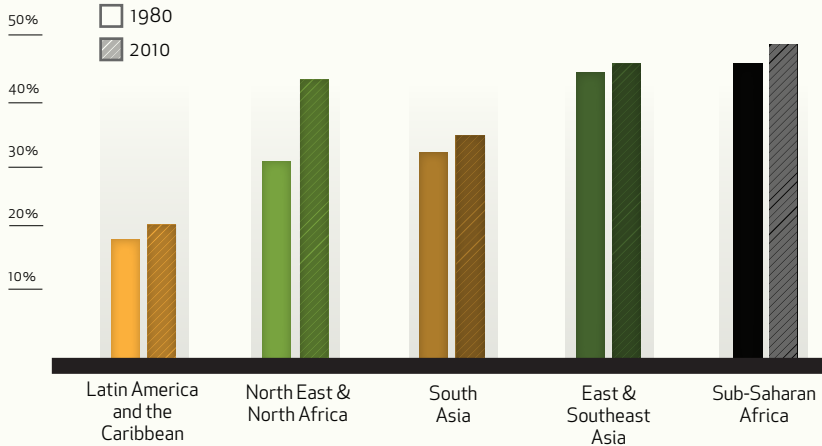
Why are women so important to agriculture?



## Female Share of the Agricultural Labour Force

Women, on average, comprise 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries and account for an estimated two-thirds of the world's 600 million poor livestock keepers.

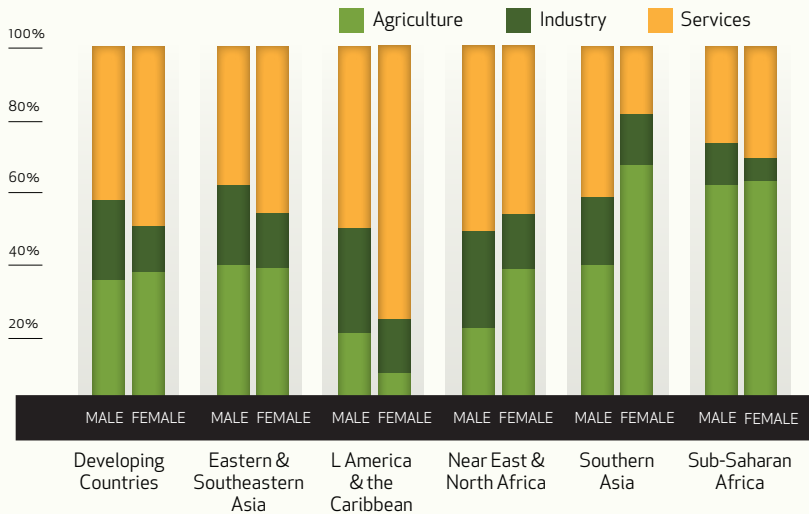
### FEMALE SHARE OF POPULATION ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE IN AGRICULTURE (%) Source: FAOSTAT



## Distribution of Male & Female Employment, by Sector

Of those women in the least developed countries who report being economically active, 79% report agriculture as their primary source of livelihood (48% of economically active women worldwide).

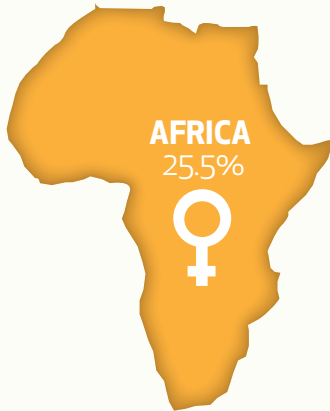
### PERCENTAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT (%) Source: FAO



## Female-headed Households

A significant share of households in all regions are headed by women, yet their access to productive resources and services are limited.

### SHARE OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS THAT ARE FEMALE HEADED (%) Source: FAO

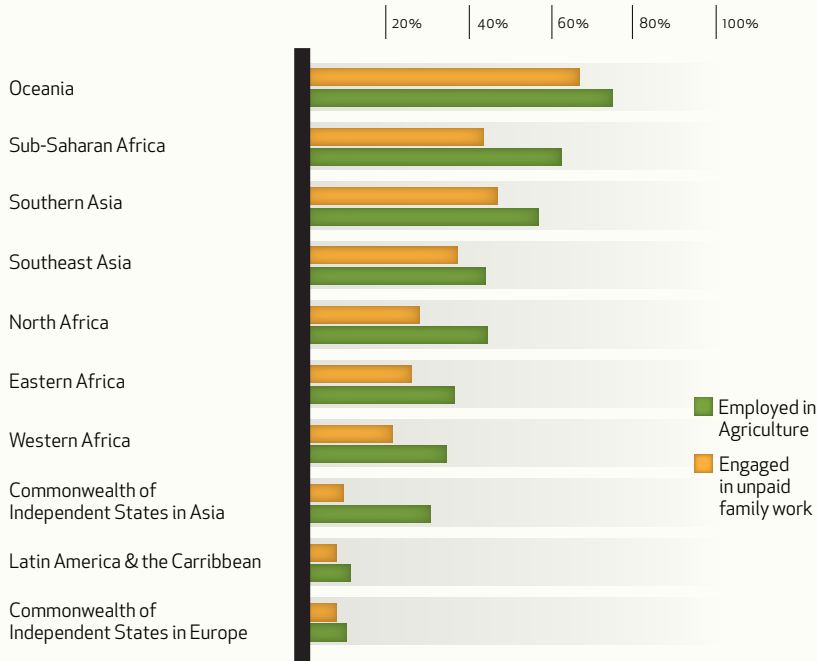


Eastern Africa		Middle Africa	
	29.9		21.6
Comoros	31.9	Angola	21.8
Eritrea	43.2	Cameroon	22.9
Ethiopia	20.1	Centra Af. Rep.	18.8
Kenya	33.8	Chad	19.1
Madagascar	20.6	Congo	23.4
Malawi	26.3	Dem. Rep. Congo	20.0
Mozambique	26.3	Gabon	25.4
Rwanda	34.0		
Uganda	29.3		
Tanzania	25.0		
Zambia	25.4		
Zimbabwe	42.6		

## Rural Working Hours

Rural women typically work longer hours than men, when one takes into account both paid productive and unpaid reproductive or domestic and care responsibilities. When these tasks are taken into account, women's total work hours are longer than men's in all regions.

### WOMEN EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE & ENGAGED IN UNPAID FAMILY WORK, 2007 (%) Source: UN, FAO



For the full infographic visit:

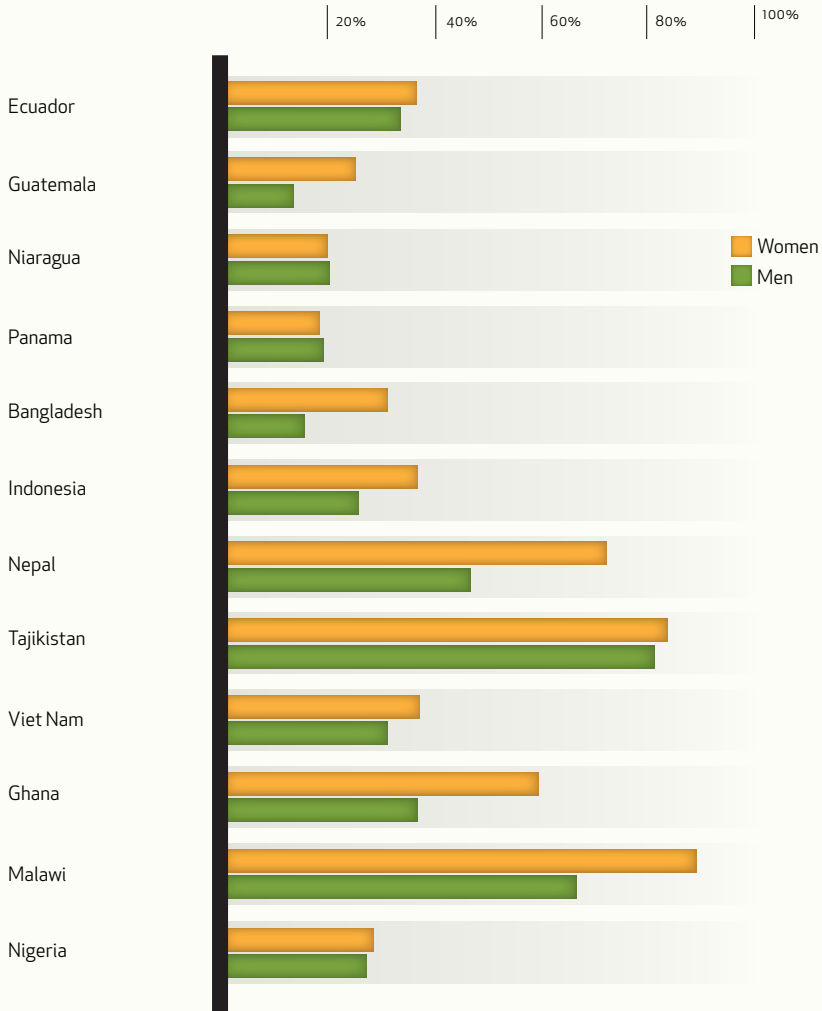
[www.farmingfirst.org/women](http://www.farmingfirst.org/women)

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## Rural Working Conditions

Women tend to be employed for labour-intensive tasks, generally earn lower wages than men and are more likely to be paid at piece rate. For example, in the casual agricultural labour market in Africa, women's casual wages (whether in cash or in kind) are usually half of men's wages.

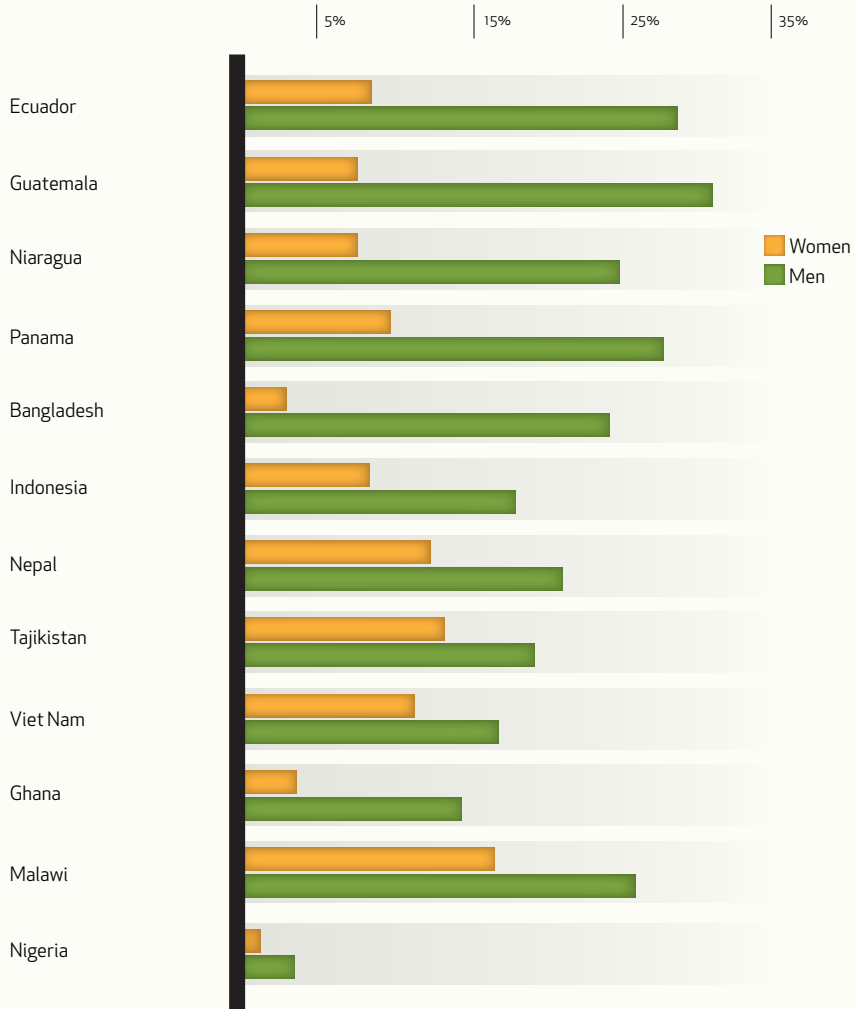
**PREVALENCE OF PART-TIME WORK IN RURAL WAGE EMPLOYMENT, BY GENDER (%)** Source: FAO



## Off-Farm Work










As farming alone often cannot sustain rural families, the off-farm economy is an increasingly important source of household income. Yet rural women do not have equal access to these employment opportunities.

**RURAL WAGE EMPLOYMENT, ADULT POPULATION BY GENDER (%)** Source: FAO



## Employment in Selected High-value Agro-industries

Women wage workers dominate employment in areas of export-oriented high-value agriculture in the developing world. For instance, women represent half or more of employees in countries such as Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Kenya and South Africa.

Country, Year of Survey	Commodity	# of Employees in the Agro-Industry	Share of Female Employees (%)
<b>Kenya</b> 2002	 Banana	40-70,000	75%
<b>Senegal</b> 2006	 Cherry Tomatoes	3,000	60%
<b>Uganda</b> 1998	 Flowers	3,300	75%
<b>S Africa</b> 1994	 Deciduous Fruit	283,000	53%
<b>Zambia</b> 2002/3	 Flowers	2,500	35%
<b>Chile</b> 1990s	 Fruits	300,000	circa 46%
<b>Colombia</b> mid-90s	 Flowers	75,000	60-80%
<b>Dominican Republic</b> 1989-90	 Fruits, veg, flowers, plants	16,955	circa 41%
<b>Mexico</b> 1990s	 Vegetables	950,000	90%

Source: FAO

Where does a gender  
gap in agriculture exist?

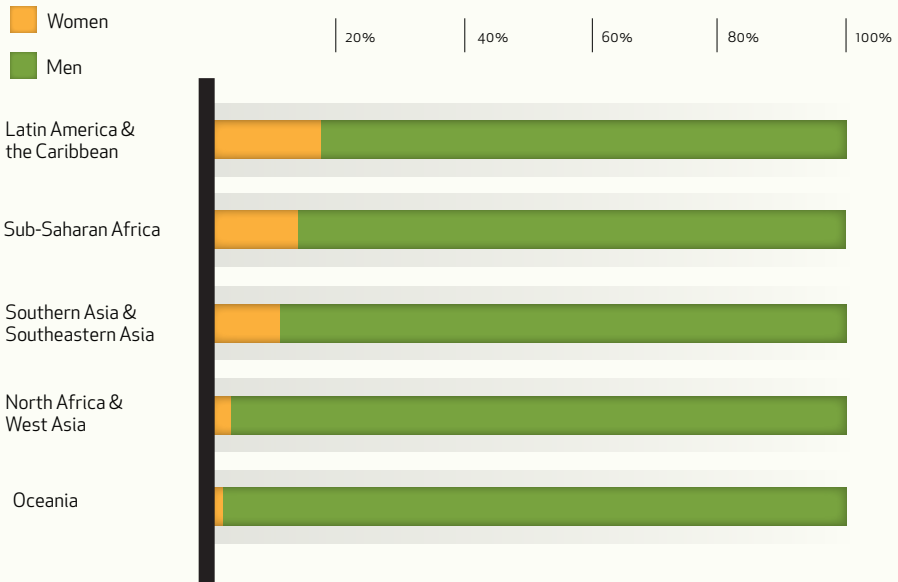




## Land Rights: Share of Male and Female Agricultural Holders in Main Developing Regions

In many societies, laws, tradition and access bar women from owning and inheriting land.

**SHARE OF MALE & FEMALE AGRICULTURAL HOLDERS IN MAIN DEVELOPING REGIONS (%)** Source: FAO



## Land Rights: Size of Plots

Moreover, where women hold land, their plots are generally smaller, of an inferior quality, and with less secure rights than those held by men.

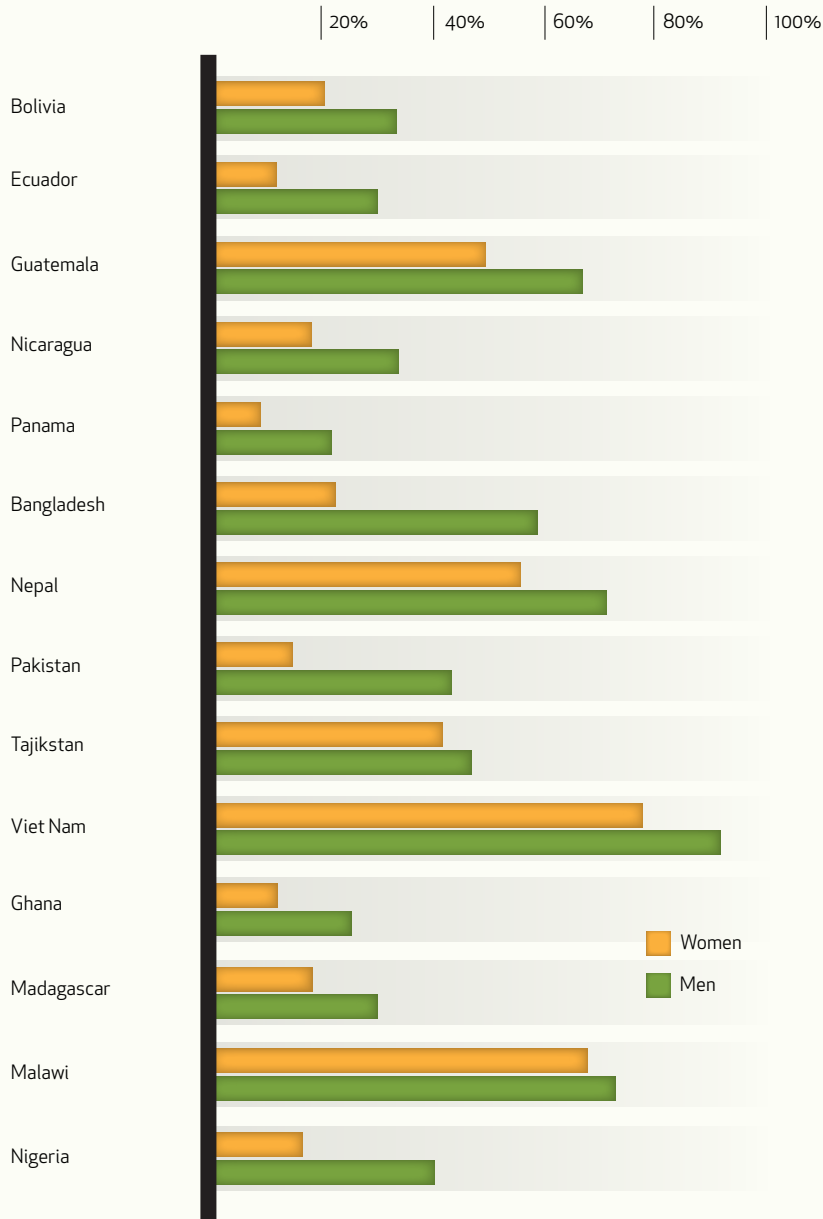
### RURAL HOUSEHOLD ASSETS, AVERAGE FARM SIZE (HA) Source: FAO



## Access to Inputs and Technologies

The vast majority of studies have found that differences in yields between men and women exist not because women are less skilled but because they have less access to inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers and equipment.

**FERTILIZER USE BY FEMALE- AND MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS, BY HOUSEHOLD (%)** Source: FAO



## Handweeding

Many fields are not planted to crops because farmers do not have sufficient labour for weeding, nor can they access herbicides.



**75%** of the 250m tons of crops grown in Sub-Saharan Africa are on smallholder farms



**75%** of those farms are weeded by hand



**50-70%** of total labour time is spent on this handweeding



**90%** of this handweeding is done by women



**70%** of farm children between the ages of 5 and 14 are forced to leave school and work in the agricultural sector at the peak period of weeding

Source: CROPLIFE FOUNDATION ILO

## Access to Extension Services

Because of cultural attitudes, discrimination and a lack of recognition for their role in food production, women enjoy limited to no benefits from extension and training in new crop varieties and technologies.



Female farmers receive only **5%** of all agricultural extension services from 97 countries



**Only 15%** of the world's extension agents are women



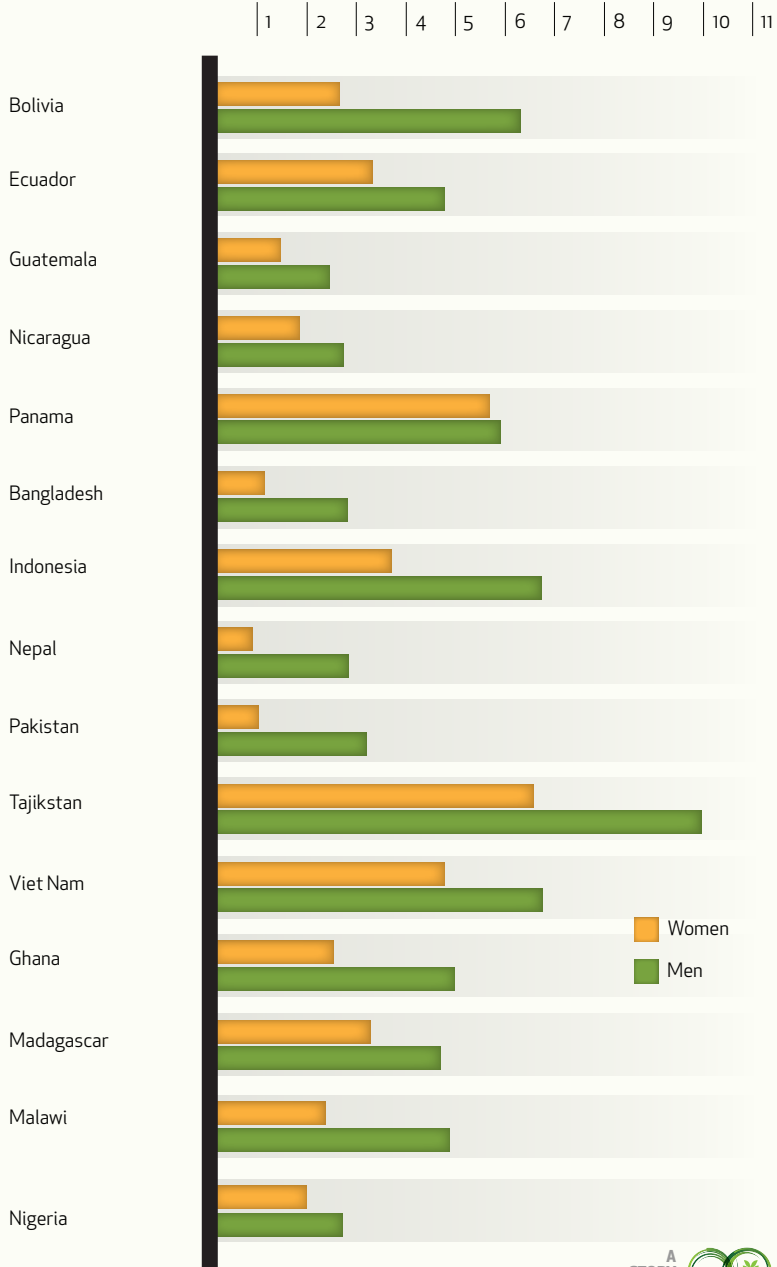
**Only 10%** of total aid for agriculture, forestry and fishing goes to women.

Source: FAO

## Education

Girls who stay in school are more likely to be able to feed themselves and their families when they become adults. One study showed that women's education contributed 43% of the reduction in child malnutrition over time compared to just 26% for improvements in food availability (Smith and Haddad 2000).

### EDUCATION OF MALE AND FEMALE RURAL HOUSEHOLD HEADS, AVERAGE YEARS OF EDUCATION OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD Source: FAO



## Opportunities in Higher Education and Research

Gender differences in education reflect a significant and widespread history of bias against girls in education. Women are less represented in higher level research, management and decision-making positions compared with their male colleagues.



**Only 24%**

of African agricultural researchers are female, up from 18% in 2000/1



**Only 14%**

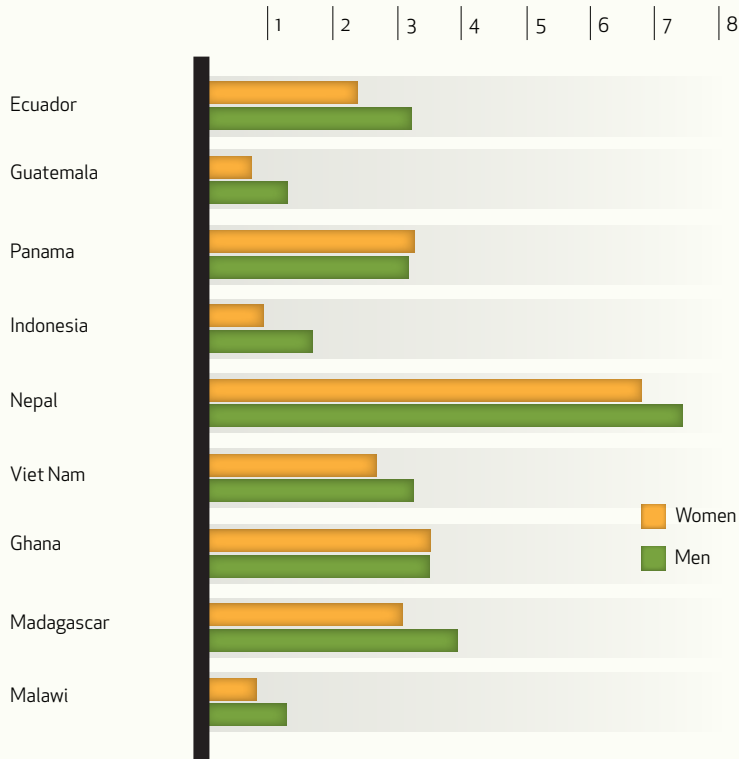
of these researchers hold leadership positions

Source: ASTI/AWARD

## Access to Credit

In most countries, there is a 5%-10% disparity in the percentage of female-headed households who access credit compared to their male-led counterparts. Without access to credit, women often cannot buy essential inputs, such as seeds, tools and fertilizers, or invest in irrigation and land improvements.

**RURAL FEMALE- AND MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS THAT USE CREDIT (%)** Source: FAO

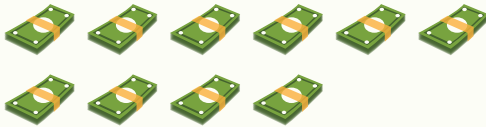


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## Access to Markets

Increasing women's share of household income has broad benefits to improved rural livelihoods. Improving transportation and infrastructure constraints and encouraging rural women's participation in farmer organisations and cooperatives can help both to achieve economies of scale in access to markets as well as reducing isolation and building confidence, leadership and security.

An increase to a **woman's income** of



achieves the same improvements in children's nutrition and health as an increase to a **man's income** of



Source: FAO CFS

# What are the impacts of the gender gap in agriculture?



## Gender Yield Gap

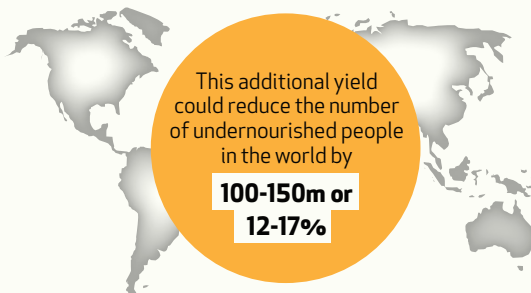
Women farmers typically achieve yields that are 20-30% lower than men. However, the vast majority of studies suggest that women are just as efficient as men and would achieve the same yields if they had equal access to productive resources and services. Bridging this gender yield gap would boost food and nutrition security globally.

The yield gap between men and women farmers averages around **20-30%** mostly due to differences in resource use



Given equal access to resources as men, women would achieve the same yield levels, boosting total agricultural output in developing countries by

**2.5-4%**



Source: FAO



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