



## INCREASE GENDER-RESPONSIVE INVESTMENTS IN AFRICA'S AGRICULTURE FOR INCLUSIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

"Gender Investments" towards the 2021 UN Food System Summit

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# POLICY SHIFTS REQUIRED TO IMPROVE GENDER INCLUSIVITY FOR AFRICAN AR4D

1

**Build capacity** of women and youth for efficient use of technologies, as well as train the next generation of researchers to bring a gender lens to their research.

2

**Promote gender-sensitive technologies** that meet women's needs, are labor-saving, cost-effective and simple to operate by non-educated or preliterate women, girls and youth.

3

**Prioritize gender-specific needs** of men and women by including their interests and taking cognizance of intersections between gender with other identity factors.

4

**Initiate and expand gender-responsive policies** to go beyond production issues throughout the entire agricultural value chains including agri-finance, agro-processing, agro-allied industry with improved access to inputs and research.

5

**Increase availability of and access to gender indicators and sex-disaggregated data** which are essential to developing critical actions targeted towards implementing interventions in closing current gender gaps, changing underlying social norms, and addressing structural causes of inequality in food systems.

6

**Design, deliver and measure financial products** that work for women to achieve gender transformative financial inclusion and close existing gender gaps.

7

**Create institutional adjustments** for women to participate not only in research but also as leaders in the various governance structures and elements of the value chains.

8

**Re-inforce commitments** to integrating gender in African AR4D simultaneously with increased budgetary allocations since it is not possible to mainstream gender effectively and sustainably without a gender budget.

9

Shift from the current gender training and/or sensitization approaches to **creating gender awareness within organizations**, to gender conscientisation and gender consciousness awakening, to **unlearning the long-held gender ideologies and stereotypes**.



## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Women make significant contributions to the economy through their role as entrepreneurs, on-farm workers, employees, or through unpaid care work at home. Female farmers play a vital role in African agriculture, doing most of the work to produce, process, and market food. For instance, women produce 60-80 percent of the world's food and in comparison, to men, face the burden of unpaid work, time elasticity, poor access to agricultural inputs as well as lower wages compared to their male counterparts. To better address their priorities and challenges, there is an urgent need to strengthen the voice and visibility of African women in the agricultural sciences.

An appreciation of gender issues cannot be overemphasized in the consideration of strategies to improve Africa's AR4D through private-sector engagement. It is important to note that the engagement of unique groups of actors in the value chains is hampered by the constraints these groups face. Women in particular are underrepresented, unacknowledged, and under-resourced concerning their involvement in specific value chains. Similarly, female participation in agricultural research and higher education has been particularly low in Africa and currently stands at 24% (ASTI, 2009). This gap does not only hinder women's productivity but also reduces their contributions to the agricultural sector and the achievement of broader economic and social development

goals (FAO, 2011). These gender-related bottlenecks to effective involvement in agriculture have an impact on enterprise development, the productivity of both men and women, and national competitiveness in Africa.

It is against this backdrop that the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), working with the Sub Regional Research Organisations (ASARECA, CCARDESA, CORAF, and NAASRO), the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the African Women in Agricultural Development (AWARD) and the International Food and Policy Research (IFPRI), convened a Food System Summit (FSS) independent dialogue on Gender-Responsive Investments in Africa's Agriculture for Inclusive Food Systems. One outcome of this dialogue is a policy brief that will be communicated to the FSS through its Science Group.

The dialogue was structured into one webinar and an on-line discussion before and after the webinars. The webinar was held on 4th May 2021 and was devoted to stimulating discussion that would identify key game-changing gender-responsive solutions needed to strengthen African Agricultural Research and Development towards improved food systems in Africa.



## UNDERSTANDING THE GENDER-RELATED CHALLENGES OF AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

*The Summit's three action tracks (Table 1) offer stakeholders a space to share and understand the gender-related challenges facing Africa's food systems towards fostering new actions and partnerships, and amplifying existing initiatives.*

ACTION TRACK	CHALLENGES
<b>ACTION TRACK 1</b>  <b>Increase capacity for gender-inclusive private sector engagement.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most private sector development investment and service providers in the agricultural sector demonstrate a lack of gender awareness and competencies.</li> <li>• Extension services remain quite technical. In most cases, female recipients have trouble applying technical knowledge because of relational problems in their household unit.</li> <li>• While there are gross variations across countries in Africa, many institutions are still not investing adequately in gender-inclusive strategies and actions. For example, growth is still disintegrated, disjointed across the value chain development (production, processing, distribution, or consumption).</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION TRACK 2</b>  <b>Build policy support for investment in gender-transformative policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural policies implementation do not target complete value chains, but are narrowly focused on technical aspects. (These policies often fail to consider matters on relations of production).</li> <li>• Most often, social, cultural and institutional support systems do not protect farmers, particularly female farmers, against losses and shocks.</li> <li>• Policy programmes and agricultural development strategies must include practical and strategic gender interests as well as their intersections with other identity actors.</li> </ul>

Continue on Page 4

## ACTION TRACK

## CHALLENGES

### ACTION TRACK 3

#### Promote transformative strategies towards a gender-responsive food system

- Women tend to lack savings or collateral to start new businesses and grow existing ones.
- Persistent gender differentiated social capital prevents access to networks and social interaction that promote business for both women and men, especially in the rural areas.
- Inputs such as land, seeds, fertilizers, technology, and information still reflect a huge gap in digital technologies for women. This has reduced women's potential to be productive, but even more importantly, to actualize their rights.

Findings from the 2016 Africa Human Development Report indicate that gender inequality costs Sub-Saharan Africa approximately 95 USD billion per year. Investing in gender-smart approaches to agribusiness would likely lead to economic benefits. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, 12-28 USD trillion could be added to the global economy if women achieved parity with men in economic outcomes. Despite essential initiatives such as Women in Africa, Women Economic Empowerment for African Agriculture Development, more is still needed to ensure greater visibility and productivity for women who are central to food production and food security in the continent.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATION

Previous gender equality efforts have focused a lot on the empowerment of women as producers, entrepreneurs, or consumers. This policy brief shifts the focus to organizations where the potential for impact is more significant. It moves the focus from trying to fix women in the system, to addressing the inequalities inherent in the systems in which women operate, including organizational systems. The brief seeks to rally around organizations working in food systems to commit to elevating women's voice and representation, achieving gender parity in leadership, and in their organizational culture, policies and programmes.

Gender indicators and sex-disaggregated data are essential to developing critical actions targeted at implementing interventions to close current gender gaps by changing underlying social norms, and addressing structural causes of inequality in food systems. This calls for a one-stop-shop for gender indicators and sex-disaggregated data across the food systems, including indicators on resources such as land ownership and agencies, including decision making over various domains and achievements. Sex disaggregated data on health, nutrition, and other wellbeing indicators is important. Other composite indicators that measure women's empowerment in the agriculture space are also critical.

Gender-responsive food systems, policies, legal frameworks, and strategies – across countries, mainly agriculture, forestry, natural resource management, climate change, trade policies, and investment do not always include or provide for gender equality and women's empowerment. In many cases, efforts for women's empowerment have been limited to initiatives that sometimes fall outside of the policy framework. The integration of gender in food systems policy would provide a legal framework for driving action and allocating the required investment. Given the lack of skills and capacities for women entrepreneurs, the financial organizations must also design, deliver, and measure financial products that work for women. Pertinent questions include: Do financial organizations know what the needs and priorities of women are? Can they design for them? Can they deliver this product in ways that work for women? Hence, with private sector companies and financial institutions, this brief calls for a coalition of financial institutions that are committed to gender transformative financing that works for women.

Improving investment in training the next generation of researchers to bring a gender lens to their research, the crucial skills of leadership, negotiation, and engagement, enhance social inclusion in work settings. Therefore, we must re-evaluate and communicate policies that benefit those at the margins and ensure widespread access to information.

## LEVERAGING AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (AR4D) TO INCREASE GENDER-RESPONSIVE INVESTMENTS

*While the COVID-19 pandemic had devastated so many sectors in our countries; it has also presented a tremendous opportunity to make adaptations.. For instance, it is possible for people to work from home and be productive. It is possible to make sure that men as fathers and caregivers can balance, be invited, and step up into their invitation to be caregivers and professionals in their work opportunities. This illustrates the change in mindset and flexibility of roles and responsibilities among men and women, presenting an opportunity to build back better.*

To drive the recognition that agricultural value chains begin at the research stage, gender inclusivity must begin by supporting the ability of researchers to lead and develop gender-responsive innovations. Evidence has confirmed that gender-responsive research is more efficient, more inclusive, better targeted, and produces more relevant innovations with higher adoption rates. Gender should be brought into the agricultural research space not as a deviation from the original research mandate, but as an additional tool that will ensure that researchers are producing research that will ultimately have a higher adoption rate.

Leveraging the potential offered by AR4D to increase gender inclusivity requires the following:

### ***Increase capacity for gender-inclusive private sector engagement.***

a

#### **ACTION TRACK 1**

Action track one calls for increasing access to proven technologies, as this will help improve food production and food security, as well as create jobs and wealth for women and youth across the value chains. Having the technology at scale will help more women and youth to access the technology for their agribusiness development. Thus, the need for private sector engagement to produce the technology and put them at scale.

Promotion of gender-sensitive technologies that meet women's needs, are labor-saving, cost-effective and simple to operate by preliterate persons is essential. Hence, promoting research products that do not add to women's daily workload and household engagements. With the availability of proven technologies, the private sector can put them at scale and enable conditions to facilitate the adoption and use of the technologies by women and youth. Therefore, it is essential to build the capacity of women and youth for efficient use of technology. This can be across the incubation centers or other mechanisms for capacity building. Similarly, capacity building is needed for the private sector to address the specific needs of women and youth in terms of technologies and solutions that fit their interests and priorities and other productive resources to increase sustainable agribusiness development.



**b*****Build policy support for investment in gender-transformative policies.*****ACTION TRACK 2**

Action track 2 calls for research that aims to solve the market's need and be in line with women's needs, primarily involved in agricultural trade. Research must be targeted at developing products that meet the needs of women who use agricultural services. This should ensure inclusivity and diversity in frameworks by considering the needs of women and vulnerable groups and establish approaches that meet the needs of all groups of people.

There is the need to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. There is an urgent need to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Research must also understand the environment and develop culturally-sensitive policies towards ensuring collective uptake of policies and participation of all actors. Extension services must create women's cooperation and train them on business practices and technology as well as increase the ratio of women extension agents in agricultural services, especially in regions with sensitive cultural and religious barriers. This calls for advocacy by RECs for gender-responsive products and investments in member states. It also calls for RECs to leverage their position as regional coordinators to mobilize support for gender-response policies in member states.

**c*****Promote transformative strategies towards a gender-responsive food system.*****ACTION TRACK 3**

Action track 3 calls for women to be provided with practical solutions, research products, communication products, market access, and linkages. So, women need to be involved, and the research needs to have them at the table to let the researchers know what they need and vice-versa. Women must be at the forefront, as advisers to researchers as they conduct their research and other field experiments.

An approach that encompasses all the groups and meets the need of all the people including the youth, vulnerable groups, and women should be designed. Additionally, there is a need to operate intelligently on the uneven field, making it even and bring onboard women and the vulnerable group to have a part in this uneven environment where the policymakers and private sectors tend to dominate and exclude the women. Hence, there is need to ensure that Food System Frameworks bring women, vulnerable groups, and youth onboard to amplify their voice and visibility.

Member states need to push for policies that address critical issues for women and youth. Also, the Regional Economic Communities have a solid role to play in lobbying, advocating, and influence investments and gender-responsive products. Explore an integrated or combination approach given that gender is a cross-cutting approach, and it involves different institutions and stakeholders. Lastly, is to examine the involvement of the private sector because most are looking at profit-making as their primary interest. Hence, the need for a balanced perspective to understand why the private sector wants to advocate and help mainstream issues of gender. Private sector involvement is essential, but there is a need to define the extent of their participation, especially from their perspective of making a profit. Strengthen advocacy towards ensuring that women's livelihoods are sustained, and their working conditions are improved and not exploited.

African food products. Bridging the missing middle entails building capacities for innovation from the bottom up. Women constitute a large part of food production, thus supporting the self-organized groups with structural assets can increase women's participation in decision-making.

***Continue on Page 7***

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## ***THE MAJOR POLICY SHIFTS REQUIRED TO IMPROVE GENDER INCLUSIVITY FROM AFRICAN AR4D***

The major policy shifts required to improve the outcomes of AR4D on the continents are:

1. Build capacity of women and youth for efficient use of the technology, as well as train the next generation of researchers to bring a gender lens to their research.
2. Promote gender-sensitive technology that meets women's needs, labor-saving, and very simple to operate by non-educated youth.
3. Prioritize gender-specific needs of men and women by including their interests and intersections with other identity actors.
4. Improve gender-responsive policies to not be limited to production but cut across the entire agricultural value chains including agri-finance, agro-processing, access to inputs, and research.
5. Increase access to gender indicators and sex-disaggregated data which are essential to developing critical actions targeted towards implementing interventions in closing current gender gaps, changing underlying social norms, and addressing structural causes of inequality in food systems.
6. Design, deliver and measure financial products that work for women to achieve gender transformative financial inclusion and close existing gender gaps.
7. Create institutional adjustments for women to participate not only in research but also as leaders in the various governance structures and elements of the value chains.
8. Re-inforce commitments to integrating gender in African AR4D simultaneously with increased budgetary allocations since it is not possible to mainstream gender effectively and sustainably without a gender budget.
9. Shift from the current gender training and/or sensitization approaches to creating gender awareness within organizations, to gender conscientisation and gender consciousness awakening, to unlearning the long-held gender ideologies and stereotypes.



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