

## **GENDER CC: Gender, Climate Change and Agriculture**

Ecosystems and climate are interdependent. Agriculture food production is the economic activity that depends most on climate conditions. At the same time, the change from traditional to intensive agricultural systems largely contributes to climate change. Land use changes, flooding areas for rice and sugarcane production, burning crop residues, raising ruminant animals and using nitrogen fertilizers are all activities that release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Developing countries will be hit the hardest by climate change, particularly countries which depend largely on rain-fed agriculture. Climate change affects changes in plant growth and in production by promoting the spread of pest and diseases, increased exposure to heat stress, changes in rainfall patterns, greater leaching of nutrients from the soil during intense rains, greater erosion due to stronger winds and more wildfires in drier regions.

### **Gender Dimension**

There are numerous significant linkages between gender and agriculture. Gender aspects in agriculture affect access to and control over resources, with consequences for food security as well as for market and policy decisions.

In many countries women's access to land is limited. Patrilineal inheritance customs regulate land ownership and property rights and thereby influence control over land and food sovereignty. At the same time, women make up 51% of the agricultural labour force worldwide, significantly more in the Global South. For example, 80% of female employees and self-employees in Sub-Saharan Africa are working in the agricultural sector.

There is an evident interdependence between rural poverty and climate change related effects like desertification and degradation. Because of their labour- and time-intensive work in order to care for their families, the share of women hit by poverty is unproportionally high. Their responsibility for using and preserving land for food and fuel production and the resulting dependency on the soil make them vulnerable for climate change effects and consequences such as desertification, erosion and soil degradation. Decreasing crops and livestock, less productivity and lower income follow these effects and impact particularly women.

Depletion of natural resources and decreasing agricultural productivity may increase women's workloads, diminish their crops, their livestock and therefore the income, place additional burdens on their health and reduce time available to participate in decision-making processes and non-agricultural income generating activities.

In industrialised countries, studies point out gendered differences in attitudes related to agricultural production and products. These differences concern the view on food and health, ethical dimensions of food productions and selection, nutritional attitudes and choices, dietary changes, food works and body images.

## **Response**

When identifying and promoting GHG emission reduction management practices in agriculture women's involvement in decision-making processes and implementations will be crucial - in particular as they play a key role in ecological, fair and sustainable food production and consumption patterns.

Cultural and legal barriers must be removed in order to set an adequate course in women's everyday reality. Women's legalized landownership, e.g., would tackle inequalities with regard to ownership, property rights and customs.

Because of the importance of the environment to rural women's daily tasks, they have developed effective adaptation strategies in the face of a changing climate. Greater attention must be paid to the coping strategies already in place within rural agricultural communities.

Given women's key role in agriculture, it is necessary that gender disaggregated data become available for more countries and farming systems. It is fundamental for adaptation efforts to provide local climate information and enhance meteorological and climatological knowledge.

To further collaboration with rural women's networks is crucial for the development of effective climate change policies and their implementation. These women provide important channels for sharing and disseminating information. Rural women should be included in developing information materials and dissemination strategies, reflecting a participatory approach to knowledge management. Building support networks for grassroots women on equal land rights and supporting women's groups who are working together to purchase land are important objectives.

For more information please visit Gendercc platform at <http://www.gendercc.net/action/agriculture.html>