Women in Agrifood Systems: Challenges and Opportunities

Jinyi Wang
Programme Analyst
UN Women China
About UN Women

UN Women is the global champion for gender equality, working to develop and uphold standards and create an environment in which every woman and girl can exercise her rights and live up to her full potential.

UN Women is the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
Current Situation

- **Rural women play a significant role in agriculture:** around 1/3 employed women works in agriculture in China and globally. [1]
- **Women have less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets:** women account for only 12.8% of agricultural landholders in the world. [2]
- **Women earn less than men in rural areas:** rural women's income is 56% that of rural men's in China. [3]
- **Women undertake most of unpaid care work:** rural women spend 149 more minutes on unpaid care work than rural men, yet only half of the families mainly have the husband do farm work. [4]
- **Women have limited access to training:** 72% of women have never attended a training, while that for men is 46%. [5]
- **Women have less access to finance:** the proportion of women with loan eligibility is 77% lower than that of men.[6]

![Unpaid care work time of rural and urban residents in 2008 and 2018](image)

Data source:
The Business Case for Supporting Rural Women

Closing the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agrifood systems would:

- increase global GDP by 1% (or nearly USD 1 trillion).\(^5\)
- reduce global food insecurity by about 2%, and reducing the number of food-insecure people by 45 million.\(^6\)

---

UN Women’s Work in Rural WEE in China

- Climate-smart agri-business development
- Women’s access to clean energy in rural green transition
- Women’s leadership and entrepreneurship
- Stakeholders’ capacity development
- Research and policy advocacy
UN Women’s Rural WEE Projects in China

• Working with IFAD, Qinghai Rural Revitalization Bureau, and Qinghai Women’s Federation, supported rural women farmers' access to livelihoods opportunities through training on climate-smart agricultural practices, e-commerce, and access to finance, as well as provision of production resources.

• Through partnership with IFAD, Hunan Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and Hunan Women’s Federation, UN Women replicates the project and the lessons learned from Qinghai to benefit over 320,000 people by 2026 in Hunan Province.

• Working with Qinghai Rural Revitalization Bureau and Qinghai Women’s Federation, UN Women works to increase women’s access to and use of renewable energy to boost agricultural productivity.
Enhanced Knowledge Transfer
UN Women’s Rural WEE Programme in China

Key Results:

- Benefited around **180,000 rural women** in Qinghai and Hunan Provinces, and over 200,000+ underway.
- Supported **6 women-led businesses** in Qinghai, and 20+ more in Hunan underway.
- Delivered gender training to around **1,000 government officials**.
- Increased women’s income, and enhanced women’s voice and leadership in their communities.
What Works?

Provide skills development opportunities for women

Strengthen the organization of women, from individual smallholder farmers

Enhance access to market

Enhance access to finance

Cultivate women’s leadership for community engagement and decision making

Build an enabling environment in the community

Connect women with government, enterprises and social organizations for better service linkage
What Does not Work?

A childcare center named 'Women and children’s family'

The plaque saying 'Compliments between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law' in the office of Village Committee
Gender Mainstreaming is a Process

• Gender mainstreaming is the **process** of assessing the implications for women, men and people with diverse gender identities of **any planned action**—including legislation, policies or programmes—in all areas and at all levels.

• It is a **strategy** for making the concerns and experiences of women, men and people with diverse gender identities an integral dimension of the **design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** of policies and programmes.

• This is done so that all individuals may **benefit equally**—so that inequality is not perpetuated.

"Equality of opportunities and - of outcomes."
Gender Mainstreaming is not “Women Only”

It is not...

- About adding a “women’s component” or a “gender equality component” into an existing activity.
- Only about increasing women’s participation.

It is...

- Bringing the **different experiences, knowledge and interests** of women, men and people with diverse gender identities, on policy and development agendas.
- Considering **rethinking and modifying our development planning**, to ensure all people will benefit equally.
- Working towards **transforming social and institutional structures** for gender equality.
From Theory to Practice:
Gender-sensitive data collection under Hunan project

- Ask women questions directly.
- No other family members, village officials, nor neighbors are not allowed in the interview room.
- Ensure women and other marginalized groups are interviewed in a private environment with a sense of security.
- The interviewees are selected from different income and social groups.
Thank you

jinyi.wang@unwomen.org
UN Women China