



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Feed the Future is the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative. With a focus on smallholder farmers, particularly women, Feed the Future supports partner countries in developing their own agriculture sectors to generate opportunities for economic growth and trade, which can help reduce poverty and hunger. Feed the Future's strategy promotes activities that strengthen women's economic empowerment to reduce poverty, promote global stability and improve household nutrition and well-being.

Women play a vital role in advancing agricultural development, food security and nutritional outcomes. They participate in all aspects of rural life, including paid employment, trade and marketing, as well as raising crops and animals, collecting water and wood for fuel and caring for family members. But women face multiple constraints in many of the activities they pursue that limit their productivity. Relative to men, women tend to own less land, have limited ability to hire labor, and have impeded access to credit, extension and other training services.

Investing in Women

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has stated that closing this "gender gap" could have a measurable impact on agricultural output in the developing world. The benefits can also improve society as a whole—studies show that women are more likely than men to reinvest back into their household to support the family's nutritional needs, healthcare and school fees.

Drawing from best practices gathered from across the U.S. Government and the international community, Feed the Future investments promote women's leadership in agriculture, foster policy changes that increase women's land ownership and strengthen their access to financial services. Through the initiative, women farmers are provided training and opportunities to adopt new agricultural technologies in order to increase their productivity, reduce unpaid work and improve their families' nutritional status.



This Nepalese ginger farmer benefitted from a Feed the Future project that works with farmers and other producers to push a high-quality product to market and increase uptake. Credit: USAID

Did You Know?

- Women make up a significant proportion of the agricultural labor force in developing countries -- up to **50 percent** in sub-Saharan Africa
- Women farmers are less productive than men due to **less access** to land, farming technologies, fertilizer, credit and training
- If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase farm yields by **20-30 percent**
- This increase in agricultural output could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by up to **150 million**

Measuring Gender Equality

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is critical to ensuring sustainable development and food security. To maintain accountability and measure progress, Feed the Future's monitoring and evaluation system comprehensively tracks how programs have impacted women and men, as well as the dynamics between them.

To measure returns on investments in women in agriculture, Feed the Future partnered with the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to develop the **Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)**, which was launched in February 2012. This innovative and rigorous tool tracks rural women's roles and engagement in agricultural activities relative to men's in: 1) decisions over agricultural production, 2) access to and decision-making power over assets and resources, 3) control over use of income, 4) leadership roles within the community, and 5) time use.

The first-ever WEAI baseline data report was released in May 2014, which provides an overview of the status of women in agriculture in Feed the Future focus countries and the relevant analysis to help identify specific areas to address and strengthen.

The Path to Transformational Change

To bring about robust agricultural growth and reduce global undernutrition, Feed the Future is committed to working with host countries to improve the ability of women farmers to reach their full agricultural productive capacity. This requires a systematic, collaborative effort built on impact evaluations, best practices and pilot programs, using innovative and bold approaches for better integration of women into agricultural value chains. Feed the Future is working on creative solutions that will help women and their families attain long-term food security for happier, healthier lives.



Stella Malangu, a member of the rice winnowing technology design group Jitambue in Morogoro, Tanzania, smiles after using the prototype she helped design and build. Credit: Giselle Aris/Land O'Lakes International Development

Project Highlight: Tanzania

In Tanzania, the U.S. Government and Land O'Lakes International Development, in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Development Lab, are working with smallholder farmers of both genders to develop technologies that save time and labor. The program, in close coordination with other Feed the Future projects in southern Tanzania, helps farmers address the constraints they face.

The project offers technology design training to smallholder farmer groups in the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania. Trainees, the majority of whom are women, develop technology prototypes in group settings and receive in-depth coaching from MIT trainers. The trainings result in technologies that help alleviate time and labor burdens, encourage community-centered problem-solving and provide an opportunity for men and women to work together. Women's empowerment is a community-wide endeavor, with men's active involvement and support being a critical factor. The technologies that farmers develop are transforming women-only agricultural tasks into tasks in which husbands and wives work together and produce a greater overall benefit for themselves and their families.