Untapped Markets: Reaching Women Smallholder Customers
ABOUT FEED THE FUTURE PARTNERING FOR INNOVATION

Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation is a USAID-funded program that helps the private sector to scale and market agricultural technologies for smallholder farmers through investing in technology commercialization and knowledge exchange. The program also facilitates partnerships between USAID Missions and the private sector and provides business acceleration tools and services.

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How to use this guide

This is an unofficial companion guide to *The Untapped Market for Agricultural Innovations in Emerging Economies: A practical workbook to help innovators reach women smallholder farmers*, produced by Securing Water for Food: A Grand Challenge for Development and supplemented by gender guidance resources developed by Powering Agriculture: An Energy Grand Challenge for Development.*

This guide is for small- and medium-sized companies operating in smallholder farmer markets that are looking to better understand how to incorporate women – an often-overlooked market segment – into their operations as customers, suppliers, and employees. Each section of this guide provides a topic outline and is accompanied by a link to the relevant section of the full report.

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Get an overview of the topic  

**Learn**  
- How to build a customer profile  
- How to evaluate your competitive position

In This Section

A basic questionnaire is provided to develop customer profiles of women smallholders.

Survey women customers, or potential customers, to develop one or more profiles.

Validate these profiles using secondary data such as reports, other studies, interviews.

Follow the link to the associated section of the full report

Click here to learn more
Why target women consumers?

• Women play a major role in food production, preparation, and sales and are involved in household spending discussions and for and informal commercial activity.
• Women are at least half of the agricultural labor force.
• Optimal product design may differ for men and women.
• Women-owned enterprises are the fastest growing cohort of enterprises.

Isn’t selling to women consumers the same as selling to men?

• Marketing to women sometimes requires different strategies.
• Women may not purchase an item but could still strongly influence a purchase decision.
• Items that women buy, and where they buy, may differ from men.
In this guide, you will find:

- Survey summaries of agtech companies and women smallholder farmers
- Tools to profile women customers to better tailor your market outreach
- Ways to evaluate your competitive position in the market
- Strategies for conducting market research
- Guidance on how to establish your product in the missing market
- Strategies to retain and grow the missing market
- How to determine whether the benefits of selling to the missing market are worth the cost
What the numbers say

Women smallholder farmers…
- 85 percent want better technologies to reduce labor and improve production
- More than 60 percent say their husbands are the key decision maker
- More than 90 percent say agriculture is their primary income source
- 30 percent of women make their own choices on how they spend their income
- Water, pests, and soil are the top three challenges to women farmers

Agriculture innovators working in emerging markets…
- Nearly 90 percent do not have a targeted sales strategy for women, while more than half acknowledge that women are up to half of their customer base.
- Perceived barriers include lack of income, access to finance, and opportunities to communicate with women
- Doorstep marketing, women’s organizations, and in-field demos are the current strategies used by companies with targeted marketing to women
Customer profiling to better target women

Learn

• How to build a customer profile
• How to evaluate your competitive position

In This Section

Develop customer profiles of women smallholders

Survey women customers, or potential customers, to develop one or more profiles

Validate these profiles using secondary data such as reports, other studies, and interviews

Click here to learn more

Bonus tool! Improve your marketing.
Where do you rank among the competition?

Learn

• *Is your product a differentiator or a cost leader in a niche market?*
• *What are your competitive advantages?*
• *Is your product positioned well in the market?*

In This Section

How to determine how your product compares to others in the market and evaluate your competitive position.
How to reach your targeted market

Learn

- What is a channel and how can you build one?
- How to generate market demand

In This Section

Finding key market influencers
Evaluate and choose channel partners to establish your product in a market
The role of community influencers, including men
Disseminating product information
What is your product’s story?
How to increase product awareness
Cost considerations

Click here to learn more
Market acquisition: making the sale

Learn

- How to use channels and market influencers to sell to early adopters

In This Section

What are the attributes of an early adopter?
Using demonstrations to make those first sales
Finding local sales agents for women-to-women sales
Product affordability: credit, rent/lease, layaway, group sales
Retaining and growing your market

**Learn**

- How to ensure product performance and success

**In This Section**

- After-sales support and training
- Customer service
- Customer feedback and measuring satisfaction, including designing and conducting customer surveys, and integrating iterative feedback
- Success stories and promotion
- Building relationships with customers and communities

Click here to learn more
Access to financing

Learn

• How to overcome challenges to women obtaining financing

In This Section

Why is it more difficult for women to get financing?
Best practices for access to financial services for women
Financing options

Click here to learn more

Bonus resource! Learn more about smallholder financing.
Integrating gender into your human resources decisions

Learn

• Why and how to recruit and retain women employees

In This Section

Return on investment of hiring women staff in product development, marketing, sales, and management

Workforce planning: what skills are required and how to include women in the process

Questions to ask when recruiting women

Training and empowerment

Measuring results
What will it cost?

You should ask yourself whether the cost of reaching women farmers can be earned back over time, and if so, how long. It is in this context that we recommend that you carry out a quick desk-based cost-benefit analysis on the approximate unit cost of acquisition of one woman customer while taking into consideration the total cost spent on marketing and sales. Check if the investment results in projected increased revenues and adoption of your innovation. While it may appear difficult or impossible to collect every cost and benefit, a company considering targeting a new market segment must do this to completely evaluate a serious change in its operations.

Keep in mind the following points while carrying out a cost-benefit analysis:

- Determine if the population in the selected geography can afford your product at current income levels. Check for annual household incomes in the region through secondary research.
- Focusing on underserved markets where the need for your innovation is validated provides a better cost-benefit ratio for early stage innovators. On the other hand, markets where you have to raise awareness and there is no previous evidence of agtech use may require greater investment of time and effort to spur adoption.
Conclusion

As we have seen in this guide, a common “missing market” of women as consumers and clients of agriculture goods and services, including farmers, entrepreneurs, household heads or members, and others involved in purchasing decisions may present a viable market opportunity for commercial companies offering technologies and value added services in smallholder farmer markets. When considering women as a market segment, it is important to walk through the steps outlined in this guide and the accompanying workbooks. Recognizing and tackling gender in technology design, marketing, and sales makes good social and business sense to expand sales to more customers and building brand or product loyalty for repeat sales.

This guide should help you understand how to build a framework for targeting the “missing market” and how to market your products and services to ensure uptake. It also includes what parallel messaging is needed for other market segments (men, youth, etc.) for building demand among women in smallholder settings.

The resources that accompany this guide are:

The Untapped Market for Agricultural Innovations in Emerging Economies: A practical workbook to help innovators reach women smallholder farmers. Published by Securing Water for Food. [http://securingwaterforfood.org/resources](http://securingwaterforfood.org/resources)
