

Gender Roles in Agriculture

Gender Roles in Agriculture – Study Notes

1. Overview

- **Definition:** Gender roles refer to the socially constructed expectations, responsibilities, and behaviors assigned to men and women in a given context.
- **Relevance to agriculture:** These roles shape who farms, what tasks they perform, how resources are accessed, and who benefits from agricultural development.

2. Historical Context

Period	Typical Gender Division	Key Drivers
Pre-industrial societies	Women: seed selection, processing, household food security; Men: ploughing, livestock, market sales	Physical strength requirements, cultural norms, division of labor for survival
Colonial/early modern era	Introduction of cash-crop economies; men often directed to export crops, women to subsistence production	Colonial policies, land tenure changes, wage-labour demand
Late 20th-21st century	Increasing diversification: women active in horticulture, livestock, agro-processing; men still dominate mechanized field work	Technological change, migration, policy reforms, NGOs promoting gender equity

3. Current Gender Distribution in Agriculture (Global Snapshot)

Activity	Women's Share	Men's Share	Typical Regions
Small-holder crop production (food crops)	40-50% of labor	50-60%	Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia
Horticulture & vegetable production	55-70%	30-45%	Latin America, East Africa

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Activity	Women's Share	Men's Share	Typical Regions
Livestock management	30-45% (often in small ruminants)	55-70%	Worldwide
Agricultural extension & advisory services	<25%	>75%	Most developing countries
Access to formal credit & land titles	<30%	>70%	Global trend

(Data sources: FAO "Gender in Agriculture" reports, World Bank gender statistics, IFAD surveys)

4. Key Dimensions of Gender Roles

4.1 Labor Allocation

- **Field work:** Men dominate mechanized tasks (ploughing, harvesting with machinery).
- **Post-harvest:** Women handle sorting, processing, storage, and marketing of many crops, especially perishable goods.

4.2 Decision-Making

- **Household level:** Women often decide on food consumption and nutrition; men typically decide on cash-crop sales.
- **Community level:** Men dominate farmer groups, cooperatives, and extension committees, limiting women's voice in collective decisions.

4.3 Access to Resources

Resource	Typical Gender Gap	Consequences
Land ownership	Women hold 13% of titled land globally	Lower investment, reduced collateral for credit
Credit & finance	Women receive 20-30% of agricultural loans	Constraints on purchasing inputs, technology
Extension services	Women attend <25% of training sessions	Knowledge gaps, slower adoption of innovations

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Resource	Typical Gender Gap	Consequences
Inputs (seeds, fertilizer)	Women acquire 30-40% of inputs	Lower yields, limited crop diversification

4.4 Technology & Mechanization

- **Machinery access:** Often restricted to men due to cultural norms and physical strength stereotypes.
 - **ICT tools:** Mobile-based market information is increasingly reaching women, but literacy and phone ownership gaps remain.
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5. Impacts of Gendered Roles

Impact Area	Positive (when women are empowered)	Negative (when gaps persist)
Productivity		