



SECTORAL BRIEF

AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RESILIENCE BUILDING IN KENYA



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Introduction

This policy brief is part of the Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP), which assesses the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Kenya based on recently produced reports and resources. The assessment aims to strengthen national understanding and data on advancing international, regional and national commitments to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). As the primary source of evidence-driven advocacy and programming, the CGEP provides insights to county and national stakeholders, development partners, the European Union, and the UN System to advance gains and overcome challenges at the county and national levels.

Furthermore, the gender analysis is guided by the transformative and rights-based gender equality and women's empowerment approach embodied in the core European Union values on human rights and reinforced by the new EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III). The framework recognises that gender equality is crucial in promoting democracy, good governance and sustainable development.

As a result, all EU policies and actions in Kenya contribute to the dual goal of advancing gender equality and accelerating progress toward Kenya's SDG goals and targets. Gender analysis is a starting point for gender mainstreaming and integrating gender equality and inclusion perspectives into the EU programming processes, policies, actions and dialogues.

This policy brief serves as a strategic guide for programmes and policies aimed at advancing and strengthening Kenya's integration of gender equality and women's empowerment across key stakeholders: The Government of Kenya (Ministries, Departments, Agencies [MDAs] and structures of governance: national, county and communities); development partners including the private sector and the United Nations (UN) agencies. This ensures that actions aimed at closing gender gaps and ending discrimination are informed by context-specific analysis that reflects the different realities, needs and challenges of men, women, boys and girls in all their diversity.

Background and context

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Kenyan economy and continues to be a key economic driver of development despite its vulnerability to the effects of climate variability.

FROM 2013 TO 2017, AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTED AN AVERAGE

21.9%
OF THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)



Agriculture also accounts for Kenya's largest exports (up to 65 percent in 2017).¹

Kenyan households engaged in agriculture contributed to a

36.1%
REDUCTION IN POVERTY IN 2015/16, FROM

46.6% IN 2005/06



Rural poverty also declined to 38.8 per cent (from 50.5 per cent) in the same period.² As the largest source of income for rural households, agriculture supports over 80 per cent of the rural population. It provides about 75 per cent of total employment,³

with 84 per cent of these rural households engaged in livestock rearing.

WOMEN ACCOUNT FOR APPROXIMATELY

75% 

OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE

in small-scale agriculture⁴ in Kenya compared to

51% 
OF MEN.⁵

In 2018, wage employment in agriculture increased to 37 per cent from 23 per cent in 2010.

Rigid gender norms that dictate roles in agriculture highlight the disparities between women and men. Women have less access to resources, including land, finance, inputs and technologies, extension services and marketing facilities.⁶ Women have less control over production, management and marketing decision-making due to male dominance of agricultural output. Men use more productive land to cultivate high-value cash crops, constraining women's crop choice.

Despite women's key role and contribution to agriculture and food security, only 10 per cent of women have land titles.⁷ According to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) 2022 Key Indicator Report, 25 per cent of women

1 World Bank. 2019. Kenya Economic Update: Transforming Agricultural Productivity to Achieve Food Security for All. Accessed <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-economic-update-transforming-agricultural-productivity-to-achieve-food-security-for-all>

2 World Bank Group. 2019. Kenya Economic Update: Unbundling the Slack in Private Sector Investment. Transforming Agriculture Sector Productivity and Linkages to Poverty Reduction. Accessed <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/820861554470832579/pdf/Kenya-Economic-Update-Unbundling-the-Slack-in-Private-Sector-Investment-Transforming-Agriculture-Sector-Productivity-and-Linkages-to-Poverty-Reduction.pdf>

3 World Bank. 2019. Kenya Economic Update: Transforming Agricultural Productivity to Achieve Food Security for All. Accessed <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-economic-update-transforming-agricultural-productivity-to-achieve-food-security-for-all>

4 Majority of farming in Kenya is primarily small-scale, with about 75 per cent of total agricultural output produced on rain-fed averaging 0.3 to 3.0 hectares in size. Key cash crops include tea, coffee and horticulture crops, which comprise 90 per cent of foreign exchange earnings from agricultural products.

5 UNDP – Kenya, 2021

6 Rose Ingutia and John Sumelius (2022). *Do farmer groups improve the situation of women in agriculture in rural Kenya?* International Food and Agribusiness Management Review Volume 25, Issue 1, 2022; DOI: 10.22434/IFAMR2020.0142.

7 Kenya Land Alliance. 2018. About The Women Land Rights Project. https://kenyalandalliance.or.ke/index.php/welcome/women_land_property_rights

own agricultural land, with 3 per cent owning it independently. Notably,

62%
OF WOMEN LACK TITLE DEEDS FOR THEIR AGRICULTURAL LAND, WHILE

13%
HAVE TITLE DEEDS WITH THEIR NAME

Without secure land rights, women's participation in and benefit from land use, such as agriculture, is inhibited even though women comprise the greater majority of the agricultural labour force. Hence, being landless or having low land ownership means that women cannot access credit and financing to boost their agricultural production. It is estimated

Findings and Current Situation

The delineation of agriculture compounds the situation as a function of the county government, necessitating coordination and cooperation between the national and county governments through the Intergovernmental Relations Act 2012. According to the 2022 KDHS Key Indicator Report, 25 per cent of women own agricultural land, including 3 per cent who own agricultural land alone. Sixty-two per cent of women do not have a title/deed for the agricultural land they own and 13 per cent who own agricultural land have a title/deed with their name on it. Thus, landlessness or low land ownership means women cannot access credit and financing to boost their agricultural production. From 2014 to 2018, it is estimated that only 10 per cent of agricultural credit benefited women.¹⁰ These disparities result in about 20-30 per cent yield gaps between male and female-managed enterprises.

that from 2014 -2018, only 10 per cent of agricultural credit benefited women, resulting in yield gaps of about 20-30 per cent between male and female-managed enterprises.⁸ These gender disparities have contributed to the challenges faced by women in agriculture. The Ministry for Agriculture also has limited specific budget allocations for gender mainstreaming. As such, development partners fund most women-related interventions.

Still, the Government is in the process of incorporating gender mainstreaming into agriculture through its ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries has a Gender Unit that coordinates the Ministry's gender mainstreaming activities and ensures that gender is integrated into all interventions, procedures, and processes. Further, the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2026 (KCSAS) considers women, youth, and vulnerable groups to be critical actors in meeting the objectives.⁹ Additionally, the 2013 gender policy in agriculture is under review, pending adoption.

With the impact of climate change, these barriers will further constrain women's ability to adapt and exacerbate the gender inequalities in agriculture. The persistent undermining of women's equal rights in agriculture and land ownership would make them and their families more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Women are mainly responsible for the well-being and food security of the family. When food security is threatened by extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, the burden of sustaining the family falls disproportionately on women and girls. Improving women farmers' capacity to ensure their households' resilience to livelihood shocks and food security crises resulting from climate change events will be vital for sustaining the adaptive capacity of the agricultural sector in Kenya. Furthermore, strengthening resilience and adaptation to climate impacts on agriculture can boost Kenya's green growth.

8 Ibid.

9 Government of Kenya (2017). Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2026 (KCSAS)

10 Ibid.

Men are the main actors in controlling and managing environmental and natural resources, including wildlife and forests.¹¹ Aside from land access, women depend highly on local natural resources for their livelihood. Women charged with securing water, food and fuel for cooking and heating face the greatest challenges. Women also experience

unequal access to natural resources and decision-making processes over the natural resources, with limited mobility in rural areas. Access to and control over environmental resources is gender biased. Managing renewable and non-renewable natural resources such as forests, wildlife, minerals and natural gas are domains of men.

Conclusions

Despite progress towards achieving food security for all Kenyans, real agricultural value-added has declined relative to levels attained in 2006 due to weather-related shocks, the prevalence of pests/diseases, and dwindling knowledge delivery systems, such as the lack of extension services for adopting modern technology.¹² The Government should increase the amount of land under irrigation

and invest in agricultural water management to counter climate change's effects and encourage participation in agriculture. The Government should provide more training for small-scale women farmers on handling pests and diseases and using fertilizer to increase productivity. Women also lack access to financing, which could improve their agricultural productivity.¹³

Recommendations for the Government of Kenya

- a. Fast-track the adoption of the reviewed gender policy in agriculture and finance the operationalization of the priority sectors through multilateral partnerships.
- b. Through multi-stakeholder consultation, develop a gender strategy with gender indicators and targets for a climate-smart and resilient agricultural sector with clearly spelled monitoring and evaluation systems. The gender-specific indicators need to constitute the Government of Kenya's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement and the evaluation of the Country's progress on the National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022).
- c. Support civil society organizations to lead sustainable approaches that privilege local ecosystems, Indigenous knowledge and women's leadership as part of institutionalising gender-just transition into agriculture.
- d. Support programmes that advance skills development/upskill women, young entrepreneurs and aspiring start-ups who can take advantage of entrepreneurship opportunities that promote environmental sustainability in agriculture, food production, tourism, crafts, recycling, etc.
- e. Increase access to agricultural investments and financing to enable more women to own land and participate in agriculture as an economic activity and for household use. Training and access to fertilizer should also be implemented so that more people can engage in sustainable agricultural production. The Government should also encourage small-scale women farmers to join farmer associations to foster inclusion and boost their productivity and income.

11 Republic of Kenya (2019). *National policy on Gender and Development*. Sessional Paper No. 02 of 2019

12 World Bank. 2019. Kenya Economic Update: Transforming Agricultural Productivity to Achieve Food Security for All. Accessed <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-economic-update-transforming-agricultural-productivity-to-achieve-food-security-for-all>

13 Food and Agriculture Organization. 2021. Evaluation of the project "Increasing smallholder productivity and profitability." Accessed <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5df03a00-fe71-4fc3-9f56-81b0e7295e95/content>

Recommendations for Other Stakeholders and Partners

- a. Support collaboration with civil society and gender programmes in academic institutions to strengthen the capacity to mainstream gender in agriculture, fisheries, natural resources management and green and blue economies.
- b. Support training and capacity building on mainstreaming gender, including gender budgeting in climate-smart and the resilient agricultural sector at the regional, national and county-level governance.
- c. Establish a networking, exchange and coordination mechanism on gender and climate change among the responsible Ministries and Departments and their counterparts at the regional and county levels. Include gender mainstreaming in the performance indicators of the responsible Ministries, Departments and Agencies and county units.

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