



Climate change, policy change

Five policy lessons to support women farmers in a changing climate

 This brief highlights policy lessons on providing support to women farmers, and offers guidelines for crafting gender-responsive climate policies at global and national levels.

Key messages

- New technologies must be appropriate to women's resources and demands.
- Extension and climate information services need to serve women and men.
- Institutions must address women's priorities.
- Women's innovation processes need to be recognized and supported.
- Policy-making processes must include women's voices.

The problem

Climate change demands new approaches to agriculture: farmers' practices will need to change to adapt to and mitigate the effects of changing conditions. Addressing gender inequality is key to ensuring this outcome. Agriculture is a fundamental part of women's livelihoods globally, most markedly in least developed countries, where four-fifths of economically active women report agriculture as their primary economic activity¹. More women are moving into agriculture as men move elsewhere for seasonal or paid labor. Yet women farmers have less access to inputs and resources that could improve their farming and meet climate change challenges². Policies, institutions and services aimed at helping farmers develop approaches to tackle climate change will need to produce results for men *and* women farmers. This brief provides five policy lessons to support this process, based on evidence from research in low- and middle-income countries.

¹ Doss C. 2011. *If women hold up half the sky, how much of the world's food do they produce?* ESA Working Paper No. 11-04. Rome: Agricultural Development Economic Division, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1MDIrgW>

² [FAO] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2011. *The state of food and agriculture 2010–2011. Women in agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development.* Rome: FAO. Available at: <http://bit.ly/LL9mfR>

Evidence and experience

New technologies and agricultural practices can help farmers meet the challenges of climate change. However, women and men often have different on-farm responsibilities and do not always have equal access to assets, time and resources (e.g. secure access to land, water, information or finances) that enable them to take advantage of new technologies or practices and participate in community-based climate adaptation practices³.

Women tend to have less access to formal agricultural extension services because they are not always seen as farmers. For example, fewer women attend community extension meetings or visit demonstration plots⁴. Women also tend to have less access to radio, mobile phones and other media, and access information in different ways than men. Using multiple channels to reach women may be more effective, e.g. radio, extension events, SMS, voice messages, community groups, health clinics and schools⁵. Women may also need different information than men because of their different responsibilities, needs, interests and constraints.

Institutions involved in climate change adaptation and mitigation need to address the different concerns of women and men. This may include broadening the focus of food security activities beyond agricultural productivity to include income-generation activities, financial services and strengthening

community adaptation capacity. Women's community-based organizations (CBOs) can be effective providers of information and services, filling the gap between services that formal organizations provide and the issues that women prioritize.

Given space and opportunity, women can be effective innovators in addressing climate challenges – identifying and designing new technologies and adapting existing ones to meet their needs. But capacity to innovate alone is not enough; an enabling environment must support women's innovation processes by providing access to facilities, services and incentives. For example, as the effects of climate change intensify, rural markets will expand for products and services that support climate resilience. Understanding and recognizing women's participation in value chains and ensuring the private sector addresses gender inequalities in market access and climate change insurance initiatives are important.

Women's voices are not always evident in decision-making processes in agriculture. When women are present, they tend to form a minority within leadership and in consultative processes. National policies and laws do not always translate well to the local level for reasons of discriminatory socio-cultural norms and laws, low visibility of women's work, limits on education and income, and caregiving responsibilities. Increasing women's voices at all levels of policy-making can lead to a more equitable distribution of the benefits and costs of climate change policies and programs, while improving their efficacy and sustainability.

Gender-responsive climate policy

Policy needs to ensure women and men benefit from climate policy implementation, addressing women's aspirations and priorities specifically, and developed through processes that listen to women's voices and incorporate women's contributions along with those of men.

Gender equality should be addressed in climate change policy and programming at all levels. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

3 Behrman JA, Bryan E and Goh A. 2014. Gender, climate change, and group-based approaches to adaptation. In: Ringler C, Quisumbing AR, Bryan E, Meinzen-Dick R, eds. *Enhancing Women's Assets to Manage Risk under Climate Change: Potential for Group-based Approaches*. Climate Change, Collective Action and Women's Assets. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute. 3–8.

4 [IFPRI] World Bank, International Food Policy Research Institute. 2010. *Gender and Governance in Rural Services: Insights from India, Ghana, and Ethiopia*. Washington, DC: World Bank; International Food Policy Research Institute.

5 Tall A, Kristjanson P, Chaudhury M, McKune S and Zougmore R. 2014. *Who gets the information? Gender, power and equity considerations in the design of climate services for farmers*. CCAFS Working Paper No. 89. Copenhagen: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). Available at: <http://bit.ly/1YLZtzZ>

Policy lessons

- 1. New technologies should be appropriate to women's resources and demands.** Women and men have different resources, constraints and priorities. Agricultural interventions to help farmers adapt to climate change must be appropriate to these resources and demands.
- 2. Extension and climate information services need to serve women and men.** Women and men often have different information needs, channels of communication, and access to information and extension services. Extension and climate services need to be adapted to their specific needs.
- 3. Institutions must address women's priorities.** Institutions supporting farmers to improve their food security under climate change need to address broader priorities beyond agriculture that are relevant to the concerns of both men and women. Cooperation among ministries and partnerships with civil society, universities and CBOs may have greater reach in addressing women's priorities.
- 4. Women's innovation processes need to be recognized and supported.** Women farmers need to be recognized as effective innovators with specific priorities and interests. They should be partners in identifying and designing appropriate labor-saving tools.
- 5. Policy-making processes must include women's voices.** Agricultural policy, law and decision-making processes at all levels – from community groups to international processes – will be more effective and relevant if they include both women and men.

Change (UNFCCC) and its subsidiary processes and working groups can and should lead by example to ensure that women are represented and heard at the very top of the international climate policy process. Systems need to go beyond ensuring adequate numerical representation of women towards mechanisms for raising the voice and credibility of women in policy processes. For example, the UNFCCC should institutionalize 'he for she' mechanisms, to encourage men to actively promote women's voices.

Key policy areas

Gender considerations should be incorporated into at least three key areas of climate change policies and programs:

- Inclusion of gender dimensions as part of the **qualifying criteria** for accessing international funding channels (such as REDD+, Green Climate Fund, Clean Development Mechanism, Adaptation Fund and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions). Organizations and countries applying for such funds should be asked to identify how programs and interventions will affect women, and how they will ensure that interventions will benefit women as well as men.
- **Needs assessments** that explicitly distinguish between women's and men's priorities and opportunities should inform policy and program design. This should be a prerequisite for any national policy and program that is carried out under the auspices of UNFCCC-mediated processes.
- Gender indicators should be incorporated into the **monitoring and assessment** of program implementation and impacts. These need to be indicators of real change – increased control of productive assets, participation in decision making, knowledge, awareness, empowerment and improved economic status for women and men. Gender indicators need to go beyond measuring the representation of women in climate change processes – women need to be actively involved in defining and monitoring implementation and impacts.

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Photo by

Tri Saputro for Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
A Lubuk Beringin villager walks home from the forest at Lubuk Beringin village, Bungo district, Jambi province, Indonesia.

This brief is number 3 in a set of Gender Climate Briefs.
See the full set here: CIFOR.org/gender-climate



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