



Briefing note

March 2021

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is leading international efforts in the fight against hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. It helps developing countries and countries in transition to modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices to achieve good nutrition for all. FAO Lebanon Programme is aligned with FAO's global Strategic Objectives. Lebanon was among the first countries to benefit from a FAO Country Office to strengthen the Organization's programmes on the ground. Established in 1977, the Office seeks to promote harmonious and sustainable development of the agricultural sector along with the national agricultural policy, in consultation with relevant ministerial departments.

Role of women in agriculture in Lebanon

Sector context



The role of women in agriculture in Lebanon is still not well recognized due to limited sex-disaggregated statistics and the lack of gender analysis in the sector. However, it is certain that women in rural areas are major contributors to this sector. They account for up to 43 percent of the agricultural work force. They usually spend long hours performing labor-intensive and time-consuming manual agricultural tasks, such as sowing, weeding, harvesting and processing. They are also responsible for a major part of livestock production activities. Some estimates indicate that, in certain labor-intensive agricultural sectors (e.g. tobacco growing) and household-based production activities, women actually constitute the absolute majority.

Challenges in Lebanon



The gender gap in Lebanon is very pronounced in the fields of economic participation and opportunity. Lebanon ranked 145th out of 153 countries according to the Global Gender Gap Index 2020 released by the World Economic Forum. Women's disproportionate shouldering of unpaid care work constitutes the root cause of their economic and social disempowerment.

Many women in rural areas are not aware of their basic rights. Since they are mainly involved in informal, part-time or invisible work, they are often financially and socially ignored, which leads to an increase in women's unpaid labour work and other challenges, such as the lack of social protection.

Available data and studies suggest that women involved in agriculture are less likely than men to own land, and are generally involved in smaller-scale agricultural work. Concurrently, they have less access to productive inputs, finance, technologies, markets and training and extension services responding to their specific needs

In 2010, only 9 percent of farms were headed and operated by women and only 5 percent of total agricultural areas were cultivated by women. Gender gaps are also prevalent in women's participation in the design of legislations and programmes related to rural areas, including agricultural wages since women often earn two-thirds to half of the wages earned by men.



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FAO interventions, response and impact



FAO supports the collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in the agro-food sector in order to improve the understanding about gender in agriculture and design proper interventions based on identified needs and economic opportunities for women.

FAO raises awareness on gender equality and builds the capacities of rural communities, farmers' organizations, partner institutions and its own staff.

Through various recent, current and upcoming projects, FAO implements many interventions aiming at empowering women economically. Hundreds of women representing more than 260 women cooperatives, associations or informal groups are enrolled in Cooperative Business Schools (CBS), where they are provided with a rich training curriculum allowing them to design a business plan and manage a viable and sustainable small-scale, income-generating activity in the agro-food sector. One hundred and fifty women groups will be further supported through cash-based transfers or in kind and labor assistance, enabling them to run and sustain their business.

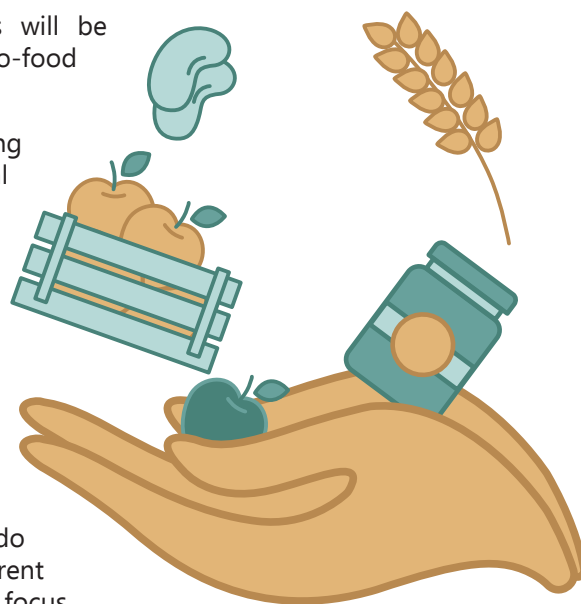
Moreover, women farmers, women-led cooperatives and MSMEs will be provided with technical support for the development of a targeted agro-food value chain with high potential for job creation for women.

In the framework of emergency responses and resilience-building interventions, women are considered a priority to receive agricultural inputs or agricultural productive small-scale assets to support their livelihood and food security in the context of the ongoing economic and financial crises.

FAO has addressed gender disparities in the agricultural technical education system at the levels of policies, institutions, programmes, data, enrollment, curricula and placement.

FAO is building partnerships and coordination mechanisms with national and international stakeholders on women in agriculture-focused projects.

Success stories of women entrepreneurs and women cooperatives do exist and are good examples to show the way forward. With the current crisis, building back the economy will require that agriculture be in focus again and that women not be left behind any longer.



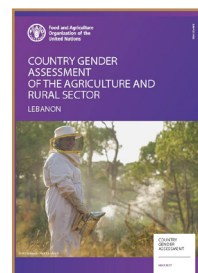
Related videos and publications



[Beekeeping for women empowerment](#)



[Support to women's cooperatives and associations in the agri-food sector in Lebanon](#)



[Country Gender Assessment of the Agriculture and Rural Sector](#)



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