



RESOURCE

The Role of Women in Agriculture

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Description / Abstract

Agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. But the sector is underperforming in many countries in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity. In this paper we draw on the available empirical evidence to study in which areas and to what degree women participate in agriculture. Aggregate data shows that women comprise about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force globally and in developing countries. But this figure masks considerable variation across regions and within countries according to age and social class. Time use surveys, which are more comprehensive but typically not nationally representative, add further insight into the substantial heterogeneity among countries and within countries in women's contribution to agriculture. This paper re-affirms that women make essential contributions to agriculture and rural enterprises across the developing world. But there is much diversity in women's roles and over-generalization undermines policy relevance and planning. The context is important and policies must be based on sound data and gender analysis.

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