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“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

Empowering Rural Women: A Solution to End Hunger

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Abstract

According to FAO's data, about 795 million people in the world today are undernourished and the majority of these live in developing countries where women constitute almost half (on average, 43 %) of the agricultural labour force (FAO 2011). Based on FAO report (2011) the agricultural sector is underperforming in these economies and among the reasons is that rural women do not have equal access to the resources they need to be more productive. Giving them the same access as men to agricultural resources and services, women could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent.

Rural women are farmers, income earners, entrepreneurs, managers of natural resources and care takers for their households. Empowering them brings gains to society at large, not to mention increasing agricultural production, promoting food security and nutrition and boosting the economy.

FAO is working to foster an environment (global, national and community level) that promotes rural women's empowerment with a view to ensuring food security and nutrition. This presentation will show how FAO is providing such an environment at the global level through the implementation of Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (GVTs). At national level, the presentation will show how FAO is collecting and analysing country level data on land. At the community level, it will show how FAO is working to empower rural women and men by offering platforms to access information and voice their needs.

Another growing area of work that promotes women's empowerment is on Social Protection Systems. The presentation will illustrate how FAO is unleashing rural women's opportunities through social protection systems, in order to enhance their access to decent work, control of income, ownership of productive assets, and participation in social networks. FAO's work demonstrates that social protection programmes — such as cash transfers, public works, asset transfers, and micro insurance schemes, if well implemented, have a great potential for fostering rural women's economic empowerment and provide a viable solution to end hunger, especially if they are complemented by other livelihood interventions.

Keywords: Country data, empowerment, food security