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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Gender and Bovine Livestock Production in Latin America: The Status Quo

NATALIA TRIANA-ANGEL, STEFAN BURKART

International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Trop. Forages Program, Colombia

Abstract

Bovine livestock production is a vital cultural and economic activity across Latin America and fundamental for the survival of rural households in developing regions. While both men and women perform crucial activities, women's contributions are still profoundly undervalued. Such overshadowing results from deeply rooted gender stereotypes and constricting family roles that determine both the division of labour and the productivity of dual-purpose producing farms. Gender inequity in the region, scholars state, prevents the sustained economic growth of livestock units and the possible impacts of new technologies and public policies, furthering conditions of poverty and disparity. This literature review summarises the contributions on gender and the bovine livestock sector in Latin America. We emphasise three salient perspectives and their respective inputs. First, we review value-chain studies and their role in tracking action nodes of both men and women. We focus on how such approaches underscore female participation in stages of manufacturing and commercialisation of milk byproducts in Central America. Second, we delve into familiarist approaches of household duties and responsibilities along gender lines. This perspective has served the vital purpose of understanding heritage, generational transference and continuity of bovine livestock activities in the midst of growing foreign-markets within the Pampean region. Thirdly, we look into more recent research on breeding and forage technologies and how they grasp the importance gender relations have in the appropriate implementation of silvopastoral systems, animal genetic improvement and mitigation strategies, especially in Colombia and Costa Rica. Such studies bring to light the different areas where women and men exert differential influence, underline the gendered impact of extreme weather events and reflect on women's potential as agents of change in the advent of climate change. Within the richness of the existing literature we were also able to identify the urgent need of new lines of research, as the impact armed conflicts, displacement and dispossession have had in cattle and dairy production in Latin American countries at war over the course of the twentieth century. Above all we strive to find connecting points across regions, research bottlenecks, and possible subject matters for further inquiry.

Keywords: Climate change, dual purpose value-chain, gender, livestock, mitigation