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Perceptions of women in agri-food supply chains under climate change

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Abstract

Women's roles in agri-food supply chains are essential as they sustain livelihoods, enhance productivity and drive innovation forward. However, women face challenges due to gender-specific norms and their needs are often overlooked. Strengthening women's empowerment in agri-food supply chains is essential for building resilience to climate change.

Workshops with female farmers were conducted in Tanzania, the Dominican Republic, Thailand and Nepal. Additionally, 21 qualitative interviews were conducted with company actors, eight of whom were women. Qualitative data collection and content analysis were guided by the Community Capital Framework and the Proximity Framework to identify indicators that support women's future visions across the production and processing side.

All interviewed women express strong self-efficacy and view themselves as pioneers of innovation. One of the female farmers interviewed describes her motivation: “The production of goods and things—that's what fulfils me. It pushes me forward.” In Nepal in particular, female farmers actively participate in workshops and share their innovations to adapt to climate change within their communities. Female company actors in companies also expressed strong motivation to implement adaptation measures to climate change.

Nevertheless, all interviewed women face challenges due to gender specific norms. Female farmers in particular, highlighted traditional caregiving roles. They shoulder a heavy dual workload across household and farm responsibilities. Moreover, their access to resources especially land remains limited and is predominantly held by men. One of the female farmer interviewed describes her situation: “So, if the husband is present, he represents her. When he can't attend meetings, they send the wife who can come, but ultimately, they[men] handle everything.”

Climate change compounds these constraints with increasing droughts, irregular rainfall and floods. Therefore, access to irrigation systems and rainwater storage is needed to secure water availability. Overall, company actors view climate change as a pressing future issue and plan to invest in their supply chains; however, most lack a stronger gender lens.

For the future, supporting women's leadership, as well as fostering access to financial and non-financial resources will enhance their resilience to climate change across agri-food supply chains for both companies and farmers.

Keywords: Agri-food supply chain, climate change, female farmers , women

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