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“Towards multi-functional agro-ecosystems
promoting climate resilient futures”

Supporting young women to thrive and drive transformation in food, land and water systems

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Abstract

This presentation is part of a proposed hybrid panel session entitled “Gender equality and inclusion in food, land, and water systems by 2050: Projections and solutions” by the CGIAR Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator, co-organised by CGIAR Science Program on Multifunctional Landscapes.

Youth livelihoods and unemployment are receiving increased attention from policy makers, and food, land, and water systems (FLWS) are positioned to meet the need for jobs. Additionally, the unique experiences of young women are often overlooked, while those who reside in rural agrarian communities are further marginalised. We identify promising solutions to support young women in FLWS. Given that young women often experience lack of capital and land, we focus on three areas with i) low start-up costs, ii) existing evidence on young women, and iii) potential for expanding young women’s engagement. These include agricultural processing and marketing, livestock and fisheries, and multi-functional landscapes. To address the lack of capital, we also examine financial inclusion approaches that target young women in FLWS.

Across these themes, despite strong evidence on barriers, there is limited evidence on robust solutions for supporting young women. Most interventions focus on reaching young women but not benefiting or empowering them. Within the gender at work framework, gender norms present a substantial barrier, with few gender transformative approaches designed for young women in FLWS. A promising approach is to bundle technical and skills-based interventions with gender transformative approaches to address root constraints. Limited assets confine young women to activities with low start-up costs, and limited profits, appropriately designed financial services that simultaneously address access, knowledge, and agency are key. Moreover, the voices of young women are often excluded from key decisions; collectives designed for and led by young women may amplify their voices and support livelihoods. Overall, solutions for young women need to simultaneously

build transferable skills and continue to make FLWS livelihoods safe and appealing for young women. Co-designing interventions can identify and leverage existing opportunities where young women exercise agency and gain benefits in ways that support sustainable FLWs.

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