



## Gender Roles in Agricultural Marketing Systems

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### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a key livelihood source in developing economies, where both men and women actively participate in production and marketing activities. However, gender disparities exist in access to resources, markets, and decision-making power. While men are often involved in large-scale marketing and financial transactions, women are primarily engaged in production, processing, and local-level sales. Understanding gender roles in agricultural marketing is essential for improving efficiency, equity, and income generation. Empowering women in marketing systems can significantly enhance household welfare and overall agricultural productivity.

### 2. Concept of Gender Roles in Agricultural Marketing

Gender roles refer to the socially constructed responsibilities, behaviors, and activities assigned to men and women in society. In agricultural marketing systems, these roles determine who participates in production, processing, transportation, pricing, and selling of agricultural commodities.

Typically, men dominate activities such as bulk marketing, price negotiation, and interaction with formal markets. Women, on the other hand, are more involved in post-harvest handling, grading, packaging, and small-scale marketing in local markets. These roles vary depending on cultural, economic, and regional factors.

### 3. Structure of Agricultural Marketing Systems

Agricultural marketing systems include all activities involved in moving farm products from producers to consumers. These include:

- ❖ Production and harvesting
- ❖ Post-harvest handling
- ❖ Storage and transportation
- ❖ Processing and value addition
- ❖ Wholesale and retail marketing

Gender plays a role at each stage, with women often concentrated in labor-intensive and low-return activities, while men dominate high-value market segments.



#### 4. Role of Women in Agricultural Marketing

Women play a significant and multifaceted role in agricultural marketing systems, contributing at various stages from production to final sale. Their involvement is crucial for maintaining the quality, value, and flow of agricultural produce in local and informal markets.

##### 4.1 Production and Post-Harvest Activities

Women are actively engaged in key farm operations such as sowing, weeding, harvesting, threshing, cleaning, and storage. Their careful handling of crops ensures better quality and reduces post-harvest losses. They play a vital role in maintaining the physical condition and market readiness of agricultural produce.

##### 4.2 Processing and Value Addition

Women contribute significantly to value addition through activities like milling, drying, pickling, grading, and packaging. These processes enhance the shelf life, quality, and

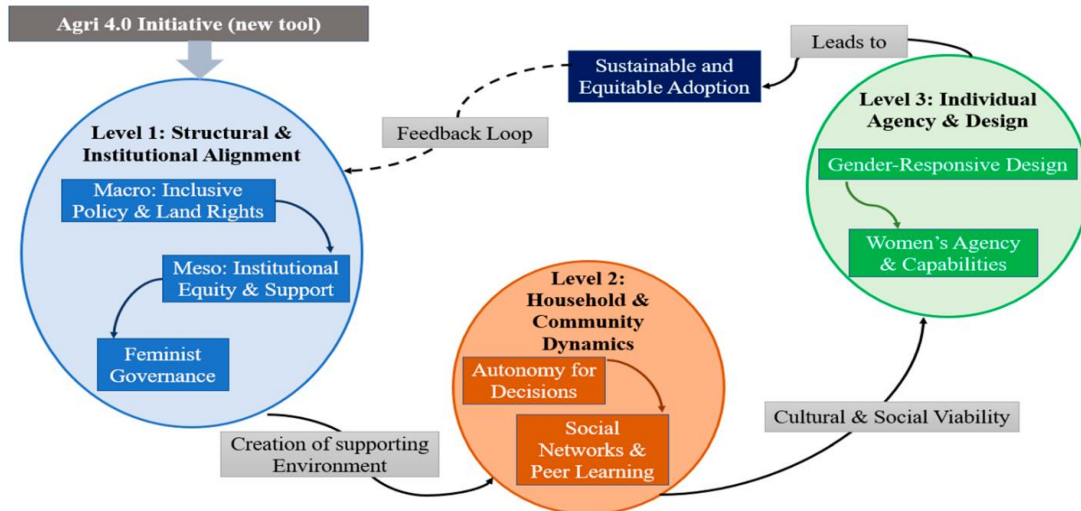
market value of agricultural products. Value-added products often fetch higher prices, thereby increasing household income.

##### 4.3 Local Marketing and Retailing

Women frequently participate in local marketing by selling produce in village markets, roadside stalls, or directly to consumers. This direct involvement helps them earn income independently and supports household financial needs. It also strengthens local food systems and community-based trade.

##### 4.4 Informal Market Participation

A large proportion of women operate within informal marketing channels, which are more accessible and require less capital. However, these markets often offer lower returns and limited institutional support. Despite these challenges, women's participation in informal markets remains essential for sustaining rural livelihoods and ensuring food availability at the local level.



Source: <https://www.mdpi.com/>

### 5. Role of Men in Agricultural Marketing

Men play a dominant role in agricultural marketing systems, particularly in activities that require mobility, financial transactions, and interaction with formal institutions. They generally control **large-scale marketing operations**, including the bulk sale of agricultural produce in wholesale markets and mandis. Their involvement in these markets allows them to handle higher volumes and access better price opportunities.

Men are also primarily responsible for **transportation and logistics**, managing the movement of goods from farms to markets. This includes arranging vehicles, coordinating with traders, and ensuring timely delivery of produce. Due to greater mobility and fewer social restrictions, men can travel to distant markets where better prices are often available.

Another key role of men is in **price negotiation and market decision-making**. They interact directly with traders, wholesalers, and commission agents, giving them greater control over pricing and sales decisions. This often places them in a stronger position to influence income outcomes. Furthermore, men typically have better **access to formal markets and financial institutions**, such as banks, cooperatives, and marketing boards. Their access to credit, market

information, and extension services enables them to take advantage of profitable marketing opportunities.

### 6. Gender-Based Constraints in Agricultural Marketing

Gender-based constraints significantly limit women's effective participation in agricultural marketing systems. These challenges arise from social, economic, and institutional factors, reducing their ability to access profitable market opportunities.

#### 6.1 Limited Access to Resources

Women often face restricted access to essential resources such as land, credit, modern technology, and quality inputs. In many cases, land ownership is predominantly in the name of men, which limits women's eligibility for institutional credit and government support programs. As a result, their capacity to invest in production and marketing activities remains constrained.

#### 6.2 Lack of Market Information

Access to timely and reliable market information is crucial for successful marketing. However, women generally have limited exposure to price trends, demand patterns, and market opportunities due to lower access to communication tools, extension services, and training programs. This information gap often leads to lower bargaining power and reduced income.

### 6.3 Mobility Constraints

Social and cultural norms in many rural areas restrict women's mobility, preventing them from traveling to distant or larger markets where better prices are available. This limits their participation to local or informal markets, which usually offer lower returns.

### 6.4 Limited Decision-Making Power

Even when women contribute significantly to agricultural production, they often have limited control over income and marketing decisions. Men typically dominate decisions related to selling produce, pricing, and use of income, reducing women's economic empowerment.

### 6.5 Inadequate Infrastructure

Poor infrastructure, including lack of storage facilities, transportation, and organized markets, disproportionately affects women. Without proper facilities, they face difficulties in preserving produce quality and accessing better markets, further limiting their profitability.

## 7. Impact of Gender Inequality on Agricultural Marketing

Gender inequality has significant negative effects on the efficiency and performance of agricultural marketing systems. When women face barriers in accessing resources, markets, and decision-making processes, the overall productivity and profitability of the agricultural sector are adversely affected.

**Reduced market efficiency:** Since women play a vital role in production and post-harvest activities but have limited access to markets, the supply chain becomes less efficient. Their inability to fully participate in marketing leads to gaps in value addition, processing, and distribution.

**Lower farm income:** When women are excluded from profitable market opportunities or lack bargaining power, agricultural products are often sold at lower prices. This reduces the overall income of farm households, as a significant portion of labor contribution remains undervalued.

### Underutilization of women's potential:

Women possess valuable knowledge, skills, and experience in agriculture, but social and institutional barriers prevent them from contributing fully to marketing activities. This leads to a loss of productivity and innovation in the sector.

### Increased poverty and food insecurity:

Limited access to income and resources restricts women's ability to support household nutrition and well-being, affecting overall family health and livelihood security.

## 8. Strategies to Promote Gender Equity in Agricultural Marketing

Promoting gender equity in agricultural marketing is essential for improving productivity, income, and overall rural development. A combination of institutional support, policy interventions, and capacity development can help women actively participate in marketing systems.

### 8.1 Capacity Building and Training

Providing targeted training programs in marketing skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship is crucial for empowering women farmers. Skill development enables them to understand pricing, grading, packaging, and market dynamics, thereby improving their confidence and participation in marketing activities.

### 8.2 Access to Credit and Resources

Ensuring women's access to credit, land ownership, quality inputs, and modern technologies is vital. Financial inclusion through banks, microfinance institutions, and self-help groups helps women invest in production and marketing, enhancing their economic independence.

### 8.3 Market Information Systems

Developing accessible and user-friendly market information systems is important for informed decision-making. Mobile-based platforms, extension services, and digital tools can provide real-time data on prices, demand trends, and market opportunities, helping women secure better returns.

#### 8.4 Strengthening Women's Organizations

Encouraging women to participate in self-help groups (SHGs), cooperatives, and farmer producer organizations (FPOs) strengthens their collective bargaining power. These organizations also facilitate access to credit, training, and markets, reducing dependence on intermediaries.

#### 8.5 Infrastructure Development

Improving rural infrastructure such as roads, storage facilities, cold chains, and transportation systems significantly benefits women. Better infrastructure reduces post-harvest losses and improves access to distant and more profitable markets.

#### 8.6 Policy Support

Gender-sensitive policies and government programs are essential to address structural inequalities. Policies should focus on equal access to resources, training, and market opportunities, ensuring inclusive and sustainable agricultural marketing systems.

#### 9. Role of Technology in Reducing Gender Gaps

Modern technologies serve as a powerful force which helps decrease gender inequalities that exist within agricultural marketing by providing women better access to vital information and financial resources and market opportunities. The new technologies enable users to break through conventional obstacles which include three limitations: restricted movement possibilities and insufficient market information and unavailable essential materials.

Mobile-based market information systems function as market solutions which deliver current market intelligence through real-time updates about price changes and shifts in customer demands and new market possibilities. Women who have access to this information can choose their optimal times and locations for selling their products which boosts their ability to negotiate with buyers.

Digital payments and e-marketing platforms function as financial inclusion tools which allow people to conduct safe and clear

financial transactions. Women can receive payments directly into their accounts which reduce their need for intermediaries and give them better control over their income.

Women experience less physical work requirements because mechanization and better agricultural tools lead to decreased physical demands during their post-harvest work which includes processing work and grading activities and packaging tasks. The new system brings operational benefits which allow women to increase their involvement in production activities that generate value for the company.

E-commerce platforms give women the ability to establish direct connections with customers and buyers who exist outside their immediate vicinity. The new market access possibilities enable them to reach more customers while securing higher product prices.

#### 10. Case Study Example (Hypothetical)

A group of women farmers forms a Self-Help Group (SHG) to market vegetables collectively. They receive training in grading, packaging, and pricing. By directly selling in local markets and using mobile-based price information, they increase their income by 30–40%. Collective marketing also improves their bargaining power and reduces exploitation by middlemen.

#### 11. Future Prospects

The future of gender-inclusive agricultural marketing lies in leveraging modern innovations and supportive policies to empower women. **Digital agriculture and e-markets** will enable women to access wider markets and real-time information, improving their income opportunities. The growth of **women-led agribusiness enterprises** will enhance entrepreneurship and economic independence. **Policy reforms promoting gender equality** will ensure equal access to resources, credit, and market platforms. Additionally, **increased awareness and education** will strengthen women's skills and confidence. Overall, empowering women in agricultural marketing systems will drive

sustainable agriculture, improve livelihoods, and contribute significantly to rural development and economic growth.

### CONCLUSION

Gender roles significantly influence agricultural marketing systems. While women contribute extensively to production and post-harvest activities, their participation in marketing remains limited due to various constraints. Addressing gender inequalities through targeted interventions, capacity building, and policy support is essential for improving market efficiency, increasing farm income, and achieving sustainable agricultural development.

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