



GENDER EQUALITY STATEMENT OF INTENT

BACKGROUND

The agri-food system is one of the leading sources of employment for women. An estimated 66 % of women in sub-Saharan Africa work in the agri-food sector, compared to 60% of men. Yet, female employment in agriculture is more likely to be informal, labour-intensive and low-paid, with women earning around 18.4% less than men¹.

Integrating gender equality into sustainable agri-food systems begins with understanding the underlying causes that limit women's participation in agriculture. Discriminatory social norms, caring responsibilities, the lack of access to subsidised agricultural inputs and credit, the seasonality of labour demand, among other factors, disproportionately affect women's productivity, earning potential and upskilling opportunities.

Race, ethnicity, age, disability and health also play a role in determining how women access agricultural resources. In most cases, lack of land ownership and tenure security constrain women's ability to benefit from participating in global value chains.

This is all the more alarming given the role of women in horticulture, who have been instrumental in the growth of the sector². Women actively participate in seed collection, storage, sowing, and weeding, among other harvesting and post-harvesting activities. However, their access to training in alternative and advanced horticultural technologies is limited, preventing them from pursuing more profitable, up to leadership roles, in which they thrive.

Acknowledging and examining these patterns of discrimination, which are prevalent in the different contexts and regions in which we operate, will enable us to strengthen the gender dimensions of our programmes and overall support.

It is here that we see the critical role we can play in addressing the vulnerabilities and disadvantages faced by women in the agrifood sector, and actively promoting their empowerment.

1 FAO. 2023. The status of women in agrifood systems. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5343en>

2 Srivastava, s.K. & Sahu, Ankita & Das, Lipi. 2020. Women in growth of horticulture - Contributions and issues. Progressive Horticulture. 52. 12. 10.5958/2249-5258.2020.00002.0.



WHY GENDER MATTERS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE? OUR COMMITMENT AND VISION

Gender equality is integral to sustainable development and a driver for sustainable agricultural production and trade. Not only is COLEAD's work relevant to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, but gender equality itself is key to the realisation of the other SDGs.

Integrating gender into agricultural technology development, training programmes and policy design has been shown to increase women's productivity and the adoption of sustainable farming practices³. Evidence from training sessions has revealed the positive impact of knowledge interventions on female farmers, by not only improving their knowledge and confidence levels, but also by improving their decision-making capacity⁴.

In addressing gender equality and sustainable agricultural systems, men's involvement and consideration of their own perceptions of gender barriers is critical to ensuring that women's needs and priorities are placed at the forefront. This is particularly relevant to natural resource management and climate change adaptation, where women have found innovative ways to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis.

Attention to gender equality offers a pathway to economic, social and environmental sustainability and an opportunity for COLEAD to contribute to the realisation of women's rights and capabilities.

We express our commitment to provide training and skills development opportunities to support efforts to help both women and men access the knowledge and resources necessary to adopt sustainable agricultural methods and comply with international market standards and regulations. We are also committed to creating the conditions for successful women entrepreneurs and managers to inspire their peers in believing it is possible.

COLEAD's vision is for women to have equitable access to critical agricultural inputs, resources and services across agricultural value chains, enabling them to realise their full economic potential. In pursuit of this vision, COLEAD is dedicated to its internal transformation, evolving into a more gender-inclusive organisation. This internal change mirrors the broader change COLEAD seeks to inspire in the global agrifood sector.

3 Thakur, N. 2023. Women Farmers and Technologies in Agriculture: A Review of Current Practices.

4 Dar MH, Waza SA, Nayak S, Chakravorty R, Zaidi NW, Hossain M. Gender focused training and knowledge enhances the adoption of climate resilient seeds. *Technol Soc.* 2020 Nov;63:101388. doi: 10.1016/j.tech-soc.2020.101388. PMID: 33250546; PMCID: PMC7677893.