



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Gender Considerations in Trade Agreements

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Reflections on new ideas on Gender in Trade agreements: FAO's perspective

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Gender commitments in trade agreements

Current status of gender provisions in trade agreements

- Only found in 13% of the 556 RTAs analyzed
 - **Not sector-specific**, but may tackle issues prevalent in the agrifood sector more generally
 - 2018 Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment
- Gender-related provisions in most RTAs are **largely aspirational**
 - Mostly identified as a **cooperation area** (dialogue, information exchange)
 - **Very few RTAs have a specific article or dedicated chapter on gender, limiting the scope of specific commitments** on domestic policies
 - **Weak enforceability**; largely excluded from dispute settlement mechanisms (DSM)
 - Even where covered by DSM (e.g. some labour-related provisions), **proving the trade impact of non-compliance to the provisions can be a challenge**



Agri-food trade and rural women

Rural women play a key role in GVC and agri-food trade

- About 45% of the agricultural labour force
- Increasingly involved in post-harvest and processing activities
 - In horticulture industries, women constitute 70 to 80% of packing jobs
- An estimated 70% of informal cross border traders which accounts for up to 40% of trade in southern and eastern Africa

Rural women face specific challenges...

- Limited mobility and time poverty
- Poor access to credit, market information, and technologies
- Lack of opportunities to influence trade policy discussions
- Concentration in subsistence/traditional agriculture

...which adversely affects trade performance and export competitiveness

- Trade agreements with proactive and mitigating measures needed



Gender commitments in trade agreements

Potential solutions to enhance impact

- **Incorporating strong and enforceable gender-related provisions in new or renegotiated trade agreements**
 - ✓ **Specific and obligatory commitments on domestic policy reforms, including through reference to CEDAW**
 - ✓ **Enforcement through dispute settlement mechanisms and availability of appropriate remedies**
 - ✓ **Clear institutional framework and oversight mechanism** informed by consultations with, and inclusion of civil society organizations, NGOs, and other third parties, including multi-stakeholder platforms, that address gender equality and ensure the presence of rural women and experts on gender and agriculture – e.g. **World Banana Forum**



Gender commitments in trade agreements

- Case Study: the **World Banana Forum**
- **Mission:** ensure that banana production and trade are sustainable from the environmental, social and economic perspectives
- **Task Force on Gender Equity** set up in 2012
- Five priority areas:
 - ✓ Increasing women's employment opportunities
 - ✓ Fostering women's empowerment
 - ✓ Reducing gender pay gap
 - ✓ Improving occupational health and safety
 - ✓ Addressing sexual harassment and gender-based violence





Gender commitments in trade agreements

Potential solutions to enhance impact

- **Complementary policies to ensure that the benefits of agrifood trade are captured by rural women**
 - ✓ Promoting **foreign investment** to foster rural women's economic empowerment (CFS-RAI)

Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems:

“Responsible investment in agriculture and food systems fosters gender equality and women’s empowerment by: (i) Ensuring that all people are treated fairly, recognizing their respective situations, needs, constraints, and the vital role played by women; (ii) Eliminating all measures and practices that discriminate or violate rights on the basis of gender; (iii) Advancing women’s equal tenure rights, and their equal access to and control over productive land, natural resources, inputs, productive tools; and promoting access to extension, advisory, and financial services, education, training, markets, and information; (iv) Adopting innovative and/or proactive approaches, measures, and processes to enhance women’s meaningful participation in partnerships, decision-making, leadership roles, and the equitable sharing of benefits.”

PRINCIPLES FOR
RESPONSIBLE
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Gender commitments in trade agreements

Potential solutions to enhance impact

- **Complementary policies to ensure that the benefits of agrifood trade are captured by rural women**
 - ✓ Simplification or exemption of trade requirements
 - ✓ Trade digitalization to tackle women's mobility and time constraints
 - ✓ Increased advocacy and technical assistance to disseminate information and develop capacity of rural women
- **Broadly, recognition of domestic labour and gender-related policy reforms as a necessary precondition to economic growth**