

# STEPPING UP WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

International Women's Day 2022

8 March 2022

2-3.30pm (CET)

Virtual - [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_5IYHNMfSFe8nsR\\_FOo3hQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5IYHNMfSFe8nsR_FOo3hQ)

## Preamble

The UNFSS, a secretariat team comprising of women majority from the African and Asian region, has paid tremendous attention to understand and study the effects of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) to the SDG 5 - Gender Equality, in particular Women's Economic Empowerment. Working with the theme the United Nations has announced for the 2022 International Women's Day – **Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow**, the UNFSS will leverage this special day to launch and present its recent research report on “**Exploring the role of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) for Women's Economic Empowerment on the agriculture sector in developing countries**”.

## Background

Women make up almost half of the human population, yet they suffer gross inequalities: gender pay gaps and limited access to human capital, despite the rapid movement in global living standards and educational attainment. Women's economic empowerment is a precondition for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), empowering women on all dimensions can contribute to reducing poverty and improving the health and wellbeing of future generations.

The argument is - Greater gender equality enhances productivity, improves development outcomes, and fosters economic growth.

The compilation of evidence and data presented in the UNFSS report proves that the many gaps identified in the agriculture sector in developing countries that discriminates against women often leads to a missed economic opportunity. If women had the same access and opportunities to that of men, it would have contributed positively to the economy, food insecurity and poverty could have been alleviated, and rural communities could have been better nourished.

In this context, Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) have been identified as a potential tool to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. However, research indicating the socioeconomic impacts of VSS is limited in nature and more than often offers mixed results. While there are specific examples reported from certain countries, wider research in particular on Women's Economic Development (WEE) and the role of VSS is very limited if not non-existent.

## The Webinar

To celebrate the International Women's Day, the UNFSS will leverage this special day to promote Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) especially in the agricultural sector in developing countries. The agricultural sector is a very important sector in developing countries as it contributes directly and indirectly to the majority of the population's livelihood.

Addressing WEE requires a combination of interventions aimed directly at increasing women's access and control over economic resources. Thus, UNFSS will be presenting its study and recommendations to facilitate VSS uptake with gender considerations in this webinar which will be discussed by invited experts and practitioners. Through this webinar, UNFSS aims to grasp the effects of WEE through knowledge exchange and best practices on the ground, particularly on three key touchpoints:

- 1) VSS to facilitate better women employment conditions and training infrastructures,
- 2) VSS to facilitate women's access to credit for financial and agricultural inputs,
- 3) VSS to facilitate women's decision-making power.

## Agenda

5 MINUTES	Opening Remarks by - <b>Santiago Fernandez de Cordoba</b> , Senior Economist and UNFSS Coordinator, UNCTAD
20 MINUTES	<i>"Exploring the role of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) for Women's Economic Empowerment on the agriculture sector in developing countries"</i> , presented by <b>Niematallah E.A Elamin</b> , Economist at UNCTAD  Commentator: - <b>Mercedes Araoz Fernandez</b> , Former Vice-President of Peru and Co-Chair of the UNFSS Academic Advisory Council
50 MINUTES	Discussants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ambassador Chad Blackman</b>, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Barbados to the United Nations in Geneva, IGC Global board and Gender Champion</li><li>• <b>Amrita Bahri</b>, Associate Professor of International Trade Law at ITAM and Co-Chair Professor for WTO Chair Program (Mexico)</li><li>• <b>Kezy Mukiri</b>, Executive Director at Ignite Trade Africa</li><li>• <b>Sahasini Singh</b>, FairWear India Country Manager</li></ul>
15 MINUTES	Questions and Answers
5 MINUTES	Conclude and Close

Event will be moderated by **Siti Rubiah Lambert**, Sustainability Expert, UNFSS