Women and Agriculture
The Untapped Opportunity in the Wave of Transformation

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
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<td>AGT</td>
<td>Agricultural Growth Transformation</td>
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<td>ASTI</td>
<td>Agricultural Science &amp; Technology Indicators</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
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<td>AVCF</td>
<td>Agriculture Value Chain Finance</td>
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<td>CAADP</td>
<td>Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GVC</td>
<td>Global Value Chain</td>
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<td>HVAVC</td>
<td>High-value agricultural Value chains</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication &amp; Technology</td>
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<td>IFC</td>
<td>International Finance Corporation</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>MDGS</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MSME</td>
<td>Micro-Small &amp; Medium Enterprises</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>The new Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>R &amp; D</td>
<td>Research &amp; Development</td>
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<td>REC</td>
<td>Regional Economic Community</td>
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<td>RVC</td>
<td>Regional Value Chain</td>
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<td>SME</td>
<td>Small &amp; Medium Enterprise</td>
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<td>SPS</td>
<td>Sanitary &amp; Phytosanitary</td>
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<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>TBT</td>
<td>Technical Barriers to Trade</td>
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<td>TYS</td>
<td>Ten Year Strategy</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollar</td>
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<td>USDA</td>
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Rationale

African women play a central role in the continent’s agriculture sector. As the backbone of the sector they represent 52% of the total population in the sector and are responsible for approximately 50% of the agricultural labour on farms in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). They ae also produce 60% to 80% of the continent’s food. Counterintuitively, African women, persistently remain an untapped opportunity in Agriculture - their level and quality of participation does not accrue to sustainable socio-economic development benefits. Women described as farmers, livestock owners, workers and entrepreneurs within the sector, consistently experience limited access to productive resources, compared to their male counterparts.

Furthermore, due to rapid population rise, increased urbanisation and demand for agricultural commodities for biofuels and climate change, Africa’s is going to experience unprecedented waves of new knowledge necessary for transformation. Consequently, women farmers and exporters will face even greater challenges than in the past, and hence are at the core of agricultural transformation. Inevitably, for Africa to succeed in this regard, one critical success factor, among others, is the adoption of new innovative approach for regional and national response founded on gender-equality, inclusivity, sustainability and good governance.

In this paper, we bring to the fore the challenges women face in particularly in relation to access to productive resources. We discuss how such challenges ultimately negatively impact the continent’s productivity. The paper also looks at the opportunities, which are not a guarantee but call for all key stakeholders to commit to putting in place gender-responsive programme. To contribute to narrowing the gap the paper discusses a number of potential interventions. According to a Mckinsey Global Institute report as much as USD28 Trillion, or 26% could be added to global annual GDP in 2025.¹

¹ Mckinsey Global Institute - The power of Global Gender Parity
2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Untapped Opportunity

1. African women are an integral part of the agriculture sector. They represent up to 52% of the total population in the sector and are responsible for approximately 50% of the agricultural labour on farms in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Reports show that in some African countries women spend approximately 60% of their time on agricultural activities - more than 60% of working employed women in SSA work in agriculture. That said, however, rural poverty tends to be associated with a vulnerable employment status. Rural labour markets present high levels of informality, multiple job-holding and casual work arrangements, and pervasive gender- and age-based inequalities. According to the 2011 ILO data, SSA had the highest level of working poor at 65% and one of the highest levels of vulnerable employment at 77.6%, whereby the share of women in vulnerable employment was the highest globally at 85.6% (ILO, 2014; FAO 2014). The majority of vulnerable employment in developing world is found in the informal economy, mostly in the rural settings and in agriculture (ILO, 2014) with rural women, especially the young, most likely to be affected by it.

2. Furthermore, in some Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries African women contribute up to 60% to 80% of the continent’s food. Yet, major constraints in access to productive resources, though a proverbial issue, are most prevalent among women. Poor yields and low productivity are among the most problematic agricultural issues on the African continent. According to FAO, the underperformance of agriculture in developing countries is attributable to women’s limited access to productive resources and inability to take advantage of opportunities in the sector. Limited access in this regard, is experienced more severely by women than their male counterparts, demonstrating a clear “gender gap”. Defined as such, this “gender gap” ultimately undermines the continent’s productivity, inhibits women’s equitable and profitable participation in intra-African agricultural trade, regional and global agricultural value chains.

2.2 The Dynamic Landscape of Global Agriculture

3. There is clear evidence that the global economy for agriculture and food system is changing; spurred on by rapid population rise, increased urbanisation and demand for agricultural commodities for biofuels. Africa, with no exception, is experiencing rapid population growth and urbanisation. Over the last two decades the continent has seen a 2.7% increase on an annual basis; from 507 million in 1990, to approximately 936 million in 2013. Africa’s population is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050. Inevitably this rapid expansion in population and urbanisation is exerting pressure on the continent with major implications for food supplies. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developing countries will account for a sizeable increment in projected growth in global consumption

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2 ILO defines workers in vulnerable employment as the sum of own-account workers and contributing family workers. They are less likely to have formal work arrangements, and are, therefore, more likely to lack decent working conditions, adequate social security and ‘voice’ through effective representation by trade unions and similar organizations. Sources: ILO, 2010 and ILO, 2014.
3 Food Agriculture Organisation
4 The working poor are those individuals who are (i) employed and (ii) living in households whose income or consumption levels fall below a poverty threshold. FAO, 2012
5 FAO - WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE Closing the gender gap for development – 2010 – 2011
6 FAO - Regional Overview of Food Insecurity in Africa African Food Security Prospects Brighter Than Ever – 2015
of meats and crops between the years 2013 – 2022. The share of growth for developing countries, including African countries, is projected at 81% for meat, 83% for grains and oilseeds, and 95% for cotton. Consequently, these countries together, will account for 92% of the total increment in world meat imports, 92% of total grain and oilseeds imports, and almost all the world cotton imports! Compounding Africa’s food pressures is the growing demand for high-value agricultural products. Today, rising incomes, changing lifestyles and the growing number of women in wage employment are increasing the demand for high-value agricultural commodities, processed products, and pre-prepared foods.

4. Linked to the demand of high-value agricultural products is the changing context of the global economy. In terms of global production networks, studies show that the whole process of producing goods, from raw material to finished products is increasingly carried out wherever the necessary skills and materials are available at competitive cost and quality. This means that the global playing field is now characterised by what has been termed as the “integration” of world markets and the “disintegration” of the production process. This said evolution and the related development of institutions necessary for vertical coordination, coupled with structural changes in agricultural supply channels, has increased both the vulnerability and opportunities for small-scale farmers, particularly women.

5. Lastly, the impacts of climate change are likely to exacerbate the existing structural barriers and risks faced by women farmers and create new ones, potentially generating a downward spiral. An increase in the frequency and impact of extreme hydro-meteorological events as well as greater variability and uncertainty in weather patterns caused by climate change will increase the risk of crop losses and lower yields. This in turn increases the risk of food insecurity and negative coping strategies. Climate change will also require greater upfront capital for investments in climate resilient infrastructure, assets and practices. This exacerbates existing limitations that women farmers face in terms of access to long-term affordable finance and collateral.

2.3 The Objective of the Paper

6. Against this backdrop, the overall objective of the paper is to bring to the fore the central role African women play in the continent’s transformation agenda for agriculture and the need to create an enabling environment where agriculture innovation is encouraged for all citizens, especially women.

7. Specifically the paper calls on all key stakeholders – political and business leaders, multilateral development organisations, the donor community and civil society to commit to the following:

   a. A fundamental rethink of what transformational change in agriculture means for African women and a full examination of how they can be supported, given the global factors impacting the sector;

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8 OECD, WTO, UNCTAD Implications of global Value Chains for Trade, Investment, Development and Jobs
b. Prioritisation of gender-based diagnostics to inform the design of regional and national programmes that are tailor-made and allow for the establishment of appropriate policy frameworks; and

c. Adoption of a holistic approach for regional and national response and design of agricultural innovation systems founded on gender-equality, inclusivity, sustainability and good governance. An agricultural innovation system is defined as “a system of individuals, organisations and enterprises focused on bringing new products, processes and forms of organisation into social and economic use to achieve food and nutrition security, economic development and sustainable natural resource management”.

3. CHALLENGES

8. Achieving the agriculture transformational change that Africa craves; one that can sustain the continent’s urgent food demands and the changing agriculture landscape, will require clear understanding of the gender-gap blocking issues in the sector. Below is an account of the most pressing issues:

a. **Access to Productive Resources:** It is widely known that women tend to experience more constraints in accessing agricultural productive resources. According to FAO, such limitations involve several dimensions such as: i) ownership of land, livestock or other agricultural resources; (ii) management of agricultural resources; (iii) use of financial services and other inputs for agriculture; (iv) access to education, knowledge and skills related to agriculture; and (v) participation in agricultural labour activities. Women tend to be disadvantaged in regard to all these dimensions (FAO, 2011).

(i) **Access to Land:** Land is the central factor of production in agrarian economies (Bell, 1990; Obeng-Odoom, 2012) consequently the manner in which it is accessed, allocated or transferred, controlled, and used is an important consideration in the socio-economic policies and associated legislative environments and institutional forms. Notably the Land question is thus not purely an agricultural issue it is a fundamental matter for socio-economic development planning and is often at the base of conflict especially within the political economy of any country. Unequal rights to land borne out of diverse statute, religious, customary and local norms put women at a disadvantage, perpetuate poverty, and entrench gender inequality in Africa. Women represent just 15% of agricultural landholders (that is, those who exercise management control over an agricultural holding as owners or tenants, or through customary rights), ranging from 3% in Mali to 35% in countries such as Botswana and Malawi, or more than 50% in Cape Verde.

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10 FAO - Realising the Potential of Agricultural Innovation in Family Farming
11 FAO - Gender and Land Rights Database
(ii) **Access to Finance and Financial Services:** Agricultural finance is among the most difficult type of finance to secure. African women farmers experience greater constraints than their male counterparts based on the following:

- **Perceived Risk** - Among the four key barriers to affordable finance in agriculture is the perceived risk and the merit-based account related to requisite collateral. African women farmers operate in an environment particularly perceived as riskier than that found in other non-African developing countries. This obstacle is compounded by the very nature of their business or land size;

- **Lack of Management and Absorptive Capacities** - African women farmers generally lack the necessary management and absorptive capacities required to profitably utilize available financial and productive resources. Africa’s large population of rural dwellers with limited education has little or no access to financial services and is effectively unbanked. This segment of the population has had neither the opportunity for interaction with financial institutions nor exposure necessary to develop skills for accessing formal credit. Generally, this also entails that such SMEs have weak capacity to prepare bankable documents and the knowledge Gaps often lead to failure to assess and understand the available financial products. A study conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Zambia’s access to agricultural finance shows a disconcerting disparity in access to financial services between the intermediate category of small, emerging commercial farmers and rural less educated micro-small as well as medium enterprises (MSMEs). The former whose vantage point stems from satisfactory levels of
literacy, land ownership and some experience with formal credit\textsuperscript{12} stand at 80 per cent in comparison to their rural counterparts who stand at 20 per cent.\textsuperscript{13}

- **Access to Banking Services vis-à-vis Location of Farm** - The third adventitious explanation for prohibitive access to finance, is the physical location of farms and distance from credit source. The distance between the borrower and the lender ultimately has an impact on the resulting borrower-bank relationship. A disaggregation of data collected on rural and urban agricultural MSMEs in Zambia paints a dismal picture. The percentage of financially excluded MSMEs, though less in that of urban MSMEs is staggeringly high (Figure 1). Over and above, the data for access to informal finance tells us that the level of social inclusion is very low. Furthermore, exacerbated by the lack of formal national identification documents, most rural dwellers happen to be financially excluded. The OECD reports that in Zambia an estimated 17 per cent of the population lacks the necessary official identification documentation required to open a bank account.\textsuperscript{14}

**Figure 1: Example - Access to Financial Services – Rural and Urban MSMEs**

![Access to Financial Services Rural and Urban MSMEs](image)

**Source:** Zambia Business Survey 2010

- **Capacity of Financial Institutions** - Exacerbated by all of the above African Banks have weak capacities to develop profitable and broadened SME financial products. Studies show that conventional bank financing to SMEs in Africa is significantly less and more short-term than that of non-African developing countries. The disparity between dedicated SME bank loans in the majority of non-African developing countries and those of banks in Africa is more than 100 per cent; 13.1 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Typically commercial credit from an agro-dealer, microfinance institution or contract farming with a large buyer


\textsuperscript{15} World Bank – PROPARCO - Martínez Peria1 Soledad María - Bank financing to SMEs: what are Africa’s specificities? – Issue 1 May 2009 – SME Financing in Sub-Saharan Africa
Access to Infrastructure: African rural producers, particularly women continue to face difficulties in accessing input and output markets due to insufficient and poor quality rural infrastructure. According to FAO, the overall level of agricultural infrastructure development in most countries in SSA is lower than that of other regions of the world, making it the lead impediment to agricultural productivity. Agricultural infrastructure comprises a wide range of public services that facilitate production, procurement, processing, preservation and trade. It can be broadly categorised as follows:

- **Input based infrastructure:** Women farmers have limited access to seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, farm equipment and machinery etc. For example, despite its potential to boost production and increase profits, levels of fertiliser use remain very low in Africa particularly among women. In many African countries, women apply even less fertilizer than men to their plots. Increasing the use of fertiliser by women, both in terms of quantity and quality, has emerged as a critical priority for narrowing the gender gap in agricultural productivity, particularly in Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger, northern Nigeria, and Uganda. Yet several distinct barriers may prevent female farmers from using fertiliser, including its price, their inability to obtain credit for its purchase or lack of access to a market. Improved seeds can boost farmers’ yields. Yet female farmers may not be able to afford to purchase improved seeds or may have limited knowledge or confidence in their quality. Furthermore, while widespread use and application of old and/or traditional technologies continues to play an important role for food security in rural communities, it is important for rural people not to remain captive to out-dated or less valuable technologies; and to explore opportunities for change as newer technologies are made available.

- **Resource based infrastructure:** Water/irrigation, Farm power/energy: The lack of access to energy and water greatly increases the burden borne by women as well as their ability to optimize the use of modern technology. For example, across sub-Saharan Africa very few households have access to modern fuels for cooking (in 11 countries, fewer than 1% of households), so women and girls spend long hours each day collecting firewood and other biomass. Without electricity, other household tasks such as food processing are far more laborious. Collecting water is another heavy burden for women and girls across Africa. It is estimated, for example, that women and girls in Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia are responsible for about 65% of all transport activities in rural households, such as collecting firewood and water and carrying grain to the grinding mill (Malmberg Calvo, 1994). One study on the impact of rural electrification in KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa found that household electricity connections sufficient to run small kitchen appliances increased women’s employment by 13.5% by reducing the time women had to devote to household chores.

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16 Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Investing in market-oriented agricultural infrastructure in Africa
17 Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition - Agricultural Technologies and Innovation Opportunities for Making a Difference
• **Hard and Soft infrastructure:** Women farmers have limited access to reliable road connectivity, transport, storage, processing, and preservation; to counter post-harvest losses. For example, efficient transport and logistics service foster economic and social opportunities as well as gains with multiplier effects such as increased regional and international market access. In today’s global economy, economic opportunities are increasingly linked to the mobility of goods, people, information, services, and investment; emphasizing the necessity of access to adequate, quality and efficient soft and hard infrastructure. In Africa transport costs can account for up to 50-75% of the retail price of goods in Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda. Similarly, shipping a car from China to Tanzania on the Indian Ocean coast costs $4,000, while getting it from neighboring Uganda can cost another $5,000. Connectivity issues and the high cost of accessing global markets is particularly acute in landlocked African countries. It is estimated that on average the volume of international trade of a landlocked developing country is only 60% of the trade volume of comparable coastal country.

• Women exporters are mostly disadvantaged as they need reliable transport and connectivity for competitive participation in modern Global Value Chains (GVC) and Regional Value Chains (RVC). The agribusiness sector, cannot function in the absence of efficient transport and logistics to sustain them. The frequent movement of intermediate goods across borders requires speed, reliability and low transaction costs to be competitive. This is particularly true for perishable agricultural products;

• Lastly, women cross-border traders experience verbal and physical abuse as well encounter high incidences of bribery and corruption. Such problems are most prevalent due to a myriad of reasons including, lack of harmonisation and standardisation of entry and exit procedures at Customs and Border Stops, low levels of female customs officials, lack of decent and affordable accommodation in border towns. A 2012 study revealed that 85% of the female cross-border traders between Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, with an average age of 32 have to pay a bribe to cross the border and that more than half reported being subjected to some form of physical harassment. A base line study of women cross-border traders in Liberia revealed that 37% of respondents had experienced sexual based violence at border crossings, and 15% had been raped or forced to have sex in exchange for favours;

• **Institutional infrastructure:** Strong institutions in Agricultural research, extension & education technology, information & communication services, financial services, and government ministries that impact agriculture are what is required to support the transformational agenda in Africa. All too often, African institutions are operating on outdated policies and regulatory frameworks or those that insufficiently cover the issues at hand.

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19 Transport in Africa: Get a move on. Economist Feb 16th 2013 – Wadi Halfa
21 Brenton and Isik 2012
23 Randriamaro and Budelender, 2008 in UNECA et al, 2010: 441
Access to Training and Technology: Developing women’s technical and entrepreneurial skills is key given the increasing food demands, the changing context of agricultural trade, unpredictable long-term effects of climate change. This puts emphasis on training and skills development for small scale women farmers and policymakers. This includes skills to improve productivity, increase adaptability to deal with change and crisis, and facilitate the diversification of livelihoods to manage risks are at a premium in rural areas. The training in new sets of skills which can be applied to farming and other rural production is an important source of support for rural livelihoods, including training in agricultural techniques, as well as business management and marketing skills. In addition, the competitive environment of regional and global agricultural trade has heightened the supply-side constraints for African women engaged in agribusiness and export business activities. The women traders lack the ability to meet the ever dynamic importer-mandated standards. Most standards require a high level of technical and industrial sophistication.

Access to Information: The gender gap in education, prevalent in previous decades, continues to affect women farmers today. Knowledge and training in farming methods and techniques are critical for both women and men. However, despite of their important role in agriculture, women often are not considered as farmers, therefore women farmers tend to have less access to agricultural information and particularly information attuned to their needs. Women farmers tend to receive second-hand information from husbands and other male relatives if they are not the head of their household. Furthermore, they may not attend training activities due to household responsibilities or mobility constraints. Recent figures on men’s and women’s access to advisory services continue to show relatively low levels of contact between farmers and extension agents, with disproportionally lower levels of access for women. A 2010 review of selected regions of Ethiopia and Ghana found that the levels of access to agricultural that women’s access was regularly less than men’s. In Ethiopia, women’s access was 20% compared with men’s at 27%; in Ghana, only 2% of women-headed households and 12% of men-headed households reported receiving extension advice (World Bank, 2010). Women’s lower access to information can be also explained by their often lower literacy and education level compared to men. In many countries, rural women are also indigenous women and are less likely than men to speak the national language, in which extension information is generally delivered. When information is provided through groups, women’s lower representation in these groups also limits their access to information.

4. OPPORTUNITIES

Removing the constraints arising from the gender gap in agriculture and fisheries sectors, including aquaculture has the potential to produce significant gains for society by increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and hunger and promoting economic growth. In essence targeted investments in women farmers and instituting policies that close this gender gap in African agriculture could yield enormous benefits for women and their families, communities and countries. Closing the gender gap could help increase food
security and improve livelihoods for Africa’s growing population, which is expected to quadruple within the next 90 years. If women world-wide had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30% and raise total agricultural output by 2.5–4%. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that the gains in agricultural production alone could lift 100 to 150 million people out of hunger (source FAO 2010/2011). In the same vein, according to a recent McKinsey study reports that gender is not only a pressing moral issue but a critical economic challenge. The report acknowledges that gender parity in economic outcomes (such as participation in the workforce or presence in leadership positions) is not necessarily – noting that men can also be disadvantaged in some instances. The focus of the findings of this report are on the economic potential available if the global gender gap were to be closed. In a full potential scenario in which women play an identical role in labour markets to men’s, as much as USD28 Trillion, or 26% could be added to global annual GDP in 2025.\footnote{\textit{McKinsey Global Institute - The power of Global Gender Parity}}

**Map: Gender Parity Core Points**

4.1 Political Will

10. While Africa seems ready for change, there are factors that have negatively impacted on the ability to realize the goals of agricultural growth are those of structural adjustment policies, decline in support to agriculture, poorly developed markets and low prices and weak political will to support agriculture (Adesina, 2010).
11. The CAADP calls for African governments to commit to spending at least 10% of national budgets on effective agriculture investments, through transparent and accountable budgets. More importantly the programme calls for governments to adopt smart, targeted policies that will boost agricultural productivity, increase the incomes of smallholder farmers and help create good jobs and viable business opportunities, lifting millions of Africans out of extreme poverty along the way. Targeted investments in women farmers and instituting policies that close this gender gap in African agriculture could yield enormous benefits for women and their families, communities and countries. Closing the gender gap could help increase food security and improve livelihoods for Africa’s growing population, which is expected to quadruple within the next 90 years. If women worldwide had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30% and raise total agricultural output by 2.5–4%. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that the gains in agricultural production alone could lift 100 to 150 million people out of hunger.

12. In addition, the African Union Commission (AUC); 10 Years after The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), declared 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security. While remaining committed to tackling food insecurity and malnutrition, 2014 was marked as a point for African agriculture to further capitalise on the continent’s human capital and address its growing social and economic demands through commercializing the sector. The main priorities hinged on expansion of agricultural production, developing the agro-processing and agribusiness sectors and increasing market access. Presently, the AUC has declared 2015 as the “Year of Women Economic Empowerment.

4.2 Agribusiness Growth Potential

13. In the coming years, Africa will experience an increase in demand for both local, regional and global urban food markets. The global population growth is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, putting a heavy demand on food security. The population in the region has grown annually by 2.7% increasing from 507 million in 1990, to approximately 936 million in 2013. Consequently, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) inundated with rapid population growth, will be experiencing challenges in the African countries’ ability to assure stable supply of and access to food.27

14. In business terms, the population growth translates in figures between USD 50 billion and USD 150 billion by 2030. According to a 2014 African Trade Report, African farmers will by 2030, practically have the opportunity to derive potential income to the tune of USD 4.5 billion, from international trade, and USD 30 billion from domestic and regional cross-border trade. The Africa-focused Future Agriculture Consortium also reports that there are 53 Private Equity Funds in the process of raising funds estimated at USD 5.8 billion, with at least 27 of them focused solely on agriculture.

27 FAO - Regional Overview of Food Insecurity in Africa African Food Security Prospects Brighter Than Ever - 2015
4.3 Regional and Global Value Chains

15. A significant share of food now reaches consumers through multiple segment value chains that include processors, wholesalers, distributors and modern retailers (Swinnen, Maertens. 2007; Gomez, Ricketts, 2013). In most developed countries, consumer concerns are now determining the orientation of food supply consequently ‘upgraded and modernized food supply chains are put in place that require different production methods with attention to product quality, the implementation and documentation of testing procedures to minimize food safety risks, upgraded processing facilities and investment in better storage systems’ (Maertens, Minten & Swinnen, 2012 p473-4). In developing countries food markets are also changing due to a range of factors including population and income growth, urbanization, the expansion globally and domestically of modern food retailing, distribution and wholesaling firms (FAO, 2010; Reardon and Timmer, 2007 in Gomez and Ricketts, 2013).

16. It is widely understood that the integration of small women producers and exporters in High-value agricultural Value chains (HVAVC) for domestic, regional and global markets has a significant role to play in poverty reduction. It is an important strategy for increasing women’s incomes through opportunities to diversify from low-value staple food commodities into higher-value commodities, such as livestock, dairy products, fish, fruits, vegetables, and spices. In addition, experts assert that small producers have a comparative advantage over large producers in certain crops as a result of labour intensity of cultivation or advantages of geographic dispersion of crop for weather and disease management. Small producer comparative advantage is evident in crops that are significantly more labour intensive than capital intensive such as coffee. The very nature of crops like coffee, prevents mechanised planting and harvesting. In addition to such comparative advantage, small producers whileshouldering higher capital costs experience lower labour costs, which potentially outweigh economies of scale of larger producers. It is reported that the cost differential can be as high as 40%.

5. WAY FORWARD – SUGGESTED ACTION POINTS

17. The document has highlighted the challenges that African women face in agriculture. It has further brought forth the opportunities in the sector and its potential to bring social-economic development benefits for women and their families. However, narrowing the gender inequality gap in agriculture will require a broad range of stakeholders (public and private sector, research institutions, donor community, women farmers & exporters, financial institutions) with an untied focus to identify the drivers for structural change in agriculture, and through collaborative efforts and input from all levels, address the constraints in a sustainable, impactful way that is aligned to the changing landscape of agriculture and modern management practices.

18. Closing the gap will be beneficial to Africa’s next generation. When a woman gains more control over her income, she gains more say over important decisions that affect her family, especially her children. Families in which women influence economic decisions allocate more income to food, health, education and children’s nutrition. Improving gender equality through agriculture could therefore translate into a generation of Africans who are better fed, better educated and better equipped to make productive contributions to their economies, within agriculture and beyond.
19. Change as such, will require intent and commitment on the part of Africa’s political and business leaders to create and maintain a wave of transformational and deliberate excellence in the continent’s agricultural sector. With women arguably being the first constituents of Africa’s agriculture sector, the stakeholders through a shared purpose and vision should holistically aim for inclusive growth, guided by gender-responsive policies and programmes. According to FAO investment in agriculture, including agro-industry, rural infrastructure, agricultural science, technology and support services such as financial institutions and extension programs, has been critically important to past growth performance. However, priorities based must be set according to the needs, risks and returns.28 To this end, an integrated programme that speaks to the various challenges and players; unique to each segment of the value chain (from production to market) is imperative. Given below are, but not limited to, interventions that correspond to some of the challenges raised in the document:

20. **Pillar I: Institutional Transformation**: Strong institutions both at national and subnational level are important to achieving Africa’s transformation agenda in agriculture. Institutions and their capacities or lack thereof, have a direct impact on the enabling environment and ecosystem that women operate in, from farm to market. According to the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, institutional innovations involve a change on the policies, process and system of organisations and practices of an institution, in an effort to encourage its improvement and increase impact.29 To this end, African governments need to ensure that innovative pro-poor and gender-responsive policies are established and the appropriate legal & regulatory frameworks are put in place. In turn the implementing agencies at sub-national levels need to have the capacity required to implement national policy and regulatory framework. This will help create an environment conducive to innovative approaches in the design of gender-responsive programmes. Gender-response programmes will require gender disaggregated data that can allow both women and men to participate in the activities for agricultural transformation. To specifically understand the constraints the women face gender-responsive programmes require that you “Know her”, “Design for her” and “Be Accountable to her”. The following are a few of the proposed interventions:

a. **Land Policy and Regulatory Framework**: Adopting gender-responsive land reforms is primal. African governments must ensure that women have equal access to and control of land through appropriate policy reforms. Such reforms should be conducted in a participatory process, with women playing a lead role in the design of related legislative frameworks. Secure land rights enhance a woman’s incentives to invest in her farm. Indeed, evidence has shown that increasing women’s formal land rights boosts agricultural investments, particularly in soil and water conservation. Strengthening land rights may also mean that women will have to spend less time and fewer resources trying to secure their land, freeing up resources for investment elsewhere. Having such rights thus holds great potential for improving women’s productivity, and policy-makers should consider implementing the following measures. Several options exist for securing women’s rights to land that are also dependent upon the socio-cultural and socio-political context. For example, in South Africa where access to land is intrinsically linked to the history of racial oppression the emphasis in the South African approach to

28 FAO
29 Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture Institutional Innovations – 2014
30 A Montpellier Panel Briefing Paper By Lindiwe Majele Sibanda
land reform was rights-based. The right to land was entrenched in the Constitutional Principles of 1997 for all South Africans regardless of race with the provision for redress to the historical distortions and dispossession to be corrected through Land Restitution, Land Redistribution and Land Tenure Reform. Over and above, land reforms should go beyond general gender-responsiveness, and ensure that legislature is both recognised and legally enforceable. Lessons learned elsewhere in China demonstrate that the country experienced agricultural transformation driven by policy reforms and incentives impacting at local level and centred on improving land and labour productivity. Now a middle income country China, feeds 1.3 billion people, equal to 20% of the world’s population.\(^\text{31}\)

b. **Fiscal Spending on Agriculture**: Increased and well targeted public spending is one policy instrument that has the potential to maximise agriculture’s contribution to inclusive socio-economic benefits. Reduced public spending on agriculture can have a negative impact on women. For example, according to a FAO analysis Kenya is putting its local producers at a disadvantage as the country spends only 4.8 % of its national budget on agriculture. In contrast, Kenya’s neighbouring countries Uganda and Tanzania spend 6% and 7% respectively.\(^\text{32}\)

c. **Farm-level Institutional Efficiency**: improve the design and implementation of programmes at farm level. In general, and for a myriad of reasons, access to input supplies is a major constraint for African women. However, there is a correlation between institutional weaknesses and the identification of gaps and establishment of programmes – the planning, fund disbursements, implementation of activities, monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the ability to create knowledge for gender-responsive policies and programmes, it is important to collect sex-disaggregated data in combination with targeted research and systemic gender analyses as they relate to gender-based constraints. This will ensure that both women and men are given the most appropriate support.

d. **Agricultural Trade Policy**: Within the specific context of the RECs, African governments must give significant importance to the interface between their domestic policies, regulatory frameworks and, the demands of intra-African agricultural and food trade. A number of African countries face a serious deficiency in agricultural policy formulation. The policies and laws are either outdated, insufficient and or obligations REC level not transposed into national policy and regulation.

e. **Evidence Based Gender Sensitive Policy Practice**: The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is the accepted framework through which the goal of transforming agriculture in Africa can be achieved (Brüntrup, 2011; NEPAD_CAADP, 2010). There is renewed commitment reflected in the Malabo Declaration AU Summit Declaration 2014 vision and goals of Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation (3AGT) is based on the operationalisation of the Sustaining CAADP Momentum Results Framework is an important instrument to guide planning and investments, and to measure, track and report progress on the agreed priorities. Creating and sustaining competitive and equitably-oriented agricultural and fisheries sectors that help small-scale farmers, especially women, will require explicitly

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\(^{31}\) China-DAC Study Group - Agricultural Transformation, Growth and Poverty Reduction  
\(^{32}\) High Food Prices and Food Security--Threats, Opportunities and Budgetary Implications for Sustainable Agriculture
examining gender issues and proactively integrating gender components into agricultural policy and development strategies. Agricultural policy, in many African countries, has not distinguished between men and women farmers and their different needs. Yet the persistent gender gap underscores that a shift in thinking is long overdue. It is now imperative that within the targets set for actions and reporting by 2017 gender disaggregated indicators and targets be adopted by African leaders. These will further require immediate investments in capacity to generate, document and analyse information that reflects progress and challenges facing the inclusion of women into the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Donors can play a catalytic role in this endeavour by supporting the development and rigorous evaluation of these critical programmes, thereby expanding knowledge of effective measures that support female farmers.

21. **Pillar II: Access to Productive Resources:** increase the availability, affordability and suitability of productive resources, including, finance, water, energy, hard infrastructure, transport and logistics. Equal access to productive resources is critical to production of competitive goods and ultimate women economic empowerment:

a. **Access to Agriculture Value Chain Finance** to support women in agricultural value chains. AVCF is an approach to financing that can be useful. It is reported as using an understanding of production, value-added and marketing processes to determine the financial needs of the players in the chain and how best to provide financing to those involved.

b. **SME Banking Value Chain** – Adopt tailor-made financing instruments for both the banked and unbanked women in agriculture: all SMEs including the unbanked, are part of the untapped “missing middle” - a business opportunity that African Financial Institutions should focus on. The need for SME banking is growing and therefore, Financial Institutions must begin to orient themselves with this growing industry; starting by understanding the specific SME financing opportunity. This requires a clear knowledge of the various women SME predicaments vis-à-vis access to finance in order to design the specific type of financial product that is needed for their business. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has adopted a standard banking value chain framework consisting of five discrete stages and one cross-cutting task. The five stages of the banking value chain identified are (i) understanding the market; (ii) developing products and services; (iii) acquiring and screening clients; (iv) serving clients, and (v) managing information and knowledge. Cutting across each of these five stages is the on-going and critical task of risk management. At each stage of the value chain there are actions and considerations particularly relevant to the SME sector.

c. **Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Policy-makers should consider providing women farmers with financing or should leverage other price incentives, such as time-limited discounts, to encourage them to increase their use of fertiliser. A randomised control trial in Mali found that when women received free fertiliser, it increased their use of that input as well as of other complementary inputs, including herbicides and hired labour. Policy-makers could pilot and assess time-sensitive financing options, such as vouchers, loans or...

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33 The term “value chain finance” refers to the flows of funds to and among the various links within a value chain.
34 IFAD - Agricultural value chain finance strategy and design Technical Note
transfers for the purchase of improved seed and other inputs that may be needed for cultivating improved seed varieties. Time-sensitive financing options may provide potential policy remedies when aligned with women’s cash flow. An ongoing experiment with seed vouchers in the Democratic Republic of Congo offers an innovative application of this approach. Policy-makers may also consider combining vouchers for a range of inputs within the same intervention, as is the case in the Fertiliser Input Subsidy Programme in Malawi, where farmers were given coupon packages for purchasing fertiliser, hybrid or open-pollinated varieties of maize seed and legumes.

d. **Input Supplies:** Reports show that to enhance the productivity of small-scale farmers and to foster their role in feeding the continent, it is essential to support them within the appropriate public-private-partnerships, including the formation of farmer groups and/or cooperatives. Grouping allows them to pool resources, share risks and provides greater access to technologies and innovation. Among the lessons learned those from the Asian ‘Green Revolution’; and its dependency on high input/high output systems can be modified to suit growers and systems of production in Africa.\(^{36}\)

Certify small fertiliser bags for use by women - Policy-makers and private sector actors could pilot interventions to certify smaller bags of fertiliser for women farmers, and assess whether these measures improve fertiliser use and returns. Fertiliser is typically certified and sold in large, bulk quantities. For example, fertilisers such as urea and ammonium phosphate (DAP) are currently sold in many West African countries in sealed and certified 50kg bags, which a large quantity is considering the low average levels of fertiliser use. Because women cultivate smaller plots of land than men on average, they need even smaller quantities of fertiliser for their plots. However, small bags of certified fertiliser are not readily available. Women therefore often have to resort to purchasing fertiliser of uncertain or adulterated quality, which perhaps helps explain their limited use of the input and their poorer returns from its application.

e. **Production Facilities:** Increase investment in production facilities for agribusiness activities. Most African women are still using manual forms of food processing, which not only has its toll on them but is also inefficient and inhibits competitiveness. They lack to resources such as scientific infrastructure needed to enhance the competitiveness of their goods in agricultural trade. The capital-intensive nature of setting up and running production facilities is a commitment that most African women tend to struggle with.

f. **Research and Development:** Increased investment in research and development (R & D) and the maintenance of the right skilled labour with sufficient staff levels are important for improved competitiveness of women in agriculture. R & D mostly in the hands of the private sector typically does not cover African SME agricultural activities. The optimal allocation of R & D investment among African countries indicates that in order to maximize the welfare of the region increased allocation of investment is required. In a study of the Agricultural Science & Technology Indicators (ASTI), sustained agricultural growth through R & D investments, in the best performing Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries yields a significant reduction in the incidence of poverty\(^{37}\). Reports show that Ghana though not on target yet has spent a relatively high proportion of 0.7% per annum on average

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\(^{36}\) Global Forum on Food security and Nutrition - Agricultural Technologies and Innovation Opportunities for Making a Difference

\(^{37}\) Nin-Pratt Alejandro – Agricultural R & D Investment, Poverty, and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa – Prospects and Needs to 2050
since 2003 on research and development. Other reports state that the country in partnership with donors was one of the first to prioritise investing in new disease resistant varieties of cassava back in the 1970s and 1980s. Cassava, a formerly “unfashionable” crop that is nevertheless important in the diet of the poor, had come under severe threat from the mosaic virus and from mealybug infestation.  

38 g. Promotion of Inclusive Rural Advisory Services: According to FAO, investment in the promotion inclusive rural advisory in addition to R&D plays a strong role in the potential to expand production, sharing knowledge about technologies and innovative practices among family farmers. Inclusive and rural advisory services can help close the gap in agricultural productivity and sustainability between developed and developing countries.  

22. Pillar III: Investment in Hard and Soft Infrastructure  

a. Enabling infrastructure: (public utilities, public works, transportation, and research facilities) is essential for agricultural development. Infrastructure is defined here as facilities, structures, associated equipment, services, and institutional arrangements that facilitate the flow of agricultural goods, services, and ideas. Infrastructure represents a foundational base for applying technical knowledge in sustainable development and relies heavily on civil engineering. Emphasis is often placed on the hard infrastructure such as roads, irrigation systems and structures however it is equally important to consider the soft infrastructure that is critical to ensure agricultural growth and development. Whereas the challenges with the provision of hard infrastructure relate to access, the challenges with the provision of soft infrastructure such as the institutions in the sector, the cultural and social standards of a country and the system of government and law enforcement hinge on an appreciation for the role that women play in society and the prejudice that often exists within these. Considering women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, infrastructure in terms of care facilities are crucial to enable women to engage in productive and income generating activities  

b. Customs and Border Management – Safety & Security along Trade Corridors: African women need a safe, secure, efficient and transparent environment along Africa’s Trade Transit Corridors. Today, women informal cross border traders still suffer from invisibility, stigmatisation, violence, harassment, poor working conditions and lack of recognition of their economic contribution. Key interventions should include, but not limited to:  

• Increased transparency and publication of Customs and border requirements;  
• Increased staffing of women Customs officials;  
• Gender sensitisation and training of Customs officials;  
• Training of women traders training on entry and exit procedures through outreach programmes;  
• Increased training in human rights;  


39 FAO - The State of Food and Agriculture - Innovation in family farming - 2014
• Establishment of regional institutions for recourse on harassment, bribery, corruption etc.
• Establishment of affordable and secure accommodation

c. **Access to Markets & Trade-related Constraints:** Access to markets by African women farmers, remains limited at the local, national, regional and international levels. Increased trade is widely promoted as an important ingredient to stimulate growth and reduce poverty. Studies show that informal cross-border trade represents a significant proportion of regional cross-border trade in sub-Saharan Africa. It is important to note African women play a key role in informal trade. For example, approximately 70% of informal cross-border trade in southern Africa is by women. In West Africa, the contribution of women informal cross-border traders to national GDP has been estimated at 64% of value added trade in Benin, 46% in Mali and 41% in Chad. Taking a gender dimension, therefore, in addressing trade barriers, is an approach which can help African countries to ensure that there is equitable export-led development benefits for both women and men:

   d. **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures:** Policy makers must take on board the critical importance of standardization and harmonization of SPS measures within the RECs. In addition, national governments need to improve the pace at which they react to changes in SPS measures as a first step to allow women traders for the efficient allocation of time and other resources during the compliance period. For the women traders, any information lag can result in unwarranted trade disruption, lost revenues, exposure to competition and, difficulties in regaining a strong position in the playing field.

   e. **Increase access to information:** Information is the interconnecting bedrock of agricultural trade across the value chain. Not only is information in agricultural trade asymmetrical it is also difficult to obtain particularly by women in the rural areas. Information gaps are a compounding factor in the meeting of technical and non-technical barriers experienced across the value chain. Different instruments have to be made available depending on the literacy levels of the women.

   f. **Export Promotion:** Giving women support for export promotion is important for regional and global market access. Literature on export promotion shows that the keys to successful national export promotion and development programs are government policy decisions that affect export trade. A country's export development policy established in terms of appropriate economic instruments and export promotion measures is critical to national foreign trade performance. Two sets of policies affect foreign trade management in general, and export promotion and development in particular: (a) foreign trade policies and other policies with direct influence on foreign trade, (b) Policies that regulate other economic activities, but at the same time influence the general performance of foreign trade.\(^{40}\)

   g. **Production and Scientific Centres:** Increased investment in scientific centres is primal. Women farmers and exporters’ supply-side constraints mostly stem from the lack of scientific infrastructure needed to enhance the competitiveness of traders in agricultural trade. The capital-intensive nature of setting up and running scientific centres to implement and monitor SPS measures is a commitment that most African countries are struggling to meet. Different regional and international markets will impose different SPS regulations

\(^{40}\) The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) *Introduction to Export Promotion*
and standards that will require exporters of agricultural products to engage production systems that are acceptable in import markets. On one hand, this entails the costly upgrade of production systems in order to produce for foreign markets, while, on the other hand, it may not necessarily be cost efficient to use the same system to produce for local consumption. The lack of adequate scientific centres is tantamount to ineffective market access for the local traders. Therefore, the African countries need Donor support to establish and maintain scientific centres that can produce for both international and local markets in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Pillar IV: Development of high-value agricultural value chains - As the landscape of high-value agriculture markets evolve, it is presupposed that the vulnerability of small producers in the absence of necessary support, grows in equal proportion – excluding them from potential participation and economic gains. In the last three decades, high-value agricultural markets are reported to have become increasingly sophisticated, consolidated and regulated, making it increasingly challenging for small producers and exporters to competitively participate in these value chains. In the past, markets were characterised by a level playing field with producers of different sizes participating in spot markets. The forces of demand and supply prevailed - a supplier’s market, with the highest bidder purchasing the available product. As mentioned earlier, in response to Africa’s rapid population rise, increased global incomes, urbanisation and the liberalisation and growth of international trade, traditional markets with vertically coordinated market linkage systems, have seen a shift in the local sourcing of inputs. Today, local sourcing from both developed and developing countries has largely been replaced by centralised national, regional or international supply chains.

Today, many interventions in the agriculture sector that aim at reducing poverty take value chains as point of departure. Regionalization in Africa presents opportunities for small and medium-sized horticulture producers to scale up and experience organizational learning as they adapt to increased standards when moving from national to regional to global chain participation, as evidenced in the horticulture section of the OECD (2014) paper.

Pillar V. Increased Access to Technology and Mechanised Methods: Due to household and child-care responsibilities, female farmers have limited time to devote to their own farm work, which undermines their productivity. Making matters worse, they have fewer household members on average than men to help them on their farms, and they face difficulties in hiring additional farm labour, either because they lack the necessary cash to pay for it or because social norms restrict them from hiring men to work for them. When women do hire labour, their workers generate lower returns for them compared with male farmers – perhaps because women’s cash constraints can lead them to hire cheaper, less productive labour. In addition, these constraints may vary for female heads of household depending on whether they are unmarried, divorced or widowed.

As such, improving women’s access to tools and machinery that can reduce the amount of on-farm labour required has potential to reduce the productivity gap. Tools and machinery may also help improve women’s returns from using available labour on the farm. Use of better tools and equipment may appeal to women who have limited time due to household responsibilities. Women who work on their own farms but face challenges in hiring outside labour may also benefit. Policy-makers should consider piloting the provision of vouchers, cash transfers, loans or discounts to women farmers so that they can hire or purchase machinery and equipment, and evaluate the impact of these programmes on women’s
agricultural productivity. Policy-makers may learn from previous experience when designing these pilots. For example, a programme in Kenya and Tanzania targeted women to purchase pumps for irrigation but, despite the emphasis on women, a qualitative assessment of the programme noted that they constituted only 10% of total pump buyers.17 This example shows that market-based approaches to increase technology use also need to address the information and financial constraints that women face, such as information on how to use machinery. It also shows that the design of technologies should be better attuned to women’s situations, cultural appropriateness and ergonomic comfort wherever possible.

27. To mitigate child-care constraints policy-makers and practitioners should consider piloting community-based child-care centres to alleviate the responsibilities that women shoulder at home, and assessing the impact of such centres on women’s farm work. Child-care centres have already improved labour participation for women working in other sectors. For example, a pre-school enrolment programme in rural Mozambique helped care-givers, mostly mothers, save 15 hours per week on their child-care responsibilities, as evidenced by a recent experimental evaluation. The programme also increased the likelihood that caregivers would work in the labour market by six percentage points. Similarly, a study in Togo found that women are more likely to work when they have fewer children to care for, and that young women are more likely to participate in the labour market if their children are enrolled in pre-school.

28. Policy-makers should further consider piloting and assessing interventions that provide female farmers with financing to hire outside labour and or machinery for specific farm tasks, such as planting, ploughing, weeding and harvesting. These measures may include vouchers specific to hiring labour, cash transfers and credit. Many agricultural tasks must be conducted within specific time periods, and labour shortages often occur during these periods. If women farmers cannot afford to hire additional labourers or cannot hire labourers to complete tasks at the appropriate time, the delay may result in lower productivity on their farms. Providing finance for these tasks may permit women to access labour in a timely manner, boosting both the number of labourers they can hire and their effectiveness. For example, a preliminary evaluation of cash transfers given to households with children under the age of five in Zambia found that they increased spending on hired labour in addition to other agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertiliser.
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