

Inspiring Agricultural Change

Sharefair on Rural Women's Technologies to Improve Food Security, Nutrition, and Productive Family Farming

On the 15-17 October 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya, a Sharefair on Rural Women's Technologies for Productive Family Farming will take place to share and showcase agricultural production and value-addition innovations. The intent is for smallholders in the East and Southern Africa region to display their technologies and learn from one another as well as get the opportunity to interact with entrepreneurs, financial sector representatives and policy makers.

Two high-level panel discussions are envisioned to take place during the Sharefair to enhance knowledge and experience sharing. The first panel will focus on *Gender and Rural Technologies* to coincide with Rural Women's Day 15 October, while the second one will explore *Food Security, Nutrition and Gender* to coincide with World Food Day 16 October. The targeted audience is an invited guest list of high-level panelists, including Regional Directors for UN and international organizations, and interested attendees at the Sharefair.

The expected format will be a two-hour long interactive "town hall" panel. After a 15-minute introduction by the African Union (proposed/TBC), four expert panelists will present a statement each (total 60 minutes). There will then be the opportunity to interact with the audience through a Q&A session (45 minutes). A seasoned expert moderator will facilitate the session to ensure interaction, encourage participation, coordinate input and ensure a lively debate.

Panel 1 – "Gender and Rural Technologies"

Women are responsible for almost half of the world's food production and in some developing countries they make up 60 percent of the agricultural labour force. Yet women are less likely to own land, and when they do, they are likely to own less than men and of poorer quality. Women receive only a fraction of the credit made available to the agricultural sector. They are rarely consulted in the solutions being under-represented in decision-making. Women farmers are less likely than men to use modern inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, pest control measures and mechanical tools. Many studies show that yields on plots managed by women are lower than those managed by men, as women simply do not have access to the same inputs. If they did, their yields would be the same as men's, they would produce more and overall agricultural production would increase. The estimated yield gaps ranged widely but many clustered around 20-30 percent, with an average of 25 percent. Thus, closing the gap could increase agricultural output in the developing world by 2.5-4 percent, on average.

One critical bottleneck is rural women's limited access and exposure to new technologies. Indeed, a recent IFPRI report (2014) noted that agricultural technologies could increase global crop yield as much as 67 percent and cut food prices nearly in half by 2050. Technology options are many, but transparent evidence-based information to support decisions on the potential of alternative technologies is relatively scarce. Additionally, information needs to be shared on adequate technologies to exploit the potential of rural women (SOFA, 2011).

This panel will serve as a platform to share and discuss opportunities and challenges in women's access to and use of technologies. It will involve exploring how to best increase agricultural

productivity and value addition in a sustainable and equal way, at policy and practical level, through these technologies. The emerging role of the private sector will also be analyzed to examine their role in creating incentives. The potential of young people in contributing to the development of feasible innovations for scaling up will also be discussed.

Proposed panelists include representatives from Private Sector/Business, Academia, Research, and a Farmer/Practitioner. Proposed moderator is Ms. Zainab Badawi, BBC Presenter/Journalist.

Panel 2 – “Food Security, Nutrition and Gender”

Women in the developing world hold the key to building sustainable solutions to free themselves, their families and their communities from food insecurity. As mothers, farmers, teachers and entrepreneurs, women can – if provided with the right nutrition, education, job training and health care – break the cycle of hunger and live lives free of the burden of malnutrition. If we look at women’s rights and gender equity through the prism of food security and nutrition, we can see how the malnutrition of women and girls stems from political, economic and social inequality. Malnutrition is a marker of both our failure to extend rights for women and to achieve development.

Women and girls represent about 60 percent of the 842 million chronically undernourished people in our world. Undernutrition among mothers and children is the underlying cause of 2.5 million deaths each year. These nutrition facts are incompatible with the fact that women produce most of the developing world’s food, provide roughly 50 percent of agricultural labour, and they represent almost two-thirds of the world’s poor livestock keepers.

It is of critical to take steps to address the structural causes of gender inequality and eliminate the barriers to the empowerment of women. We must ensure women’s access to training, and resources, including financing. Women are empowered when they gain control over their own life and gain power to make choices. In addition to increases in production and income, closing the gender gap in agriculture would generate broader social and economic benefits by strengthening women’s direct access to, and control over, resources and incomes. Increasing agricultural production by 2.5-3 percent by closing the gender gap could reduce the number of undernourished people by 12-17 percent. When women control additional income, they spend more of it than men do on food, health, clothing and education for their children. This has positive implications for immediate well-being as well as long-term human capital formation and economic growth through improved health, nutrition and education outcomes.

This panel will serve as a platform to discuss women’s role in food security and nutrition in order to identify specific challenges and opportunities, and ways to use them to improve food security and nutrition across the board.

Proposed panelists include representatives from Nutrition, Government, Academia, Research, and a Farmer/Practitioner. Proposed moderator is Mr. Cheikh Sourang, IFAD.

