



PROGRESSIO



POLICY BRIEF No. 7/2012

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY

Introduction

Women are the majority labourers in the agricultural sector but this however, is not reflected in agribusiness industry as men tend to dominate this level. Major reasons for the women's exclusion are attitudinal, historical, legislative and cultural in nature. The reasons are also linked to women's limited access and control over key production resources such as land, livestock and equipment among others. Drawing from how women fared under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe, this paper considers the participation of women in the agribusiness industry and the regulatory framework governing the agribusiness industry with the intention of providing recommendations to improve the participation of women in the agribusiness industry. In the paper, agribusiness is defined as denoting '*the collective business activities that are performed from farm to fork. It covers the supply of agricultural inputs, the production and transformation of agricultural products and their distribution to final consumers*' (FAO, 2010).

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this paper are to:

- Investigate the nature and type of agribusiness activities in Zimbabwe and the extent to which women are involved
- Analyse current policies and legislation-their strengths and weaknesses in promoting women's participation in agribusiness
- Offer recommendations on how the gaps could be addressed

Study Methodology

This study used qualitative methodology to gather the required data. Primary and secondary sources were used to collect data on the participation of women in the agribusiness industry in Zimbabwe. Primary data came from consultative meetings held in the various regions where NANGO has regional offices. These include Harare, Masvingo, Mutare, Gweru and Bulawayo. These meetings made a deliberate effort to have women represented. NANGO regional coordinators facilitated and coordinated such meetings. Key informant interviews were held with key people in the various farmers' unions and associations that include the Zimbabwe Farmers Union, the Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union, the Zimbabwe Women Poultry Farmers Trust, Domboshava Horticulture Association and Murewa Agriculture Producers Association, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development and the Ministry of Agriculture. The study also relied on review of existing documents, including books, policies, acts and bye laws.

Major findings

The participation of women in the agri-business industry is limited by historical and economic factors. There is division of labour which sees women dominate production of most value chains including livestock, tobacco, cotton, horticulture, oilseed and sugar with limited participation in trading and marketing. Cultural norms and expectations as well as financial and other resource constraints limit the participation of women in trading and marketing components of the agribusiness industry. Some of the constraints cited on particular value chains include centralization of the market in Harare for tobacco, EU trade regulations on exportation of raw sugar to Europe which restrict women to local packaging operations, market opening and closing times for marketing of vegetables and lack of information about the export market for floriculture.

Value chains such as cotton are supported by contract farming yet such services lack when it comes to oilseed which is dominated by women. In agro-chemical factories and in production of technology and implements used in agriculture, women dominate as office workers as they do not have the requisite qualifications to operate in chemical and equipment production. The legal framework generally promotes women's participation in the agribusiness industry. However, implementation of the legislation in the majority of cases is against legislation.

Recommendations

- Ownership of key agricultural production resources is key to the participation of women in the agribusiness industry. The government should therefore provide women with land and equipment for agricultural activities if they are to effectively participate in agribusiness activities. A quota system can be considered in the distribution of agriculture equipment by the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that women benefit from the equipment.
- Under the current indigenization drive, women farmers should be considered in ownership of agribusiness industries. This ownership should be accompanied by capacity building to enhance their performance.
- Commodity production decisions must be driven predominantly by market requirements. Farmers' Unions should be vigilant in providing market information to women farmers.
- There is need for partnership and coordination between Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development and the Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprise Development in financially and technically promoting women in the agribusiness industry.
- Women need to come up with women's agribusiness associations that assist them in their business ventures. Civil society organizations can help build the capacity of these associations for them to effectively deliver services to women.
- There is need for the government to monitor the implementation of various policies and legislation to ensure they are implemented well. In the same manner, civil society organizations should play an important role in raising awareness on the provisions of various policies governing the agribusiness industry.

- The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education through higher and tertiary institutions should incentivize enrolment of women in science programmes that would see an increased number of women in agro-chemical industry. At a lower level, Science, Maths and Technology camps can be promoted and scaled up in schools.
- The government should negotiate with the EU for the revision of the EU trade regulations on supply of raw sugar.
- Civil society can train women to diversify from food crops and produce high-value cash and horticulture crops and participate in dairy farming, production of cattle and pigs.
- The government needs to promote contract-farming schemes and out-grower schemes to facilitate the transition among women from subsistence agriculture to market-oriented agriculture. Contracted women growers would get specific technology that can be owned and operated by the agribusiness.

NB. *This policy brief is a summary of the policy monograph on the participation of women in the agribusiness industry written by Dr. Sunungurai Chingarande. The policy monograph was developed by the National Association of NGOs (NANGO), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) from the University of Zimbabwe and Progressio-Zimbabwe with the financial support from the European Union. For more detailed information on the policy monograph contact Mr. Marongwe Machinda at NANGO offices in Harare at machinda@nango.org.zw or Mr. Mweembe Christopher at Progressio Zimbabwe in Harare at chrismweembe@yahoo.com*