

Women's Role in Food Security and Threats from WTO

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Women and Food Security

- Globally women are responsible for half of the global food production.
- 8 out of 10 farmers in Africa and 6 out of 10 farmers in Asia are women.
- They undertake farming activities from seed conservation to land preparation and from watering to harvesting.
- Besides, they are responsible for household food security

The presentation highlights three key roles of women

- Guardian of seed and biodiversity
- Production of food
- Agriculture labour

Women as the guardian of seed/biodiversity

ROLE OF WOMEN

- In Sub-Saharan Africa women cultivate as many as 120 different plants in the spaces alongside men's cash crops
- In south asia conservation of seeds is traditionally a responsibility of women
- In Bolivia, Columbia and Peru etc women develop and maintain seed banks

THREAT FROM WTO

- TRIPs agreement (WTO) promotes patenting of life forms which facilitates MNCs to patent seed
- The guardians of seed turned into merely the customers of 'new varieties'
- Women lose control over natural resources

Women as the producers of food crops

ROLE OF WOMEN

- Women produce 60-80 percent of the food in most developing countries
- In Sub-Saharan Africa women produce 80 percent of basic food stuff
- In Rwanda women-as the traditional bean farmers-provide half of the protein consumed by people

THREAT FROM WTO

- The unfair agreement on agriculture allows rich countries to subsidise their agriculture that results in dumping of cheap products
- Women face severe problems in marketing their products

Women as agricultural labour

ROLE OF WOMEN

- In Southeast Asia women provide up to 90 percent of labour for rice cultivation
- Women perform 25-45 percent of agricultural field tasks in Columbia and Peru
- In Pakistan 80 percent of livestock is managed by women
- Women constitute 53 percent of agricultural labour in Egypt

THREAT FROM WTO

- GATS (WTO) promotes the liberalisation of services like **rice transplantation, crop production and protection practices, harvesting, livestock rearing** etc
- Such liberalisation will wipe out women's livelihood and will aggravate the poverty situation

Conclusion

- The trade liberalisation policies encourage corporate agriculture policies and exclude smallholders
- Since women have a primary role in food sector they lose control over natural resources and income
- WTO does not consider women related issues in its agreements

Recommendations

- Women related issues should be brought into the on-going negotiations at the WTO
- Research needs to be done for more in-depth analysis of women and trade related issues
- NGOs and social movements - working on trade – and women movements need to come together on these issues
- At national level governments should be sensitised through research and lobbying

Recommendations

Why research and lobbying is important?

- Women's contribution is not reflected in census and surveys conducted by governments.
- Their activities are not considered economic activities
- In 2004 a WTO representative told a women's group that without compelling economic arguments the progress on gender mainstreaming is impossible

Thank you