



Contribution of women towards agroecological transition

SNAPSHOT

- Women make up to 43% of the global agricultural labor force (FAO).
- Globally, less than 15% of all landholders are women.
- Only 2% of the organisations governing the food system in low and middle countries are led by women (UN Women).
- 1 in 4 women and girls are expected to be moderately or severely food insecure by 2030 (UN Women)

Understanding women's contributions to the transition of agroecology is essential for promoting gender equality because it recognizes and values the often-overlooked roles women play in sustainable agriculture.

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About the Author

Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) is a membership-based organization dedicated to promoting and coordinating the development of the organic agriculture sector in Tanzania. Under the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in East Africa (KHEA) project, TOAM serves as the lead implementing partner in Tanzania. The organization works in close collaboration with associate partners—including SAT, NSHDA, MSOAPO, and Floresta Tanzania—as well as a network of master trainers. These trainers work directly with multipliers, who in turn provide technical support to farmers on the ground, equipping them with practical knowledge on organic agriculture and agroecological practices.

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Women are key drivers of agroecological transformation. As farmers, caregivers, knowledge holders, and community leaders, their daily actions promote and empowers the community growth, food availability and accessibility as well as decision making actions through below contributions:



Why Women Matter in Agroecology



1. Biodiversity and food security

They cultivate a diverse range of crops and livestock, preserving indigenous varieties and ensuring a stable supply of nutritious food for their families and communities.



2. Sustainable farming practices.

Women often lead in adopting low-input, organic techniques such as composting, intercropping, and natural pest control that restore soil health and reduce environmental harm.



3. Community cohesion and knowledge sharing

Women actively participate in farmer groups, seed exchanges, and savings associations, creating strong networks for mutual learning and local resilience.



4. Soil and water Conservation

Through practices like mulching, terracing, and water harvesting, women help prevent erosion and maintain water availability in agroecological systems.



5. Advocacy and Leadership

Increasingly, women lead community initiatives and influence policies that support local food systems, gender equity, and sustainable farming.



6. Knowledge Transmission and Informal Education

Women pass down agricultural knowledge through generations by teaching practices like seed selection and pest control, to children and other community members.

CHALLENGES FACED

Limited participation in decision making

Women are underrepresented in farmer organizations, cooperative leadership, and policy spaces which affects their voices from key decisions on resource use, markets, or technology adoption.

Low recognition of their contribution

Women's roles in seed saving, biodiversity conservation, and food production are often undervalued. This leads to exclusion from rewards, recognition, or support schemes.

Cultural and gender norms

Traditional beliefs may restrict women's freedom to attend trainings and limits their technical expertise

Limited access to financial resources and credits

In many rural contexts, women do not own land which restricts their ability to make long-term farming decisions or invest.

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WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Strengthen women's Land Rights

- Reform land policies to ensure women can own, inherit, and control land.
- Promote joint land titling for married couples and secure tenure for women farmers.

Improve Access to Resources and Services

- Design agricultural extension, credit, and input supply systems that are gender-inclusive.
- Provide targeted support for women's access to organic inputs, tools, training, and certification.

Ensure Equitable Market Access to land

- Support women in value addition, branding, and organic certification.
- Provide market information, financial literacy training, and control over income earned.

Promotes women inclusion in leadership

- Ensure women are represented in leadership roles in different groups.
- Create safe and supportive spaces for women to engage in decision-making and advocacy.

Reduce Women's Unpaid Workload

- Invest in time- and labor-saving technologies (e.g., water access, energy-saving stoves).
- Support childcare, collective farming, and shared responsibilities in households and communities.

Challenge Gender Norms and Stereotypes

- Conduct community awareness campaigns to shift mindsets around women's roles in agriculture.
- Engage men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality and shared responsibilities.

Make Education and Training Inclusive

- Tailor training content and delivery to women's needs (language, time, format).
- Support peer learning, mentorship, and women-only training opportunities where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Women are not just participants but powerful agents of change in the agroecological transition. Their deep knowledge, labor, leadership, and commitment to community wellbeing are essential to building food systems that are sustainable, equitable, and resilient. Yet, to unlock their full potential, systemic barriers must be addressed; including access to land, resources, markets, and decision-making spaces.

Promoting gender equity in agroecology is not only a matter of justice but also a strategic pathway to achieve climate resilience, food security, and ecological balance. When women are empowered, entire communities thrive. Investing in women is investing in the future of agroecology.

By integrating these actions into agroecology programs, policies, and farmer support systems, we can create a more just, inclusive, and resilient food system led by both women and men.

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We proudly dedicate this knowledge product to the lead farmers engaged in advocacy, extension officers, and trainers who champion gender equity in agriculture. Your tireless efforts to ensure that women are equally represented in agricultural value chains and that their contributions are recognized and celebrated are fundamental to building a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food system.