

**Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Rapidly Transforming Food Systems**

**Discussion Starter[[1]](#footnote-2)**

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# Introduction

Gender equality and food systems are intertwined. On one hand, gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. While the world has made major strides in reducing inequalities, achieving full gender equality remains a challenge. The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labor market, etc.—with negative consequences for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice.

Stark gender inequalities are both a cause and an outcome of unsustainable food systems, unjust food access, consumption and production. Tackling gender injustice and truly empowering women is not only a fundamental prerequisite for food systems transformation but also a goal. Evidence demonstrates that gender-based discrimination, or the denial of women’s rights, is one of the major causes of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity. Women are more vulnerable both to chronic food and nutrition insecurity and to food insecurity caused by shocks (illness, disasters or food price rises). In 2019, across all continents, the prevalence of food insecurity was higher for women than for men. But while we have evidence that gender inequality causes food insecurity (levels of hunger are higher in countries with a lower degree of gender equality), we also have evidence that increasing gender equality and the empowerment of women results in improved food security and nutrition[[2]](#footnote-3). The economic case for closing the gender gap is compelling because gender inequalities limit agricultural productivity and efficiency and, in so doing, undermine development. Increases in GDP and crop production, as well as accelerated poverty alleviation associated with closing the gender gap, are accompanied by other social and economic benefits. Women spend a larger share of their income on children’s nutrition, health and education than men[[3]](#footnote-4).

There is consensus that food systems need to transform to feed and nourish people in a sustainable way that does not stretch our planetary boundaries. The most recent estimate for 2019 shows that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 690 million people, or 8.9 percent of the global population, were undernourished. The pandemic may add an additional 83 to 132 million people to the ranks of the undernourished[[4]](#footnote-5). Two billion people, or 25.9 percent of the global population, experienced hunger or did not have regular access to nutritious and sufficient food in 2019. These trends in food insecurity contribute to increasing the risk of child malnutrition, as food insecurity affects diet quality, including the quality of children’s and women’s diets, and people’s health in different ways.

Women are key actors in food systems. Their role is crucial throughout the food chains, for example, from production, to food preparation, to distribution within the household, as traders in the markets, as food processors, and as laborers in food systems. However, their roles are generally undervalued and constrained by limitations on their access to resources, including finance, services, and labor market opportunities. There is documented evidence of unequal access to resources such as land, pasture and water; seeds and fertilizers; technology and information and; extension and advisory services that reduce their potential to be productive and realize their rights. Their work in agriculture is precarious; they are over-represented in seasonal, part-time and low-wage work, and the informal sector constitutes their primary source of employment. Market institutions and governance models are gender blind, often imposing constraints to women’s participation and benefits from markets. Addressing these gaps is necessary but not sufficient as there is need to address the underlying gender norms and structural causes of inequality.

Women’s own food security and nutrition needs – and often those of girls and adolescents– can often be neglected at the household level, where discriminatory gender and social norms prevail. For example, despite rapid economic growth in India, many women and girls still lack access to nutritious foods provided they eat last and least, as a direct result of patriarchal systems further intensified by class and caste hierarchies, violence against women; including early marriage. Norms that shape traditional division of household responsibilities in in many contexts, can sometimes leave women largely in charge of growing and buying food for the household, and to cooking. This division of labor leads to heavy burdens on women for unpaid care work, which in turn affects their health, and their participation in economic activities. Norms and perceptions about male traditional roles discourage men from participating in caregiving roles and in participating in food preparation, despite the evidence that addressing gender and social norms has positive outcomes for maternal, child and overall household nutrition.

There is evidence that women’s empowerment is a pathway to improved nutrition due to positive links between women’s empowerment and child and maternal health. Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index data from various countries shows a correlation between different indicators of women’s empowerment and nutrition. For example, in Ghana women’s empowerment was strongly associated with diet quality and women’s aggregate empowerment and participation in credit decisions was positively and significantly correlated with women’s dietary diversity score. However, analysis of data from six countries in Africa and Asia suggests that some tradeoffs exist: while there are no tradeoffs between dimensions of women’s empowerment in agriculture and household and child nutritional outcomes, the tradeoffs are made by the woman herself. Increased participation in agriculture often comes at the expense of women’s workload and own nutrition[[5]](#footnote-6).

The focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment must consider the multiple roles women play in the food system-as producers, entrepreneurs, leaders and consumers and how their decision making and control over resources can enhance their empowerment, the relationships that they negotiate as they do these and how to address the gender norms driving inequality via engaging men and boys to change these relations to be more equitable and the way institutions in the food systems reinforce gender inequality. Analysis and action must also take an intersectional approach, understanding that different identities of women can compound their marginalization in the food system, For example indigenous women might face greater barriers in participating in, benefiting or engaging in different aspects of the food system, due to their multiple identities as indigenous and as women.

# Reframing the nexus of gender equality and food systems transformation

Food systems transformation is a political, economic and environmental issue, but, most importantly, it is a gender justice issue.

Shaping food systems so they become gender transformative requires a combination of improved knowledge, sound policies, regulations, and investments across the production- to-consumption continuum. It also requires a rethinking of the role of women as producers and consumers. In this sense, we must move from “what are women’s contributions in agriculture” toward “how food and agricultural systems contribute to or can contribute to the process of women’s empowerment”, and “how these systems are changing to create an enabling environment”, which could have a significant impact on gender equality and empowerment of women, in a context of accelerating climate change[[6]](#footnote-7). In this fast-evolving context, important questions become “how do women’s responses to climate change build the resilience of food systems” and “how women can be empowered to lead the development of climate resilient agricultural and food systems”.

The actions of this change lever will be to work with all actors to achieve a gender just, transformative and equitable food system.

Gender just, transformative and equitable food systems are those which guarantee a world without hunger, where women, men, girls and boys have equal access to nutritious, healthy and safe food, and access to the means to produce, sell and purchase food. They are food systems where the roles, responsibilities, opportunities and choices are available to women and men – including unpaid caregiving and food provision – are not predetermined by restrictive gender roles but are developed in line with individual capacities and aspirations and human rights. It is a food system where countries, communities and households and individual men and women are equipped to produce enough food for their own populations through sustainable environmentally sound and climate resilient processes, while also being able to participate in gender-equitable local, global and regional food trading systems.

So as food systems transform, the goal is to ensure that they transform in ways that are equitable, that ensure meaningful engagement and benefits to all, women, boys, girls, men, indigenous peoples amongst others.

To achieve this, we propose a key set of cross cutting priority areas and actions for all stakeholders across action tracks to consider, as well as action track specific recommendations.

# Cross Cutting thematic areas

Based on existing evidence, sevent key priorities have been identified for focus as areas where potential solutions are needed to make food systems equitable and three cross cutting areas.

## Guaranteeing Women’s Rights to Land

Women’s access to, use of and control over land and other productive resources are essential to ensuring their right to equality and to an adequate standard of living. Throughout the world, gender inequality when it comes to land and other productive resources is related to women’s poverty and exclusion.

Some key priority actions include:

1. Support to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Lands, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security and the gender technical guidelines[[7]](#footnote-8) as well regional guidelines such as the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, adopted by the African Union in 2009, which contains provisions on strengthening the land rights of women[[8]](#footnote-9).
2. Global women’s movement to advocate for women’s rights to land formed through strategic alliances including civil society, governments and the private sector and that focuses on the intersection between law provisions & their enforcement on the one hand and customary laws and gender and social norms around land inheritance for women and their voice in allocation of customary land.
3. Ensure international convention and treaty obligations related to gender and food systems are enshrined in national legal frameworks and that mechanisms for application of the law or dispute settlement are functioning, accountable and accessible to women and build capacities and provide tools to enable the implementation of relevant policies by national actors and their implementation by sub-national actors.
4. Remove barriers to women’s ownership of and control over assets through rights-based approaches and other instruments such as social and environmental standards and responsible investment frameworks – and demand accountability from all partners on progress towards the realization of rights.
5. Develop or reform land tenure and ownership legislation (including through harmonization of customary laws with statutory laws or through changes to inheritance laws or harmful customary laws or practices) to ensure that women’s rights are upheld, and voluntary guidelines promoted. This should include government recognition and promotion of the legal security of tenure for women on an individual basis irrespective of marital or other status and that women are able to opt out of religious and customary processes should they choose, and appeal to formal justice systems for redress.

## Economic empowerment of women in food systems

Women play multiple roles in the food system, as producers, traders, processors, wage workers, consumers and researchers. Pathways to their economic empowerment are going to be different depending on where they are in food systems. New ways of thinking are needed to ensure women’s economic empowerment at scale.

These could include:

1. Transformative finance (design, delivery and assessment of impact) and leveraging different forms of finance in support women in the food system. A pre-requisite for this is gender equality and diversity commitments by financial institutions with measurable indicators/accountability mechanisms including mandatory training for leadership on gender.
2. Gender standards that include workplace dignity for women, equal pay etc with monitoring and accountability mechanisms for private sector companies in the food system
3. Improve women-focused value chain financing in food systems.
4. Guaranteed living wage (including provisions for social protection) for small-scale women farmers, livestock keepers, fisherfolk and other workers in food systems.

## Addressing women’s unpaid care and agricultural labor burden

Unpaid care responsibilities fall disproportionally on women. The gender gaps in unpaid care are particularly large in developing countries. Across regions, gendered social norms that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative compel women to spend a substantial part of their day meeting this expectation, in addition to their paid activities. The framework for Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution is useful in systematizing key actions needed which could include:

1. Reform and resource research, extension and advisory services to ensure that they are responsive and accountable to the needs and interests of women and men, including through the recruitment and training of female extension and advisory agents.
2. Include time use data and energy expenditure innational statistics and in other assessment food system transformations.
3. Adoption of gender transformative Human-centered design approaches to address the labor burden and energy expenditure of women working in food systems.
4. Develop policy (including macro-economic policy) that aims to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and ensure that public services are resourced for this purpose.
5. Ensure standards for paid care provision, childcare services and the redistribution of care work for women in agriculture, food wage workers and others across the food system and use of approaches that address masculinities, and engage men and boys in workload sharing, caregiving and decision-making.
6. Enact legislation to ensure access to transport, safe employment, decent wages, care services and other public services for women, including seasonal, migrant and informal workers in food systems.

## Women’s voice, decision making and leadership in food systems

Women are actively involved in food systems in many roles, but their contributions often go unrecognized and they face many inequities. Part of the problem is that women’s voices are often missing from decision making processes in the food system. Women’s leadership is central to ensuring that women’s needs are well articulated and addressed. Some key processes and approaches to get women’s voices heard are:

1. Strengthen and fund women’s social movements, women’s small-scale farmers organizations, women business networks, women’s workers unions, women’s consumer organizations to engage at different levels and in different conversations to influence food systems.
2. Take affirmative action at organizational, policy and legislative levels to promote women’s leadership, to ensure women’s participation and representation, and to allow women’s voices to be heard at local, national and international levels within the food systems.
3. Develop a collaborative and accountability mechanism for women’s leadership and representation in decision making levels in the private sector such as women and food systems manifesto.
4. Increase to 50% the number of women researchers in food security and nutrition and establish national-level research, knowledge and learning platforms on gender equality in food and nutrition security.
5. Strengthen women’s knowledge and voice as educated consumers to counteract the movement for processed foods and to advocate for easily available, healthy and sustainably produced food.

## Access to technologies, including digital technologies

There are gaps in access to technologies leads to productivity and profitability gaps between male and female owned and managed firms, as well as male and female owned food businesses. Closing this technology gap is critical for making food systems inclusive and equitable. Digital technologies, AI and other disruptive technologies are expected to play a key role in driving the transformation of food systems. From accessing information, payments, organising to access markets, or getting insurance for their farms, farmers are relying more and more on technologies.

Key potential strategies to address this include:

1. Ensure technology design (low, intermediate and high-end) testing and scale out, for all stages of the food systems engages women and is based on thorough research and analysis of the differential needs of women and men in food systems.
2. Support and develop national research capacity and invest in research and development (of technologies) for, with and by women, particularly indigenous women who face higher compound discrimination.
3. Commit to close the digital gender gap including addressing the gender and social norms around women’s asset ownership and decision making.
4. Increase the availability of locally relevant digital platforms catering to women and building their digital skills; availing women-oriented and relevant content.
5. Innovative business models that make it easier for women to access and use technologies including digital technologies – mobile money, bundled services etc
6. Strengthen and finance a gender responsive extension system with 50% of women extension and service delivery agents to increase access to agricultural technologies for women.

## Changing norms, addressing institutional barriers and challenging GBV

Gender and Social norms and institutional barriers define women’s access to resources, the gender division of labor, the rights that women can and cannot enjoy and what society deems as appropriate for women and girls. Addressing gender and social norms across the different themes is therefore critical. Challenging norms that sustain or drive gender-based violence must be a priority. GBV constrains engagement in agricultural labour markets and restricts mobility along value chains. In countries where gender-based discrimination is deeply rooted in patriarchal systems and in social norms, GBV becomes a way to control and extend the status quo. Existing legal barriers in access to resources is correlated with domestic violence, meaning that the combination of harmful legal norms and economic obstacles can reinforce perceptions of control men have over women. GBV is both a symptom of gender inequality and a tool to reinforce this inequality, including maintaining or restricting control over natural resources, further entrenching gender inequality.

Key priority actions include:

1. Application of tools for critical reflection, dialogue and action on restrictive gender and social norms at the household, community, and institutional levels as related to each of the cross-cutting priority actions above.
2. Mandate the capture and analysis of sex- and age-related and differential vulnerability data and develop and collect data on GBV in food systems programming, in both humanitarian and development contexts[[9]](#footnote-10). Make this data available to all stakeholders for accountability, design and monitoring purposes and publish progress in the public domain with independent and parliamentary scrutiny.
3. Build capacity for the use of gender markers, or gender inclusion score cards or other self-assessment tools in the design and implementation of food system activities to drive accountability for gender equality minimum standards.
4. Support social and women’s rights movements/men engage alliances /networks of influential leaders and gate keepers ( e.g committees of elders, traditional chiefs) to advocate for gender more equitable norms, redistribution of work, elimination of GBV, changes in land allocation practices etc
5. Develop campaigns that challenge masculinities within food systems by engaging male champions of gender equality at all levels, and through youth, traditional and religious leadership; civil society; the private sector; and research and government partners who are brokers and role models.
6. Introduce mechanisms for GBV risk mitigation to prevent sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation, across the food system, which include awareness raising and training.

## Gender transformative agricultural and food systems policies

While national governments recognize that they should embed gender perspectives within development programs and policies, systematic integration of gender in food systems policies and following that with investments to implement this often fall short.

Key priority actions include:

1. Establish multi-stakeholder task forces to carry out national assessments of food policies and develop model policies that promote just and equitable food systems.
2. Translate gender transformative food policies into action plans with clear indicators and targets and a score card for ensuring accountability by countries.
3. Include gender indicators, targets and budgets in National Food Systems Investment Plans with clear financial targets e.g 10% of budget going towards gender specific activities.
4. Build capacities within government, and at local level to implement gender transformative food policies and to facilitate gender and social change.

# Relevance of cross cutting themes to Action Tracks

The table below shows the relevance of the different cross cutting issues to the different Action Tracks.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Priority area | Relevance to Action track | Examples of Bold Actions |
| Women’s Land Rights | AT 3 and 4 | 1. Support to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Lands, Fisheries and Forests 2. Global women’s movement to advocate for women’s rights to land formed through strategic alliances. 3. Ensure international convention and treaty obligations related to gender and food systems are enshrined in national legal frameworks. 4. Remove barriers to women’s ownership of and control over assets through rights-based approaches. 5. Develop or reform land tenure and ownership legislation to ensure that women’s rights are upheld, and voluntary guidelines promoted |
| Economic empowerment of women in food systems | AT 1, 4, 5 | 1. Transformative finance (design, delivery and assessment of impact) and leveraging different forms of finance in support women in the food system. 2. Gender standards that include workplace dignity for women, equal pay etc with monitoring and accountability mechanisms for private sector companies in the food system 3. Improve women-focused value chain financing in food systems. 4. Guaranteed living wage (including provisions for social protection) for small-scale women farmers, livestock keepers, fisherfolk and other workers in food systems. |
| Addressing women’s unpaid care and agriculture labour burden | AT 1,2,4,5 | 1. Reform and resource research, extension and advisory services to ensure that they are responsive and accountable to the needs and interests of women and men. 2. Include time use data and energy expenditure in national statistics. 3. Adoption of gender transformative Human-centered design approaches 4. Develop policy (including macro-economic policy) that aims to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work. 5. Ensure standards for paid care provision, childcare services and the redistribution of care work for women in across the food system. 6. Enact legislation to ensure access to transport, safe employment, decent wages, care services and other public services for women. |
| Women’s voice, decision making and leadership in food systems | AT 1,2,3,4,5 | 1. Strengthen and fund women’s social movements and organizations to engage at different levels of food systems. 2. Take affirmative action at organizational, policy and legislative levels to promote women’s leadership. 3. Develop a collaborative and accountability mechanism for women’s leadership and representation in decision making levels. 4. Increase to 50% the number of women researchers in food security and nutrition and establish national-level research, knowledge and learning platforms on gender equality. 5. Strengthen women’s knowledge and voice as educated consumers to counteract the movement for processed foods and to advocate for easily available, healthy and sustainably produced food. |
| Access to technologies, including digital technologies | AT 1, 2, 4, 5 | 1. Ensure technology testing and scale out engages women and is based on analysis of the differential needs of women and men in food systems. 2. Support and develop national research capacity and invest in research and development (of technologies) for, with and by women, particularly indigenous women who face higher compound discrimination. 3. Commit to close the digital gender gap including addressing the gender and social norms around women’s asset ownership and decision making. 4. Increase the availability of locally relevant digital platforms catering to women and building their digital skills; availing women-oriented and relevant content. 5. Innovative business models that make it easier for women to access and use technologies. 6. Strengthen and finance a gender responsive extension system with 50% of women |
| Changing norms and addressing institutional barriers | AT 1,2,3,4,5 | 1. Apply tools for critical reflection, dialogue and action on restrictive gender and social norms. 2. Mandate the capture and analysis of sex- and age-related and differential vulnerability data and develop and collect data on GBV in food systems programming. 3. Build capacity for the use of gender markers, or gender inclusion score cards in the design and implementation of food system activities. 4. Support social and women’s rights movements/men engage alliances/influential leaders and gatekeepers to advocate for gender more equitable norms. 5. Introduce mechanisms for GBV risk mitigation to prevent sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation, across the food system. |
| Gender responsive agricultural and food systems policies | AT 1,2,3,4,5 | 1. Establish multi-stakeholder task forces to carry out national assessments of food policies and develop model policies that promote just and equitable food systems. 2. Translate gender transformative food policies into action plans with clear indicators and targets and a score card for ensuring accountability by countries. 3. Include gender indicators, targets and budgets in National Food Systems Investment Plans with clear financial targets e.g 10% of budget going towards gender specific activities. 4. Build capacities within government, and at local level to implement gender transformative food policies and to facilitate gender and social change. |

# Key Gender Considerations and Priorities for Action Tracks

## Action Track 1 – Ensure Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for All

This action track aims to deliver zero hunger and improve levels of nutrition, enabling all people to be well nourished and healthy. It will develop game changing solutions for (1) accelerating hunger reduction, (2) making nutritious foods more available and affordable and (3) making food systems safer.

Good nutrition requires access to a sufficient quantity and variety of safe, nutritious food, in addition to proper health and adequate care. But many vulnerable families lack the resources or information needed to maintain proper nutrition. In households which are vulnerable to food insecurity, women are at greater risk of malnutrition than men. Malnutrition in mothers, especially those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, can set up a cycle of deprivation that increases the likelihood of low birth weight, child mortality, serious disease, poor classroom performance and low work productivity. Social and economic inequalities between men and women often stand in the way of good nutrition. Gender matters in ensuring access to nutritious foods because initiatives to improve nutrition cannot achieve lasting success without taking into consideration the social, economic and biological differences between men and women and the gender inequalities which stand in the way of good nutrition. Initiatives that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women significantly improve nutrition and well-being for the entire household.

Key gender considerations and priorities and actions include.

* Rather than merely aiming to “benefit” the nutrition of women and girls, women and girls’ voices should be central to the solutions proposed. What do they themselves see as the main barriers to safe and nutritious food, and how can this process enable the conditions that will knock down those barriers?
* Women need to be empowered to make decisions over their own nutrition and be able to contribute to the improvement of their families’ nutrition – this requires access to resources, adequate nutrition knowledge, and addressing the gender norms that prevent their voice in equitable household decision making. While some parts of food production, procurement, and preparation decisions may be part of their traditional role as mothers and caregivers, the areas where they can exercise agency over these domains vary and norms and structural inequalities prevent them from having choice and agency.
* Conventional approaches to nutrition education tend to reinforce existing gender roles, focusing on women’s roles as mothers and caregivers of young children. the agriculture extension workforce is male dominated and targets male farmers as heads of households. To address this, nutrition education programs must recognize that men must also play a role in ensuring adequate nutrition for all.

Potential solutions include:

* The health, nutrition and agriculture sectors to coordinate and design gender transformative programs that also address inequitable norms and structures for equitable food systems.
* Universal nutrition education integrated in schools so that girls and boys learn the importance of healthy diets early on.
* Community-based nutrition education that reaches the influential members of the community, including elders, mothers-in-law and other gatekeepers of resources.
* Increasing the “availability” and “affordability” of nutritious foods and the promotion of optimal feeding practices must be considered considering women’s time and income constraints.
* Invest in and promote of climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, aquaculture and natural resource management. This should include approaches such as off-season cultivation and the application of agro-ecology that ensures nutrition outcomes. The protection of rights to save, exchange and sell seeds, including indigenous seeds, upon which women depend should also be included here.

## Action Track 2: Shifting to Sustainable (and Healthy) Consumption Patterns

Action Track 2 focuses on three key areas (i) Food environment: shape food environments that stimulate sustainable consumption (Policy, regulation, business practices), (ii) Food Demand: address consumer choices, behaviour change and the need for social movement (Food demand, consumer choices, behaviour change, social movement) and (iii) Circularity: halve food waste and transition to circular food economies (Refuse, reduce, rethink, redesign, renew, reuse, recycle)

Key gender issues and priorities are:

**Food Environment:**

* Development of policy and regulatory programs that ensure equitable and sustainable access to nutritious foods and encourage healthier diets and consumption patterns.
* Incentivize the involvement of women in decision-making in sustainable food transition programs at governmental and institutional level and the active involvement of women in international forums and regulations that seek to find sustainable food consumption solutions.
* Incentivize a greater participation of women in food industry boardrooms to include women’s ideas, views and perspectives in transitions towards sustainable and healthier food consumption systems.
* Involvement of men and women in corporate social responsibility promoting healthier and more sustainable food production systems.
* Development of private sector programs that adapt food products and services that meet the demands and needs of female consumers and nutrition education.
* Design of education programs on women’s rights and building advocacy capacities to empower women to influence in agricultural nutrition policies.

**Food Demand:**

* Incorporate women’s needs and preferences in breeding programs for more nutrient-dense foods and investment in research on gender differences in healthy and sustainable eating preferences and on drivers of behavioural change in food consumption patterns
* Empowerment of women and men to become more sustainable food consumer-citizens (e.g. gender-sensitive food nutrition education programs)
* Engage and support women’s social movement concerns and acts of political food consumerism (i.e. market-oriented engagements emerging from societal concerns associated with production and consumption of food).
* Design of digital food technologies (e.g. nutrition information apps) that take the needs and preferences of women into account
* Prioritize empowerment intervention areas that address women’s barriers to decision-making and autonomy in food consumption
* Design and inclusion of gender, age and ethnicity indicators on nationally representative surveys on sustainable consumption of food

**Circularity:**

* Inclusion of women in food innovation processes that promote circularity (e.g. design of compostable food packaging materials).
* Include women in the design and implementation of more efficient lifecycle carbon footprints of food products
* Improve women’s transportation and access to recycling infrastructure
* Gender-sensitive education programs on food waste and recycling
* Use of role models that support household changes towards responsible and equitable cultures for food circularity.

## Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production

To achieve nature-positive food production systems, we must adopt practices that protect, manage and restore nature, while globally meeting the fundamental human right to healthy and nutritious food for all. The work of the Action Track will focus on three key elements (i) Protect natural ecosystems against new conversions for food and feed production (ii) Sustainably manage existing food production systems to the benefit of both nature and people and (iii) Restore degraded ecosystems and rehabilitate soil function for sustainable food production.

Women have the potential to play a critical role in this process, as they use and manage land and other natural resources, while meeting water, food and energy needs in households and communities. However, this use rarely translates into women being allowed to influence the distribution of natural resources or being given a decision-making role when the management of resources is discussed, and peace is negotiated. Addressing issues of inequality related to resource access and ownership, participation in decision-making and benefit-sharing can enhance the role that women can play in boosting nature positive production.

Key gender issues and priorities include;

**Protect**

* Address cultural and/or religious practices affecting women’s agency especially gender power relations, that reduce women’s decision making in sustainably producing food and protecting the environment.
* Include gender considerations in trade-off analysis of food systems

**Sustainably manage**

* Addressing women’s access to and rights to land which has implications for their active participation in sustainable land and natural resource management and restoration
* Men need to participate more in family labour requirements in order to release women’s labor and time for sustainable land management activities.
* Inclusion of time use data and energy expenditure in agriculture surveys and in other assessment food system transformations
* Adoption of Human-cantered design approaches to address the labor burden and energy expenditure of women smallholder farmers
* Integrate gender in policies that relate to food production, environment and gender and monitor how these relationships relate to nature-positive-production systems.

**Restore**

* Harness women’s knowledge of ecosystems in land and natural resource management practices and policies
* Address women’s heavy workloads can force them to make choices that can lead to land degradation; or which hinder land rehabilitation efforts.

## Action Track 4: Advance Equitable Livelihoods and Value Distribution

Inequality and power imbalances – at household, community, national and global levels – are consistently constraining the ability of food systems to deliver poverty reduction and sustainable, equitable livelihoods. Discriminatory gender and social norms, practices and roles shape the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work; limit women’s access to productive resources (such as land) and markets; underpin unequal bargaining positions and the gendered division of labor within households that results both in time poverty and malnutrition for women[iv] and; marginalize women from decision-making spheres at all levels. Priority actions in this action track are organised around three key areas

**Agency**

* Ensure equitable access to livelihoods, which include access to infrastructure, services, skills and knowledge which influence the way food is produced, processed, transported, distributed, sold, conserved and ultimately consumed
* Increasing investment and access to finance for women especially those in small-scale food production and rural micro, small and medium agri-food enterprises.
* Build agency of women in diverse food systems that lack the space or the enabling environment in which to exercise their power and rights.
* Protect and strengthening the capacities and the knowledge of women, their resilience and innovation that they possess
* Increase women’s decision making, control over resources and leadership across the food system

**Social Relations**

* Engage men, boys and power holders to ensure gender equality across the food system, within households, communities and institutions
* Redistribute women’s unpaid care work and agricultural labour burden
* Ensure women’s leadership and decision-making in collectives

**Structures and Institutions**

* Address gender and social norms and practices that are embedded in structures that systematically privilege some groups over others, marginalizing the poor and women
* Strengthen women’s roles and engagement in producer organizations, farmer and livestock consumer cooperatives, and other collectives can effectively address existing inequality, reach economies of scale and minimize elite capture and urban bias
* Ensure women’s rights are secured and protected by laws, policies and regulations regarding, for example, land tenure and access to knowledge, dignified work, natural resources and markets.
* Make value chains inclusive through the generation of decent employment and improving resilience through gender responsive social protection

## Action Track 5: Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses

Action Track 5 will propose solutions to ensure that food systems - which are affected by conflict, and environmental, health and economic shocks and stresses- can maintain functionality, recover from adverse effects, and improve to a better-off state. COVID-19 and other shocks has demonstrated the potential of shocks to exacerbate already existing vulnerabilities and the need to tackle the root causes of vulnerabilities. Despite their vulnerabilities to climate change, women are important agents of change and innovators. This potential can be best tapped into by co-designing solutions and innovations and practices with women and ensuring their engagement in decisions that affect them, their households and communities.

Key priorities and actions:

**Analyzing and understanding shocks and vulnerabilities**

* Carry out vulnerability and capacity analysis that addresses gender dynamics and identifies priorities and preferences of women and men and how intersectionality influences marginalisation
* Put communities at the centre of research, analysis and monitoring. The application of social accountability tools to monitor how resilience building activities challenge, benefit from and transform existing gender norms, relations, and structures from a community perspective is required. Gender dynamics change and so participatory performance tracking methods will help communities identify and monitor their own progress and thereby make informed decisions and, when necessary, demands for support. Developing gender responsive M&E systems to monitor, measure and evaluate interventions
* Adopt frameworks that allow for gendered analysis of vulnerability and impact of shocks on men and women and the root causes of socio, political and ecosystem vulnerabilities for different groups.

**Building resilience**

* Addressing inequalities – structural, social, gender - in access and utilization of resources, knowledge, assets, technology, and markets/value chains
* Establish multi-stakeholder platforms to ensure action to drive gender transformation, including the creation of safe spaces and processes to allow for adaptive management, particularly in the face of climate, environmental or health crises.
* Use innovative approaches such as participatory scenario planning, agro-climate advisories and early warning systems, integrated community and ecosystems adaptation as complementary ways to introduce gender-transformative interventions.
* Take specific actions to remove structural challenges, including the lack of ownership of land and other assets, unequal division of labour and inequitable decision‑making, that inhibit adaptation by women.
* Strengthen the adaptive capacities and resources (technologies, advisory services) of women in food systems) to effectively manage risk and transform their livelihoods to be more resilient
* Develop gender responsive products, including social protection to address specific vulnerabilities of women
* Enhance women’s participation and decision making (and strengthen women’s networks) at local, national and global levels in agreements for addressing shocks and vulnerabilities
* Support programs that adopt gender equality and social inclusion strategies through the integration of both community- and ecosystems-based approaches to adaptation.

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2. CARE, 2020, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Food Security and Nutrition – Scoping Paper for for the Committee on Food Security [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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8. The Land Policy Initiative (a joint programme of the tripartite consortium constituted by the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank) is now moving towards assisting African Union member States in developing or reviewing their land policies as well as in implementing and evaluating these policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Analysis of GBV risk, and consequent responses, in food security and nutrition interventions are essential. In humanitarian crises, Rapid Gender Analysis is a methodology recommended by the Interagency Standing Committee. In the wider development sphere, there are many social analysis and action tools. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)