

2-7-2018

Does Gender Really Matter in Agriculture?

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Khachatryan, Marianna and Peterson, E. Wesley F., "Does Gender Really Matter in Agriculture?" (2018). *Cornhusker Economics*. 943.
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Cornhusker Economics

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Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	2-2-18
Livestock and Products,			
Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	118.56	119.00	124.50
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	157.84	185.07	192.70
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	130.53	158.94	153.27
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	192.88	207.99	209.51
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated	NA	66.01	72.57
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean.	83.53	77.58	80.48
Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn, 135-165 lb. National.	139.75	127.92	NA
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB.	336.91	369.87	365.26
Crops,			
Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W.			
Imperial, bu.	2.98	3.45	3.93
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Columbus , bu.	3.21	3.20	3.33
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Columbus , bu.	9.37	8.81	8.87
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow			
Dorchester, cwt.	5.07	5.99	5.96
Oats, No. 2, Heavy			
Minneapolis, Mn, bu.	3.14	2.83	2.96
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	147.50	*	166.25
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	65.00	90.00	90.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	65.00	82.50	82.50
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average.	105.00	145.50	151.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average.	43.25	45.25	48.00
* No Market			

Agriculture comprises around 9.5 percent of GDP for all developing countries, 26.0 percent for the least developed, 17.6 percent in South Asia and 17.4 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa compared with only 1.1 percent in the United States (World Bank, 2018). Agriculture is the main source of employment and livelihood for many, especially in Asia and Africa where about 60 percent of workers (both men and women) are employed in the agricultural sector (Agarwal, 2015). Globally, about 43 percent of workers who are engaged in agricultural activities are women (Akter et al., 2017), and across Asian and African countries, about half of all agricultural workers are women (Agarwal, 2015). Additional information on the role of women in agriculture in low-income countries can be found in Table 1. Women perform a wide range of activities including the majority of weed control and harvesting (FAO, 2011). They also do transplanting, cleaning of grain, processing, sowing, clearing of fields, and much more. In Benin and Mali, for example, women are heavily involved in land clearing, tillage, harvesting, threshing, and the marketing of staple food crops (Adétonah et al., 2015).

There is much evidence of gender inequality in access to assets, land, technology, technical information, extension services, training, financial services, marketing services, livestock, and farm inputs. Women farmers often have greater difficulty in obtaining fertilizers and water, particularly in African and Asian countries (Kassie et al., 2015; Kinkingninhoum-Medagbee et al., 2008; Agarwal, 2015). Women generally do not own the land they work on, instead farming land owned by their husband or other male family members (Agarwal 2015). Agarwal (2015) also notes that when women do have access to land they face restrictions on their rights to lease or sell it. The result of restricted access to land and other farm inputs is

Table 1. Share of female labor for selected regions and countries

Female Labor Share		Female Labor Share	
	%		%
Uganda	56	Asia	43
Tanzania	52	Latin America % Caribbean	16
Malawi	52	Near East and North African	42
Nigeria	37	Sub-Saharan African	46.5-50
Ethiopia	29	Developed countries	42
Niger	24	Developing countries	42-43
Cambodia	52	World	43
the Lao People's Democratic Republic	52	South Asia	35
Bangladesh	50	East and Southeast Asia	50
Vietnam	49	India	30
China	48	Southern Africa	40
		Eastern Africa	50
		Northern Africa	45
		The developing countries of the Americas	20

Sources: Palacios-Lopez et al., 2017; Doss, 2014; Agarwal, 2015; Akter et al., 2017, FAO, 2011

lower productivity on land farmed by women. Lowered productivity is reflected in the fact that women generally realize lower yields (Agarwal, 2015). Kinkingninhoun-Medagbee et al. (2008) and Doss (2014) have shown that if given similar opportunities and access to the same resources women are as productive as male farmers. Thus, the fact that there is gender discrimination in access to resources means that total output is lower than it would be if women had greater access to these resources.

The lower productivity of female agricultural workers translates into lower household income, greater food insecurity, and lowered wellbeing of the women's families and wider communities. Kassie et al., (2015) argue that increasing women's empowerment by extending women's abilities to make decisions and take advantage of opportunities is essential for broad-based agricultural development in low-income countries. Indeed, decreasing gender inequalities has been shown to be fundamental for reducing poverty and increasing growth (Kassie et al. 2015).

Todaro and Smith (2012) note that publicly-supported development programs often exclude rural women despite the significance of their contribution to agricultural production. Men often work on cash crop production (cotton, coffee, cacao) while women manage food crop production on small plots of land. Because of gender discrimination in credit markets and family practices concerning the ownership of property, women often lack the collateral that would

enable them to obtain the credit needed to purchase fertilizer and other inputs that would increase both their output and their income. As noted by Todaro and Smith (2012), development programs that are directed at assisting men but have little impact on the work done by women are unlikely to gain the support of households in developing countries and may cause more problems than they solve.

The broad evidence from the literature on women's roles in agriculture shows that gender inequality slows development. Policy-makers and international organizations cannot ignore the interests of women agriculturalists if they are to have an impact on household and national food security. Akter et al. (2017) find that women are ten times more likely than men to invest their income in the health, education, and nutrition of their children with long-term effects on human capital formation and economic security. In analyzing gender roles and their impacts on agriculture, the specific context is of great importance. No single policy initiative will be effective in all settings (Kassie et al., 2015; Taubong et al., 2016). But simply focusing on support for men's contributions to agricultural production will clearly leave major sources of agricultural output flowing from women's labor untouched. Reducing gender inequality is a critical element in promoting agricultural development in low-income countries.

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