

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

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
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Women as agricultural labour

ROLE OF WOMEN

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

THREAT FROM WTO

- Š GATS (WTO) promotes the liberalisation of services like rice transplantation, crop production and protection practices, harvesting, livestock rearing etc

Š Such liberalisation will open up

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