



Combating Gender Inequalities in Rural Georgia: A Call to Action

Background

Since 2017 the country of Georgia has taken significant steps to promote gender equality and eliminate violence against women through changes in legislation or policy. However, there are still significant gaps in legislation, policy, and practices relating to gender equality that require state attention and investment. Gendered inequalities in income and land access in rural Georgia have significant implications for women's economic empowerment and overall social and economic development. The importance of this issues is reflected in the **SME Development Strategy of Georgia, 2021-2025**¹ by The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and The **National Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of Georgia, 2021-2027**² by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

Main messages

- Male-led households in rural Georgia earn 4.8 times more income from selling the agriculture products.
- Male-led households own 2.8 times more land than female-led households and they have 2 times more working force in the household.
- Family care responsibilities lay mostly on women in Georgia which doubles rural women's workload and could decrease their agricultural productivity.

Since the Government of Georgia started the process of nationalization of SDGs in 2015, the country has prioritized all 17 goals, nationalizing 93 targets and 200 indicators – all depicted in the National Document for Sustainable Development Goals (Decree #2328 of the Government of Georgia).³

Research methodology

The paper draws upon gender-disaggregated farm household survey data from the 2020 Agricultural Integrated Survey (AGRIS), conducted by the National Statistics Office of Georgia with support from the United States Agency for International Development

¹ Source:

https://www.economy.ge/uploads/files/2017/ek__politika/sme_strategy/2022/sme_strategy_2021_2025_eng_2.pdf

² Source: <https://eu4georgia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Agriculture-and-Rural-Development-Strategy-of-Georgia-2021%E2%80%932027.pdf>

³ Source: <https://sdg.gov.ge/intro>

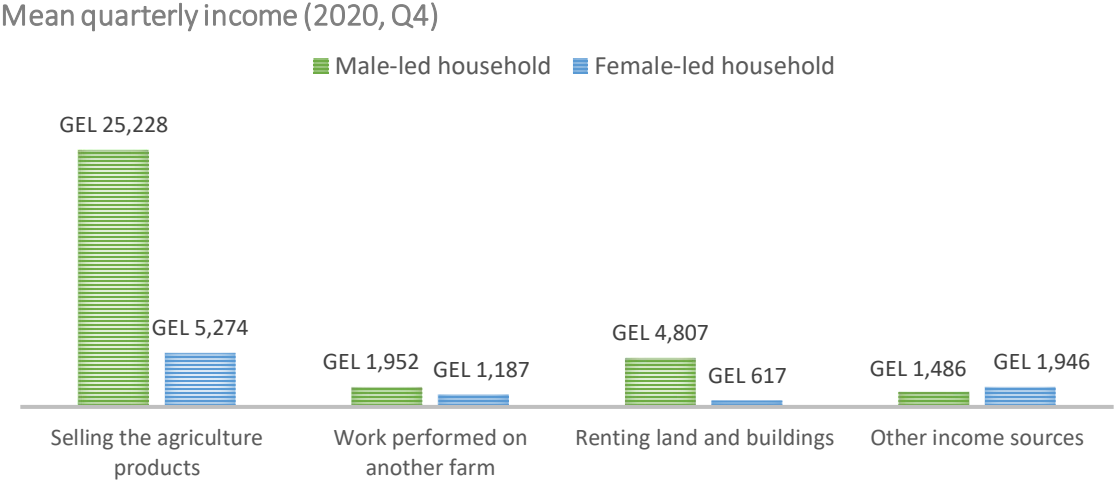
(USAID) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.⁴ The nationally representative dataset includes 10,812 farm households, including 8,038 male-headed and 2,772 female-headed households, and includes a series of modules providing data on characteristics of the household, farm characteristics, production, and market engagement, among others. We consider differences between male-headed and female-headed households in terms of four groups of variables: Household earnings, Household expenditures, Access to agricultural resources, Household labour productivity. Supplemental qualitative data include ten in-depth interviews with women farmers from six different regions of Georgia: Samegrelo, Imereti, Guria, Shida Kartli, Kakheti.

Findings

1. Male-led agricultural holdings generate more profit

Analysis of AGRIS 2020 data shows that male-led households in rural Georgia earn more profit comparing to female-led households (figure 1). Male-led households earn 4.8 times more income from selling the agriculture products and 0.6 times more income from another income sources, including working on another farm and renting land and buildings. Significant differences were found between earned income for selling the crop and livestock which indicates that male-led households have more capacity to produce crop and care for livestock.

Figure 1
Quarterly earned household income (cash) from different income sources



⁴ Source: <https://www.geostat.ge/en/project/32/sasoflo-meurneobata-integrirebuli-gamokvlevis-gankhorcieleba>
https://www.geostat.ge/media/38834/soflis_meurneoba_2020.pdf

2. Gender disparities in land ownership are prevailing

Analysis shows significant differences between size of the owned land by male and female-led households. Women farmers in Georgia own significantly less land than male farmers, with women owning an average of 5.4 hectares compared to 15.1 hectares owned by men. Meaning that male-led households own 2.8 times more land than female-led households. Besides, male-led households have 2 times more working force in the household to perform agricultural production. Statistical analysis showed that number of workers in the household as well as land ownership has the direct effect on household income. Land ownership disparities are mostly caused by the property heritage traditions in Georgia. The traditional inheritance of land, which favors male children over female children, creates obstacles for women in obtaining business loans and hampers their overall business development since collateral is a primary requirement for securing such loans.

3. Farmer women work both in the farm and the family

Family care responsibilities lay mostly on women in Georgia which doubles rural women's workload. Multiple responsibilities prevent women to spend more time and resources on the development of agricultural production. Besides, women need to hire additional labor force for specific work in agriculture that require physical strength. Women mostly are unable to care for the livestock without men, that prevents their engagement in animal husbandry, which is one of the most profitable sources of income.

What could be done to empower farmer women in Georgia?

Below are three main direction and some support schemes identified during the research.

1. Increase women's access to information, vocational education and modern technologies

To plug the gap in technical and professional expertise in agriculture as well as **well-functioning vocational education and training programs** for women are indispensable to reduce inequality and create decent work for all in agriculture.

Access to information in general plays a huge role in amplifying women's capacity and entrepreneurship opportunities. In this regards its utmost important to ensure the **access to internet** for farmer women. Types of information which will be supporting women include: new knowledge and innovations in agricultural production; modern technologies and machinery; learning and training opportunities; grant opportunities; sales and market opportunities.

Providing **trainings for women in modern technologies**, machinery and modern production is important for farmer women to boost their productivity and capacity.

2. Promote access to sales market and finances for women

Access to finance and markets is the main factor that urgently drives the acceleration of success in agricultural production and trade. Well-structured trade system as well as access to large, profitable markets is seen as one of the forms of action in the reduction of inequality, poverty, and can be effective in agricultural sector. This recommendation responds to SDG Goal number 2.3, thus serves the GoG's priorities to increase agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women; The above recommendation involves promoting access to finances for female farmers including **access to state funding opportunities** as well as funding through commercial institutions.

3. Support women's ownership of land

Supporting women's ownership of land and other properties is an important precondition of improving rural women's entrepreneurship abilities. Continuous awareness raising activities should be implemented aiming at cultural changes in respect to property inheritance traditions. This recommendation is aligned with SDG Goal number 5.a.

4. Increase governmental support for women in agricultural production

Various **state support schemes** play an important role in boosting agricultural production, this includes state-funded fertilizers, pesticides, fuel, cattle feed, seedlings, tractor renting, vaccines and veterinarian services; Special arrangements should be made within the existing scheme and framework of **cooperation between the state programs and female farmers** to ensure women's eligibility in state programs; **Providing state support and developed insurance schemes** in case of natural disaster damages is also important for rural farmers due to high risk of natural disasters.

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