

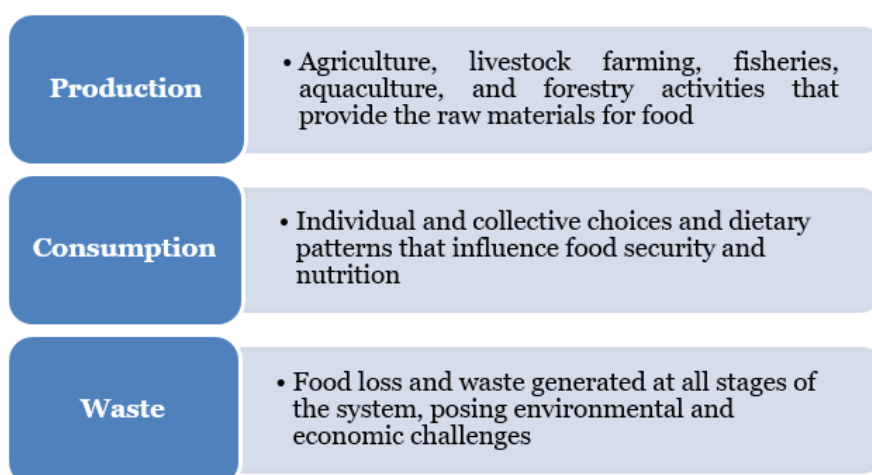
Gender Equality in Agri-Food System

Why in news?

A recent report by Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), calls for nutrition investments in the agri-food sector to reduce gender inequalities, increase productivity and enhance business resilience.

What is agrifood systems?

- **Definition** - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines agri-food systems as *all the interconnected activities and actors* involved in getting food from field to fork.
- **Coverage** - It encompasses everything from agricultural *production* and processing to *distribution, consumption, and waste management*.
- It also highlights the critical role of economic, social, and environmental factors in shaping how food reaches our plates.



- **Challenges** - A range of pressures like *rapid population growth, urbanization, growing wealth & consequent changes in consumption patterns*, are challenging our food systems' ability to provide nutritious food.
- They are affected by, *extreme weather events* as associated with climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

Investment in Nutritional Food value Chain

• Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a *Switzerland-based foundation*, launched the report titled The Case for Investment in Nutritious Foods Value Chains: An Opportunity for Gender Impact.

• **Importance of Nutrition Investments**

- It can contribute to global *food security and nutrition*.
- It can *improve supplier productivity* and business resilience.
- It can create a more productive and loyal workforce by *attracting and retaining women* thereby empowering women.
- It can help in *climate mitigation and adaptation*.

• **Recommendation** - It highlights *six nutritious food value chains* in three geographies from a gender perspective

- In Sub-Saharan Africa - Cashew nuts and poultry
- In Latin America - Aquaculture and quinoa
- In South Asia - Tomatoes and dairy

Africa is the world's largest producer of raw cashew nuts. South Asia has a high tomato production, with India being the world's second largest producer.

What are the benefits of having gender equality in agrifood systems?

- **Employment opportunities** - According to FAO, globally, women comprise *38% of all agri-food workers*.
- They play a vital role in our agrifood systems as
 - Farmers
 - Retailers
 - Wage workers
 - Entrepreneurs
- **Food Security** - About 60-80% of the food produced in India can be attributed to the efforts of rural women.
- **Health benefit** - Women's participation in food sector *improves household diets* and in particular *improves child nutrition*.
- **Rural Development** - Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture can bring paradigm shift towards economic growth.
 - Agriculture employs about 80% of rural women
- **Women FPO** - Women Led Farmer Producer Organization benefits both society and economy.
- **GDP growth** - Plugging the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agri-food-system would *increase global gross domestic product (GDP) by 1%* or nearly \$1 trillion.

To know more about Women Led FPO, Click [here](#)

What are the challenges in reducing gender gap?

- Despite the high rate of participation, *women in agri-food sectors continue to face a plethora of barriers*.
- **Lack of access to resources** - Women find it difficult to access land, inputs, finance,

extension services and technology.

- **Discriminatory social norms** - Inadequate encouragement from the domestic environment impede the elevation of women to the higher ladder in the sector.
- **Marginalization** - Most of the women labours in agrifood system are irregular, informal and vulnerable, as well as labor-intensive
 - 71% of the part-time jobs in agricultural processing around the world are held by women.
- **Gender segregation** - Women tend to be concentrated in the *low-paid sectors* and also have higher burdens of unpaid care work.
- Share of women in the agri-food sector is much higher in the less developed countries.
 - In sub-Saharan Africa, this share is 66% and in the South Asia region of which India, it is recorded at 71%.
- **Unequal pay for equal job** - On average, female employees in agriculture *earn 18% less than men*.
- **Safety concerns atmosphere** - Risky working conditions and gender-based violence impedes their participation.
- **Uneven disaster Impact** - Women are impacted more by disasters, such as climate risks and crises

In Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India stands at rank 108 out of 193 nations and Global Gender Gap Index 2024 places India at 129.

What is the Way ahead?

- Address the structural inequalities and discrimination in the system.
- Provide women with equal access to resources, services, technologies, and training to close the gender gap in productivity.
- Increase funding to nutritious foods value chains, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- *Gender-lens investments* could help address the lack of representation of women in leadership positions and support women entrepreneurship and ownership.
- The '2X criteria' provides a clear and standardized framework for investing in companies with a gender lens.

*The **2X Criteria** is the global industry standard for assessing and structuring investments that provide women with leadership opportunities, quality employment, finance, enterprise support, and products and services that enhance their economic participation & access.*

References

1. [Down To Earth | Nutrition investments in agri-food sector](#)
2. [FAO| Agro-food Systems](#)
3. [FAO | Women in Agri Food systems](#)



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering