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**Outcome of the 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development
towards Africa's Agenda 2063 and in the context of the Post-2015
Development Agenda**

Executive summary

This document provides an overview on the main outcomes of the 2015 Year of women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda 2063. It introduces gender issues in agriculture, food security and nutrition and presents the main outcomes of the African Union summits in 2015. The document shares some follow up actions for the implementation of the gender equality commitments within the context of the Post 2015 development agenda and key messages.

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

- Strengthening capacities of Governments and rural institutions for expanding women's opportunities in inclusive agricultural growth and transformation. This involves gender-responsive policy and programme design, financing, implementation and monitoring.
- Promoting women's access to agricultural value chains and markets by enforcing their land tenure and decent employment rights, ensuring their access to and uptake of technologies and innovations for food production and agro-processing, and meeting their needs for extension, financial and marketing services.
- Implementing integrated and multisectoral public policies and investments that ensure women's full enjoyment of safe, sufficient and nutritious food and strengthen their access to social protection and resilience to shocks as a pre-condition for the achievement of Zero Hunger.

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- Ensuring women and men are equal partners in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies, investments and programmes.
- Fully integrating gender considerations in national and regional agricultural investment plans, CAADP and Post Malabo processes and Africa Green Fund.

I. Introduction: gender issues in agriculture, food security and nutrition

1. Harnessing the full productive potential of women, men and youth along agricultural value chains and in agro-industries is paramount for achieving Africa's priorities for food security and nutrition, sustainable agricultural growth and transformation, competitiveness of African products and import substitution encapsulated in Africa's Agenda 2063 and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Figure 1: Addressing gender issues in the narrative of agricultural growth and transformation in Africa



Source: Adapted from the Gender Audit Report of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FMARD), 2013

2. Women make important contributions to agricultural growth in Africa: they represent about 50% of the agricultural labour force in sub-Saharan Africa¹. They are the frontline nutrition care givers in the family, producing, storing, cleaning and cooking the food for consumption and caring for the welfare of infants, young children, elderly and other family members. At time of shock, women's

¹ FAO, 'The State of Food and Agriculture: women and agriculture, closing the gender gap for development', 2010-2011

role in providing food and care for the family become often more critical depending on disaster impact, resource scarcity and knowledge on coping strategies to disasters.

3. Women also contribute as wage labourers in agro-industries. In Kenya's fruits and vegetable export businesses, women represent 80% of the workers in packing, including labelling and bar coding of produce; However, they are commonly hired as temporary or casual workers while men predominate in permanent positions. In the Senegal tomato sector 2% of female workers and 28% of male workers have permanent contracts ².

4. Persistent gender inequalities undermine the performance of the agricultural sector in Africa. Evidence show that women farmers are less productive than men farmers because they lack access to productive assets and resources such as land, services, inputs and technology. A recent study conducted in six countries³ in Africa shows that the gender gap in productivity per hectare ranges from 23% in Tanzania to 66% in Niger when comparing women and men with similar sized plots in similar contexts. In Malawi, lower use of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and extension services in women's plots accounts for 80% of the gender gaps in productivity⁴.

5. The following table shows the asymmetries between women's contribution to agricultural production and processing and their access to resources and services in Nigeria. Due to cultural and gender barriers, women farmers may have more difficulties accessing extension services given the small proportion of women among extension workers. Registration for accessing services and resources is also lower among female farmers.

Table 1: Gender disparities in agriculture, agro-processing, and access to resources and services in Nigeria

DOMAIN	INDICATORS	MEN	WOMEN
Contribution to production/ agro-processing	Agricultural production	30%	70%
	Agricultural processing	40%	60%
	Animal husbandry	50%	50%
Access to resources	Ownership of land	93%	7%
	Access to agricultural loans	70%	30%
	Access to capital from formal financial services	99%	1%
	Ownership of bank accounts	85%	15%

² FAO-IFAD-ILO, Maertens, M. & Swinnen, J.F.M: 'Are African high-value horticulture supply chains bearers of gender inequality?', 2009

³ Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda

⁴ World Bank, 'Levelling the field: improving opportunities for women farmers in Africa', 2014

Access to services	Share among extension workers	94%	6%
	Farmer registration	90%	10%

Source: Gender Audit Report of FMARD, 2013

6. Many African countries are committed to achieving zero hunger targets related to hunger eradication by 2025, fulfilling the right to food, and reducing malnutrition as well as food loss and waste. Women's condition and status are important determinants of hunger eradication and child and family nutrition. The adequate nutritional status of mothers (pre- and post-delivery) guarantees the nutritional well-being of their infants, in particular during the critical first 1,000 days of life (from conception to 2 years of age). Iron deficiency anaemia at childbirth is an important cause of maternal mortality in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance in Togo, the rate of anemia in the 15-49 age group is estimated at 20% for men and 48% for women, and 64% of pregnant women aged 15-49 years suffer from it.⁵

7. The educational level of mothers is an important determinant of children's nutritional status. The risk of chronic and severe malnutrition, underweight and anaemia among infants and children decreases significantly with a higher educational level of mothers.

Table 2: Effect of education level of mothers on children's nutritional status in Togo

INDICATORS	NO EDUCATION	PRIMARY	SECONDARY OR SUPERIOR
Chronic Malnutrition among children less than 5 years old	33 %	25 %	18%
Severe Malnutrition among children less than 5 years old	9 %	-	5%
Underweight less than 5 years	21 %	13 %	10 %
Anaemia - 6-59 months old	74 %	73 %	61 %

Source: Data from the Demographic and Health Survey in Togo, EDST-III, 2014

8. The lack of sex- and age-disaggregated data leads to important policy and investment gaps due to constraints to measuring gender disparities, establishing baselines and monitoring progress. Key data on land ownership, plot management and access to extension services, technology and innovation, decent jobs and social protection remain limited. For instance only 6 out of the 14 African countries that carried out an agricultural census during the 2010-round of the World census of agriculture collected sex-disaggregated data of parcel/plot managers.

⁵ Data from the Demographic and Health Survey in Togo, EDST-III, 2014

9. Addressing gender gaps in agriculture will yield great economic and social dividends given the multiplier impact on a range of dimensions from food security and nutrition to poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development. There are many positive externalities associated with food security and nutrition. For example, school feeding programmes can lead to the retention of girls in schools as parents are more willing to leave their girls at school, thus giving them better chances to escape early marriage and pregnancy.

10. The African Union has set up an important agenda for addressing gender issues and women's empowerment including: the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa⁶ in 2003; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa in 2004⁷; the African Women's Decade (2010-2020)⁸; the Fund for African Women⁹; the Addis Ababa Declaration on 'Accelerating the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action - Towards a Transformational Change for Women and Girls in Africa' adopted in November 2014 during the regional review process Beijing+20. African countries have also ratified or adopted global documents such as: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its additional protocol; the "Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security" and the Principles on responsible investment in agriculture and food systems adopted by the Committee on Food Security in 2012 and 2014, respectively, with strong gender equality provisions.

11. FAO recognizes the centrality of gender equality to its mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO's Policy on gender equality endorsed in 2012 aims at advancing equality of voice, agency and access to resources and services between women and men in sustainable agricultural production and rural development.

II. Overview of the 2015 Year of women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda 2063

12. The 2015 Year of women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda 2063 provided important opportunities to build on the 2014 Year of agriculture and food security. The Malabo Declaration on "Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods" adopted in June 2014 called for deliberate and targeted public support to women to participate and directly benefit from the growth and transformation opportunities to improve their lives and livelihoods. The January 2015 Summit emphasized the need for enhanced support to small-holder farmers, women and youth and promotion of inclusive agricultural value-chains, preference for regional markets and strengthening natural resources governance.

13. The Declaration on employment, poverty eradication and inclusive development in Africa¹⁰ adopted during the January Summit underscored the sustainable and high economic growth rates. However, these did not translate into proportionate job creation to contribute to significantly reducing unemployment, underemployment and poverty. This is evidenced by the very high level of structural

⁶ Document Assembly AU/Dec.19(II)

⁷ Document Assembly AU/Dec.12 (III)

⁸ Document Assembly AU/Dec. 229 (XII)

⁹ Document Assembly AU/Dec. 277(XIV)

¹⁰ Document Assembly/AU/20(XXIV)

underemployment associated with limited social protection coverage, low productivity and income generating capacity, and poor occupational health and safety conditions which affect particularly women and youth in the informal economy and rural sectors.

14. The Declaration reaffirmed the commitment to reduce unemployment, in particular of youth and women, by at least two percent annually over the next decade, and requested member States to develop minimum social protection packages for vulnerable populations with concrete targets, timeframes and performance indicators. It also advocated for urgent measures to improve the level of growth inclusiveness, productivity and competitiveness of African economies, targeting the micro, small and medium enterprises in the informal economy and the rural sector as the main sources to create jobs along with the private sector.

15. The June 2015 Summit adopted the Declaration on 2015 Year of women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda 2063¹¹ which sets an ambitious agenda to enhance women's contribution and benefit from formal agriculture and agribusiness value chains. It emphasized the importance of multi-sectoral engagement and co-ownership of the transformative agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment, including agriculture, science and technology, infrastructure, energy, finance, trade and industry. It also recognized the complementary roles and responsibilities of the public sector, private enterprises, African think-tanks, grassroots and business women and civil society organizations.

16. The Declaration invites AU member states to increase mechanization, technological innovation, education and skills development for women, intensify their financial inclusion in agribusiness and empower them with knowledge and skills to use modern technologies in agribusiness and agricultural value chains. Another key dimension is to enforce women's rights to productive assets including land and their access to public procurement processes in agribusiness. It calls upon financial institutions to have a minimum quota of 50% to finance women to grow from micro to macro businesses. The Declaration also stresses the need to integrate gender responsive indicators in the CAADP Results Framework of the Malabo Declaration and ensure that the Continental Free Trade Area promotes the empowerment of women in agribusiness and agricultural value chains.

17. The June Summit endorsed the theme of the Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly to be held in Addis Ababa as: "2016, African Year of Human Rights, in particular, with focus on the Rights of Women". This theme provides important avenues for addressing women's rights to food, land and decent employment.

18. The 25th African Union Summit launched the "African Union Campaign to confine the hand held hoe to the museum" on 14 June 2015 in Johannesburg. Under its aspiration 1 on "A prosperous Africa based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development", Agenda 2063 strives for a "modern, productive and attractive agriculture, using science, technology, innovation and indigenous knowledge", and states that "the hand hoe will be banished by 2025."

¹¹ Assembly/AU/Decl.1(XXV)

III. Follow-up actions for the effective implementation of gender equality commitments in the context of the Post 2015 development agenda

19. The Post 2015 Development Agenda has catalysed great political attention on the urgency to address gender inequalities and the uneven distribution of capacities, opportunities, wealth, power and voice. A key priority is to create sound policy frameworks at all levels, based on pro-poor and gender-responsive development strategies to support accelerated investments in poverty eradication actions.

20. Goal 1 on poverty eradication strives to ensure that all men and women have equal rights to economic resources, access to basic services, technology and financial services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property and natural resources. Goal 2 on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture specifically addresses the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women. It aims to double by 2030 the agricultural productivity and incomes of women small-scale food producers through secure and equal access to land, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

21. Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women calls for the recognition and value of women's unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. Women's participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making is also essential.

22. FAO's actions are in line with these commitments by supporting women to participate fully and profitably in value chain and agribusiness development, promoting their participation in contract farming and decent employment opportunities, strengthening their land tenure rights, improving their access to financial services, business skills and technologies and innovations for agro-processing. FAO is also strengthening the capacities of government and rural institutions to enhance resilience and social protection for women farmers.

23. The following actions are recommended for effective implementation of the gender equality commitments in the context of the Post 2015 development agenda and in line with the outcome of the 2015 AU Year:

- Strengthening capacities of Governments and rural institutions for expanding women's opportunities in inclusive agricultural growth and transformation. This involves gender responsive policy and programme design, financing, implementation and monitoring.
- Promoting women's access to agricultural value chains and markets by enforcing their land tenure and decent employment rights, ensuring their access to and uptake of technologies and innovations for food production and agro-processing and to extension, financial and marketing services.
- Implementing integrated and multisectoral public policies and investments that ensure women's full enjoyment of safe, sufficient and nutritious food and strengthen their access to social protection and their resilience to shocks as a pre-condition for the achievement of Zero Hunger.
- Ensuring women and men are equal partners in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies, investments and programmes.
- Fully integrating gender considerations in national and regional agricultural investment plans, CAADP and Post Malabo processes and the Africa Green Fund.

IV. Key messages

- When rural women have equal access as men to resources, assets, services and economic opportunities, they become a key driving force against rural poverty, hunger and malnutrition.
- Investing in women along agricultural value chains is the right and smart thing to do for thriving rural communities and gender equal societies in Africa. For every dollar invested in women, the dividends are enormous in overcoming hunger, malnutrition and poverty, and creating wealth for farmers.
- We should create the conditions for women to exert greater decision-making in family farming, food systems, and management of natural resources.
- Technology matters for unleashing the full potential of women, men, girls and boys to contribute equally and benefit from agricultural growth and transformation in Africa.
- There is a wide consensus on the urgency to invest in women farmers, food processors and agribusiness owners. It is now time to walk the talk.

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