

POSITION PAPER OF WOMEN FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF UGANDA ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

In Uganda, women play a central role in the agricultural sector, engaging in a myriad of ways as producers, laborers, marketers, and entrepreneurs. This is of course, coupled with duties and responsibilities over family nutrition, child-care, and food security which are still mainly conducted by women.

In the achievement of Uganda's food security, the Women Farmers Association of Uganda (WFAU) recognizes the pivotal role of women in farming and advocates for the empowerment of their role in agriculture. According to FAO estimates, women are responsible for more than 50% of food production worldwide. This includes up to 80% of food production in African countries, 60% in Asia and between 30 and 40% in South America. In Uganda 81 % of the female labor force compared 67 % of men who work in the sector.

In Uganda, the trends have seen a recent increase in female-headed households along with female-headed farms due to a variety of factors. In our communities, women are often left with the responsibility of farm management, performing all duties that pertain to a farm manager, along with family care and household maintenance. However, often due to gender bias and women's low social standing due to the patriarchal nature of many societies, they are rarely legally or socially recognized as head of the farm. Men's absence is most often due to either death, migration in search of additional income through urban employment or men enlisting in the army in times of conflict. Women often accept and assume the magnitude of their duties and receive a minimal amount of recognition for their contributions. They are seldom granted land tenure rights and often have less access to vital production inputs such as: land; financial services including credit, savings, insurance; access to markets and storage; and other services and technical support, than their male counterparts and are often denied access to education and agricultural extension programmes. Many studies demonstrate when women have access to education and improve their social and economic standing; they can ably cater for their children's education and household spending on nutrition increases. Their social and economic empowerment has impacts in many realms for example child health outcomes improve and small farms become more productive, economically viable and sustainable.

Rural women are therefore especially affected by various forms of poverty. Poverty of time: taking care of their farm and their family gives them less time for recreation, repose and even time to work. Poverty of work: women's work is often less productive due to injustices of the basic accesses cited previously. Poverty of business certainty: women often have less access than their male counterparts in formal contracts of work, property, and professional training and information. Poverty of social networks: The quality of social and technical infrastructure makes the access to social networks more difficult for women.

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The challenge we aim to address through the formation of Women Farmers Association and Women Farmers Grassroot Associations, is to raise awareness on the value of women's work and the need to improve their skills in order to maximize their potential as farmers and agents of change. The Women Farmers Grassroot Association's work aims to improve the position of women in the agricultural value chain and in particular ensure equal treatment between women and men in the agricultural sector in terms of the economic, working and social conditions.

The establishment of Women Farmers Association of Uganda will encourage and foster solidarity and cooperation among women and men farmers nationally. The Women Farmers Grassroot Association's work will also focus on strengthening the capacities of women in Agriculture through their full and active participation in farmer's grassroot meetings, in decision-making bodies and Women Farmers Association of Uganda's development activities.

Women Farmers Association of Uganda also aims to actively ensure the representation of women in delegations speaking for farmers at national level and support the effective participation of women farmers in relevant programs. It will also ensure that national decision-makers take into account women farmers' needs such as access to land, credit, knowledge, technical support and market opportunities when drawing up agricultural policies. The aim of Women Farmers Association of Uganda also is to achieve policies that are effective and efficient in promoting the socio-economic empowerment of women in agriculture and allowing gender-balanced conditions in agriculture. In this regard, Women Farmers Association of Uganda will promote, analyze, and disseminate among its network of Women Farmers Grassroot Associations' any relevant information that will inform the decision makers.

In order to operationalize our aim, we will promote the status of women in agriculture nationwide by creating awareness about their working and living conditions at all levels in relevant dialogue and policy making forums, and in relevant organizations. The association is also dedicated to sharing best practices and promotes their scaling-up. Actions to empower women in agriculture are central to Women Farmers Association of Uganda's position on national and global food security. Women Farmers Association of Uganda promotes the development of farm programs that address the particular needs of women in agriculture, including investment in women and their access to land tenure, production inputs, education, training, credit and market opportunities. Women Farmers Association of Uganda also advocates for the creation of women in agricultures' observatories within local governments in order to develop gender disaggregated data in regards to status and production revenues.

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Women Farmers Association of Uganda, We are **calling for concrete action to be taken in terms of political and financial commitments on behalf of the national community** recognizing that the achievement of gender equality generates faster rural development, economic growth and stability through agricultural-related employment, increased food security and overall well-being of rural populations.