

**Gender Roundtable
Business Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's
and Girls' Empowerment in Food Systems**

REPORT

Summary

The gender roundtable held on 7 April 2022 brought together 120 representatives of Member States, UN agencies, NGOs, academia, and private sector to discuss and showcase business commitments and initiatives that are accelerating action for gender equality. The consensus from the discussions was that there is need to massively scale ambition to achieve impact and make a difference in the lives of women in food systems. Strengthened partnerships, financing, co-creating solutions with women themselves, and policies that work were highlighted as instrumental in achieving this. The roundtable provided an opportunity to explore the themes of leadership, entrepreneurship, and nutrition with the aim of generating key messages, as highlighted below, that will contribute to the ongoing negotiations of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition. The case studies and speakers were drawn from all regions around the world, sharing a wide array of voices and experiences.

- **Leadership**

"Having come this far as a race, it is ridiculous that we are still talking about women empowerment. There are no two ways about this. We must make it clear that this is not just a conversation. These things need to stop!" – Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President, AGRA

Case Studies

[She Told Us So](#) (Global): CARE's rapid gender analysis underscores the need to listen to women's voices to inform policy responses. In the face of the devastating effects of COVID 19, women are still taking leadership in their communities. The top 5 needs prioritized by women are mental health, food security, livelihood, cash and health services. [Read more.](#)

[MH Elevate](#) (Australia, New Zealand): Moët tracks gender diversity, with a global target of 100% gender balance by end 2023 for executive and management population. MH Elevate, a mentor and personal brand leadership programme, develops talents for leadership within LVMH. [Read more.](#)

[Cargill Cocoa Promise](#) (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroon, Brazil, and Indonesia): Over 170,000 farmers have participated in Cargill's gender sensitization trainings. Cargill also works with farmer organizations to develop gender action plans to support initiatives such as promoting women in leadership in cooperatives and gender dialogues in cocoa communities. [Read more.](#)

Best Practice

- Organizations must set, commit and be accountable to inclusion goals at all levels – total workforce, management, and board. Reporting mechanisms to track gender equality in leadership are key. Initiatives such as the Global Food 50/50 can enhance transparency and accountability. Gender equality initiatives should not be just side CSR activities but core parts of business models.
- Men should be brought on board as allies. Explicit strategies are needed to engage men and boys in the promotion of women's empowerment to improve attitudes, behaviors, and structures that support gender equality.
- Work together with women to co-create solutions. It is critical to raise awareness among women and offer them the necessary training, tools, and resources to reach their full potential. This must be done in partnership with them.

- **Entrepreneurship**

Case Studies

[KEMDAP](#) (Kenya): Tetra Laval's Kenya Market-Led Dairy Value Chain Supply project (KEMDAP) has increased dairy productivity and income whilst simultaneously getting more women involved in the dairy value chain. Using a Dairy Hub model, KEMDAP links 30,000 farmers to a dedicated milk processor thus enabling stable access to market. [Read more.](#)

[Women in Agribooster](#) (Ghana): OCP has linked 5000 women farmers in Ghana with access to inputs, training on good agricultural practices through an e-Extension platform, market access, and provided technical support to increase food productivity using mechanization and intelligent techniques. [Read more.](#)

[Women Economic Empowerment in Agricultural Trade and Commerce](#) (Philippines): Morination is working towards market stabilization of the agroforestry and food security sectors by applying the agriculture to buyers model (A to B model), the hybrid of the B2B. Women are partners in leadership, finance, training, trade, logistics, field operations, audit, and quality control within the ecosystem. [Read more.](#)

Best Practice

- Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are key in achieving gender equality through programs that have a gender lens and working with small businesses (SMEs).
- Government should do more business with women and gender sensitive enterprises, including through gender-responsive procurement.
- Gender empowerment should start at the household level. Male members of households can play a big role in breaking cultural norms and barriers.
- Identify and flag unexplored opportunities within value chains and plug women in those areas that are not male dominated but still generate benefits for women.
- Invest in entrepreneurship training and market access as well as wage-based employment. SMEs and farmers play a vital role and are by far the biggest part of the food system. Many more of those businesses are women-led than large scale ones.

- **Nutrition**

“Gender equality is a prerequisite and driver for sustainable development and the future viability of society, especially in the fields of nutrition, agriculture and rural areas.” – Silke Stallkamp, Germany Permanent Representation to the UN Rome-based Agencies

Case Studies

[Fresh Greens](#) (India): SEWA connects vegetable growers directly to rural and urban consumers to meet the growing demand for indigenous fresh vegetables and fruits during and after the COVID 19 pandemic. [Read more.](#)

[Nutrition in Cities Ecosystems \(NICE\)](#) (Bangladesh, Kenya, Rwanda): The project works to improve nutrition and health, and to reduce poverty by increasing the demand and supply of local, diverse, agroecologically produced foods in secondary cities. [Read more.](#)

[Women-led Biofortified Food Businesses](#) (Africa, Asia): HarvestPlus works with enterprising women around the world who produce and sell nourishing biofortified products. Nutrition trainings increase awareness and 63% of the 143,000 farmers trained in 2019 were women. [Read more.](#)

Best Practice

- It is crucial to involve all care givers, men and women, to change gender norms and improve nutrition for all household members.
- Work with women in breeding more nutritious staple crops and designing new food products. It is important to understand the traits women are interested in seeds.
- Work with women at the policy level to ensure they participate locally in policy design and implementation as well as overseeing how finances are being used locally in nutrition programming.
- Invest in time-saving innovations that enable women engage in agri-production roles.
- Record keeping in government and institutions should ensure information on women is collected and filed to facilitate their involvement in empowerment programs.

Additional Contributions

“Gender equality will not be achieved without the commitment of the business community. Let’s see the CFS Voluntary Guidelines as an empowerment tool for governments, companies, businesses, civil society, for women and men that are committed to make it happen.” - H.E. Amb. Gabriel Ferrero, Chairperson of the UN Committee on World Food Security.

- [Reckitt Access to Clean Water](#): In 2019, Reckitt and Water.org partnered to close the gap in access to safe water and sanitation – providing over 177,000 loans to women in India, Indonesia, and Kenya over two years.
- The guidelines need to address the needs of other genders including transgenders, LBTQ, LGBTQ+ who are also facing inequalities in agri-food systems.
- It is important to recognize that child rearing is a family responsibility and ensure women have maternity leave but also, that families can share that responsibility in any way they want.
- It is critical to proactively assess service offerings – finance actors need to think about retooling programs to increase access for women. That applies to many more sectors from agri-retail; to processors considering how to source from women produced products; to cooperatives; and also, how food retailers are sourcing from women-led businesses.

We need to coordinate our work, bringing each of our efforts to cohorts of women around the world. We need a full suite of fair access, from land to water to nutrition to power.

Additional Resources

- [CFS Gender Workstream Working Space](#)
- [PSM Contributions to the Gender Workstream](#)
- [ACDI/VOCA Inclusion Matters](#)
- [Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality](#)
- [Value4Her Connect: Africa’s First Digital Platform for Women-led Agribusiness](#)
- [FOLUR Gender Inclusion](#)
- [The power of procurement: How to source from women-owned businesses](#)
- [Rethinking gender-responsive procurement: Enabling an ecosystem for women’s economic empowerment](#)
- [Women Empowerment Principles](#)
- [Seizing the opportunities of the AfCFTA for the economic empowerment of women](#)
- [Boosting women’s engagement in trade and promoting inclusive economic development in Africa](#)