

FOCUS ON **GENDER** BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Issue 02

Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic



COVID-19
RESPONSE



Sweden
Sverige



This issue of Focus on Gender concentrates on the gender aspects in agriculture and rural development in BiH, with an additional perspective on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This publication, in line with the international standards enshrined in CEDAW Convention¹, the gender equality as a central component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the EU enlargement strategy and enlargement process, provides a snapshot of the gender inequalities affecting agricultural production and rural life. It also provides recommendations on how differences between women and men in access to productive resources, inputs and information, gender roles and expectations, as well as gender stereotypes, should be taken into consideration during strategic planning around agriculture and rural development.

UN Women has undertaken two studies on the topics of gender and agriculture and rural development. The first is the Study

on Mainstreaming Gender in the Sector of Agriculture and Rural Development, aimed at reflecting the current situation in the agriculture and rural development sector. The Study considers gender development of the rural development sector as a broader strategic framework in which agriculture is one of the sub-sectors analysed in detail because of its dominant role in the rural economy in BiH. Additionally, it analyses the degree of coherence of the rural development and agriculture sectors in the pre-accession process and, in that sense, the capacity to use EU pre-accession funds. The second is a comprehensive Country Gender Assessment on Agriculture and Rural Development, implemented for the first time ever in BiH, in the joint undertaking of UN Women BiH and UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

This publication provides key segments from both analyses.

**This publication provides
a snapshot of the gender
inequalities affecting agricultural
production and rural life.**

¹ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, United Nations, 1979.



A NOTE ABOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The experience of emergency situations, which can include natural disasters and human-made events, has demonstrated that existing disparities grow wider in times of crisis. This includes gender disparities as well as marginalization based on poverty, education levels, settlement type, minority status, etc. As the UN has emphasized, “[a] cross every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex”². Women and girls in rural and isolated locations are in especially vulnerable situations, given their more limited access to health information and health services, their overrepresentation among the unemployed and informal workers, the burden of unpaid care work, which has

increased with the widespread closure of schools, workplaces and non-essential services, and the risk of domestic violence and poor infrastructure in rural areas.

In May 2020, the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH issued a set of recommendations for BiH Council of Ministers, entity and cantonal governments, calling for a gender perspective to be integrated into the processes of planning and implementing decisions, measures and plans in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including measures for gender-responsive economic recovery³. Special attention should be devoted to women from marginalised groups, including women living in rural areas.

² UN, Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, 9 April 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/36EGWkw>

³ The recommendations are available at: <https://bit.ly/2FfMsPI>

WHY IS GENDER RELEVANT TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT?

The statistical base for agriculture in BiH is not reliable; much of the data is obsolete and statistics are also inconsistent. The Strategic Plan for Rural Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2018-2021 identifies this as a core political, legal and institutional weakness.

Lack of political consensus concerning the division of competencies for agriculture and rural development between the state, entities and the Brčko District BiH has resulted in many asymmetries and gaps, meaning that available data is often not representative of the country as a whole.

FAO has determined that over the last five years BiH has produced data in only 11 out of 31 domains related to agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and food consumption.⁴

Although there are legal requirements concerning gender analysis of policies in all sectors, collection of sex-disaggregated data and regular monitoring of the status of gender equality in BiH, there is a lack of publicly available data.

Sector-specific gender analysis relevant to agriculture or rural development is either inaccessible or has not been conducted by line ministries. Institutional gender mechanisms, however, have supported research and analysis relevant to the topics of the country gender assessment, some of which is available in both local languages and English on the relevant websites.

The European Commission noted that the lack of a recent agricultural census is a major limitation for agricultural statistics and that special attention needs to be paid to adopting a methodology and defining the responsibilities and budgetary aspects of a future agricultural census. Additionally, a very limited number of statistical indicators are produced for agriculture, including some experimental estimates.⁵

COUNTRY OVERVIEW (SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE SEGMENT)

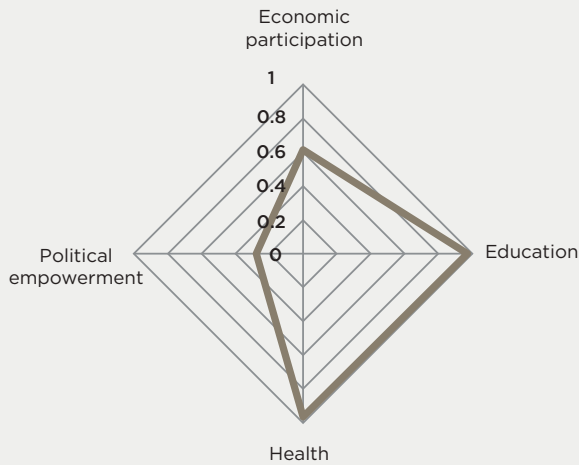
The Global Gender Gap, developed by the World Economic Forum, offers the perspective on progress toward gender parity in four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Considering each dimension separately, Bosnia and Herzegovina has particularly low scores in the areas of women's economic participation. Areas of inequality, such as economic and political empowerment, also have important implications for the economic independence of women in rural areas and whether their interests are represented in formal decision-making, depending on the administrative level of the country.

⁴ FAO, 2019, Statistical Capacity Assessment for the FAO-relevant SDG Indicators 2018/19 - Bosnia and Herzegovina, p. 5, available at: <https://bit.ly/33EA4lt>

⁵ European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report, p. 86, available at: <https://bit.ly/34DXNBx>

Figure I: Global Gender Gap scores for BiH, by dimension (2020)



Source: World Economic Forum, 2020. The Global Gender Gap Report 2020, p. 99

The characteristics of rural female- and male- headed households differ markedly. The typical male household head is married (79% of male-headed households), while the large majority of women who are heading households in rural areas are widowed (86% of all female-headed households - FHH), as compared to being divorced or unmarried⁶. This group of elderly women living in rural areas is especially at risk from poverty and social isolation.

In rural households, women who are classified as 'housewives' frequently undertake non-paid agricultural work in addition to housework (while men seldom take on housekeeping activities). The gendered division of labour largely reflects stereotypes about the types of activities that are "acceptable" for women and men to perform. Women are less engaged in processes that are higher along value chains, such as dealing with marketing, and are concentrated at levels that involve

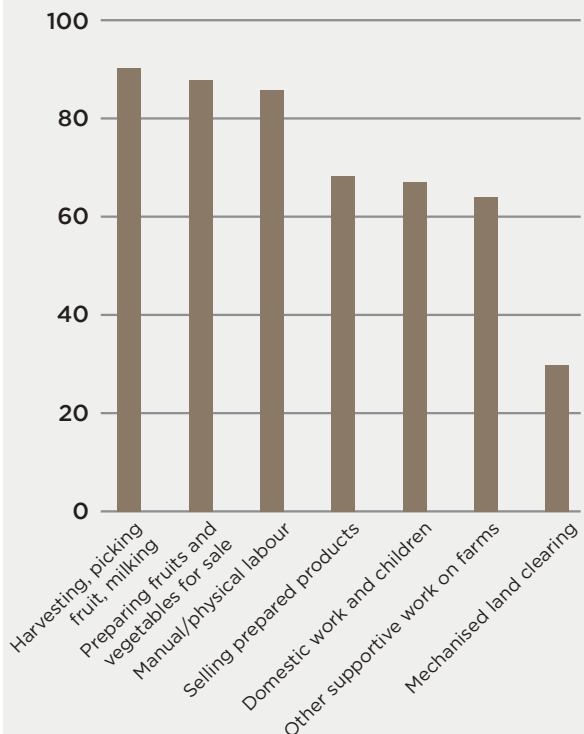
COUNTRY OVERVIEW (SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE SEGMENT)

Demographic data shows a pronounced aging process in rural areas. Rural women make 28,58% of total population in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 49,85% of total rural population, with more elderly women compared to younger ones. Rural women, having a lower level of education, not being able to work, and being part of a dependent category of population, are in need of social and other public services.

About 20.5% of the female workforce is engaged in the agricultural sector, 16,9% in non-agriculture or industry and 62,6% in services⁶, with employment rate for women being twice lower than for men and unemployment is higher for women compared to men. Around 65,9% of employed women in the agriculture sector are full time employed and 34,1% part-time.

Over a quarter of all households in BiH are headed by women - 26.7%; this rate is slightly higher than the European average of 24%. Male-headed households (MHH) are more predominant in rural areas, where 76% of households are headed by men⁷.

Figure II: Most common activities that women perform on farms



Source : Sarajevo Economic Institute, 2018. Gender and Youth Diagnostic Study Final Report, p. 18

⁶ BHAS - Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019, Labour Force Survey 2019, p. 66, available at: <https://bit.ly/3iEPmLp>

⁷ Ibid, p. 66

⁸ Ibid, p. 65

less decision-making about and control over income earned from agriculture.

Of the 363,394 households engaged in agriculture in 2013, 18.3% were female-headed households and 81.7% were male-headed households, meaning that women were leading approximately 66,500 household farms. In the RS particularly, the entity level action plan aimed at rural women is credited with an increase in the share of female-headed farming households from 12.5% in 2011 to 22.7% in 2017⁹.

For the country as a whole, the proportion of women registered as heads of family farms increased from 10% in 2016 to around 18% at present.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The BiH Law on Agriculture, Food and Rural Development defines that the basis for the implementation of BiH rural development policy shall be determined by the Strategy - the BiH Rural Development Plan. In line with this provision, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MoFTER), coordinated the drafting of the strategic document, in cooperation with the competent entity level institutions, the Federation BiH Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry (FMAWMF), the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Republika Srpska (MAFWM RS), and the Department for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of District Brčko (DAFWM DB). The Strategic Plan was drafted in a mid-to-up methodology, with the acceptance and use of the entity strategic documents drafted with full respect for the competencies of BiH, entities and the Brčko District of BiH.

The state itself doesn't provide budget for the implementation of the Strategy, but the purpose of the document was to provide strategic framework for the entities and Brčko District that is aligned with EU policy for agriculture and rural development and will open the floor for negotiation on pre-accession assistance and access to IPA funds. The real implementation of the agriculture and rural development policy on the ground happens at RS and FBiH entities and Brčko District level, as they adopt their own legal

and financial frameworks for development of agriculture and rural areas.

The Federation BiH entity has a Mid-term Development Strategy for the Agricultural Sector for 2015-2019 (whose validity has been extended) and a Rural Development Program of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2021.

In the Republika Srpska entity, the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas until 2020 is in force and gender issues have been adequately elaborated in the document itself.

When it comes to Brčko District, the document, although drafted, was never adopted and does not constitute an official document. Gender analysis has been done for the legislative and legal framework pertaining to the agriculture sector, and more specifically to the agricultural budget.

The analysis of the legislative framework for the agriculture and rural development sector has revealed an extremely low degree of gender sensitivity of these documents. Most laws at all levels of government do not know the concept of gender equality, female beneficiaries, female holders of agricultural holdings, or in any way recognize this beneficiary group or this social group of rural residents within the framework of rights and obligations prescribed by the law.

ACCESS TO FINANCE AND INCENTIVES

The relevant ministries for agriculture in both entities of BiH distribute incentives to farmers to invest in agricultural production and rural development. These subsidies are neither loans nor credits but are direct payments to farmers. There are various incentive schemes, paid to farmers on family farms, legal entities, crafts persons and individual entrepreneurs. The share in absorption of agriculture budget for women headed households has reached 6,5% in RS and 15,3% in FBiH in 2019.

Nevertheless, in most agricultural households, it is the male family member who has formal farm ownership, and this generally means that female members would not be able to directly apply for incentives. Although women who are heading family farms should have the

⁹ Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2019. Progress report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in BiH within the Beijing +25 process, p. 28, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Sz4aRg>

same access to incentives as men, the data presented below suggest that this is not the case. Women represent considerably less than half of those who apply for and receive funds. In terms of the amount of funding, men receive the lion's share - up to almost 90% of the total approved funds in some categories.

Women in rural areas who are operating at the micro level must be supported with specialized training and credit lines that reflect their needs and the characteristics of their businesses.

Table 1- Beneficiaries of financial support for agriculture and rural development in FBiH, by sex (2019)

	Number of requests (individuals)	% requesting incentives	Amount of approved support (in KM)	% share of total incentives
Legal entities and craftspersons				
Women	847	14.1%	3 898 071.71	9.9%
Men	5 169	85.9%	35 644 090.33	90.1%
Family farms				
Women	5 559	27.8%	5 482 422.99	25.6%
Men	14 409	72.2%	15 964 664	74.4%

Note: the data represent the total combined incentives for structural measures and production support.
Source: Data provided by the FBiH Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, April 2020.

Table 2- Beneficiaries of financial support through the Agrarian Payments Agency in RS, by sex (2019)

	Number of recipients (individuals)	% requesting incentives	Amount of incentive (in KM)	% share of total incentives
Family farms				
Women	2 894	17.9%	4 533 718	10.2%
Men	13 285	82.1%	40 056 519.11	89.8%

Note: data for legal entities and individual entrepreneurs is excluded because it is not sex-dissaggregated.
Source: Data provided by the RS Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, April 2020.



In order to help mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women in BiH has secured support for rural women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the financial support of Sweden, and in partnership with the Gender Center of Republika Srpska and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Republika Srpska. As a part of this support, members of Association "Romanijski skorup - kajmak" received a grant to buy high quality buckets for milk.

GOOD PRACTICES RELATED TO GENDER IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BIH

In the CEDAW commentary on the BiH report on the position of rural women, the following positive practices in both entities are highlighted:

- During the reporting period and by 2015, the first Action Plan for Improving the Position of Rural Women in RS was implemented, thus representing a temporary special measure within the 2009 - 2015 Strategic Rural Development Plan. Measures included economic empowerment of women and strengthening the role of rural women in the development of local communities. Although the measures were initially provisional, they became part of the regular annual work plan of the RS Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, ensuring their sustainability in the future.
- Both entities have gender-sensitive evaluation methods in approving investments subsidies. The FBiH Rural Development Program (2016 - 2020) foresees special measures for women, such as special methods for ranking female applicants for projects by awarding additional 20 points and increasing the level of support for such projects by 5%. In RS women applicants receive additional points in the evaluation process and receive 30% return to investment.
- Various programs, supported by UN Women, which included co-financing from the RS Ministry of Agriculture, resulted in requests of women's associations for co-financing of specific business activities by 39%; increase in the involvement of women in associations and cooperatives; establishment of five women cooperatives; establishment of a regional gender network; and over 17% of the women owning the farms.
- International Day of Rural Women is traditionally celebrated on 15 October each year in BiH. Campaign "EQUALLY! For women in the rural areas" is regularly implemented in the RS, increasing visibility of rural women's contribution to society, and improving their position.
- The Federal Employment Agency has implemented the Rural Enterprise Subsidy Program, which has increased the number of entrepreneurs engaged in agricultural affairs, and the trend of engagement of unemployed women in rural areas was evident. 22,034 applications for women's incentives were received in 2013, which made 30% of total applications received, confirming the tendency of increasing the number of female applications compared to 2012 (16,347 applications) or 2011 (12,383 applications).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

GOVERNMENT

In the medium term:

Ensure that national targets for SDG 5 reflect issues that are impacting rural women. Additionally, in nationalizing the SDGs, mainstream gender throughout all targets of the 2030 Agenda, especially those related closely to women and agriculture (e.g. Goal 1 on ending poverty; Goal 2 on food security and nutrition; Goal 6 on access to clean water and sanitation; Goal 15 on land and biodiversity, etc.)

Compile all existing sex-disaggregated data related to agriculture and rural development and publish such data with analysis, either as stand-alone material or a chapter within future Women and Men statistical compilations.

Increase cooperation between institutional gender mechanisms and agricultural ministries to undertake gender analysis where data about women in agriculture is missing, for example gender-sensitive value chain analyses.

For municipal governments that are developing local gender action plans, include indicators for monitoring the implementation of such plans that also measure improvements for rural women. Local gender budgeting initiatives should continue supporting the economic empowerment of rural women but should also distinguish between assistance needed by new start-ups and support to established enterprises that have the potential to grow.

When conducting gender analysis relevant to the development of policy, strategies or programmes, include an assessment of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and men in rural areas.

In the long term:

Design and conduct an agricultural census that includes a gender perspective at the preparatory, implementation and analysis stages. In addition, review where other statistical compilations/surveys can more effectively incorporate a gender perspective.

Assess the system for registering farms and enterprises to detect financial, procedural, and other barriers that prevent women from formalising their income-generating activities. Consider ways to provide support to women locally, such as “one-window” systems, or hubs for legal and accounting assistance.

In addition to existing agriculture incentives and programmes supporting women farmers and entrepreneurs, consider further projects that specifically support women who have established enterprises but are unable to grow or expand. Business or farming incubators are a model that can reduce risk for small enterprises.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Advocate and push for mainstreaming and incorporation of gender in all projects and initiatives that are being supported.

Advocate for harmonization of agriculture policy measures at all levels of government with good EU practices.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Build strong advocacy and awareness about the importance and participation of women in agriculture and rural development.

Take advantage of every opportunity for constructive dialogue with government and international actors to point to the gaps and advocate for an improved response as well as to advise on solutions.

Engage with media outlets and continue to raise the visibility of women from rural areas.