

ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

As the world celebrates International Women's Day, Kenya national Farmers Federation (KENAFF) is happy to appreciate women for their great role in Agriculture which is an engine of growth and poverty reduction especially in developing countries. Women comprise 43% of the world agricultural labour force. In Africa 80% of Agricultural production comes from small scale farmers who are largely rural women.



Women are the strongholds of development of rural and national economies; they guarantee livelihoods, especially in rural areas. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, engaging in trade and marketing as well as caring for family members and maintaining their homes. As a result of their immense effort in production, they help in guaranteeing their self-sustenance and that of the overall economy.

Despite the important roles that Women play, representing a crucial resource in agriculture and the entire economy as farmers, laborers and entrepreneurs, they face greater constraints than men in that they suffer from high illiteracy, poor access to productive resources such as land as well as information and markets access. As a result they are the most affected by poverty. Effort to achieve the government agenda of agricultural development, economic development and food security will be realized if contribution made by women is recognized and measures are put in place to alleviate the constraints they face in agriculture.

Strengthening women's land ownership rights through adoption of land laws that favor women is very crucial in agricultural women empowerment; this will help in improving security of land ownership by women. Women produce 80% of crops and own about one percent of land, the situation needs to change if women productivity is to be realized. Lack of appreciation of the huge role that women play in Agriculture is harmful and gives rise to formulation of policies that does not address the specific needs of women especially those in agricultural sector.

The empowerment process in agriculture should include linking women farmers to markets, finance and ensuring that they have access to assets and resources such as land, water, tools and technologies, as well as human social and financial capital, together with knowledge about the implications of climate change.