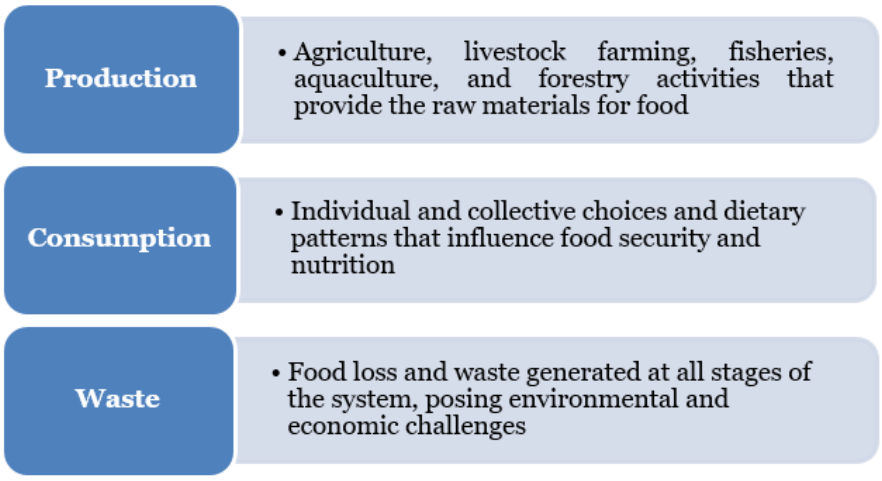
# Gender Equality in Agri-Food System

## Why in news?

A recent report by Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), calls for nutrition investments in the agri-food sector to reduce gender inequalities, increase productivity and enhance business resilience.

## What is agrifood systems?

- **Definition** – Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines agri-food systems as *all the interconnected activities and actors* involved in getting food from field to fork.
- **Coverage** – It encompasses everything from agricultural *production* and processing to *distribution, consumption, and waste management*.
- It also highlights the critical role of economic, social, and environmental factors in shaping how food reaches our plates.




- **Challenges** – A range of pressures like *rapid population growth, urbanization*, growing wealth & consequent changes in consumption patterns, are challenging our food systems' ability to provide nutritious food.
- They are affected by, *extreme weather events* as associated with climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

## Investment in Nutritional Food value Chain

• Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a *Switzerland-based foundation*, launched the report titled The Case for Investment in Nutritious Foods Value Chains: An Opportunity for Gender Impact.
• **Importance of Nutrition Investments**
  - It can contribute to global *food security and nutrition.*
  - It can *improve supplier productivity* and business resilience.
  - It can create a more productive and loyal workforce by *attracting and retaining women* thereby empowering women.
  - It can help in *climate mitigation and adaptation*.
• **Recommendation** - It highlights *six nutritious food value chains* in three geographies from a gender perspective
  - In Sub-Saharan Africa - Cashew nuts and poultry
  - In Latin America - Aquaculture and quinoa
  - In South Asia - Tomatoes and dairy

> *Africa is the world's largest producer of raw cashew nuts. South Asia has a high tomato production, with India being the world's second largest producer.*

## What are the benefits of having gender equality in agrifood systems?

- **Employment opportunities** – According to FAO, globally, women comprise *38% of all agri-food workers*.
- They play a vital role in our agrifood systems as
  - Farmers
  - Retailers
  - Wage workers
  - Entrepreneurs
- **Food Security** - About 60–80% of the food produced in India can be attributed to the efforts of rural women.
- **Health benefit** – Women's participation in food sector *improves household diets* and in particular *improves child nutrition*.
- **Rural Development** – Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture can bring paradigm shift towards economic growth.
  - Agriculture employs about 80% of rural women
- **Women FPO** - Women Led Farmer Producer Organization benefits both society and economy.
- **GDP growth** – Plugging the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agri-food-system would *increase global gross domestic product (GDP) by 1%* or nearly $1 trillion.

To know more about Women Led FPO, Click here

## What are the challenges in reducing gender gap?

- Despite the high rate of participation, *women in agri-food sectors continue to face a plethora of barriers.*
- **Lack of access to resources** – Women find it difficult to access land, inputs, finance,

extension services and technology.

- **Discriminatory social norms** – Inadequate encouragement from the domestic environment impede the elevation of women to the higher ladder in the sector.
- **Marginalization** – Most of the women labours in agrifood system are irregular, informal and vulnerable, as well as labor-intensive
    - 71% of the part-time jobs in agricultural processing around the world are held by women.
- **Gender segregation** - Women tend to be concentrated in the *low-paid sectors* and also have higher burdens of unpaid care work.
- Share of women in the agri-food sector is much higher in the less developed countries.
    - In sub-Saharan Africa, this share is 66% and in the South Asia region of which India, it is recorded at 71%.
- **Unequal pay for equal job** - On average, female employees in agriculture *earn 18% less than men*.
- **Safety concerns atmosphere** - Risky working conditions and gender-based violence impedes their participation.
- **Uneven disaster Impact** - Women are impacted more by disasters, such as climate risks and crises

*In Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India stands at rank 108 out of 193 nations and Global Gender Gap Index 2024 places India at 129.*

## What is the Way ahead?

- Address the structural inequalities and discrimination in the system.
- Provide women with equal access to resources, services, technologies, and training to close the gender gap in productivity.
- Increase funding to nutritious foods value chains, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- *Gender-lens investments* could help address the lack of representation of women in leadership positions and support women entrepreneurship and ownership.
- The '2X criteria' provides a clear and standardized framework for investing in companies with a gender lens.

*The **2X Criteria** is the global industry standard for assessing and structuring investments that provide women with leadership opportunities, quality employment, finance, enterprise support, and products and services that enhance their economic participation & access.*

## References


1. Down To Earth | Nutrition investments in agri-food sector
2. FAO| Agro-food Systems
3. FAO | Women in Agri Food systems



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