

HIGHLIGHTS



Women entrepreneurs – key players in ACP agribusiness development

Brussels Development Briefing No. 42

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On 17 September 2015, the CTA organized the 42nd Brussels development Briefing—part of a series of bi-monthly Policy Briefings on ACP-EU rural and agricultural issues. Around 100 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss how to empower women agribusiness entrepreneurs in ACP countries.

Women agribusiness entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs – key players in ACP agribusiness development

This Briefing focused on several key issues: access to resources for women in agriculture such as land, finance etc.; the need to prioritize programmes which would result in job creation for women; the impact of the women's economic empowerment on the overall economy and agricultural productivity in ACP regions; the role of women in value chains; their participation in trade; the challenge of the climate change particularly for the small islands in the Pacific region; types of support provided by the European Investment Bank; various successful business models developed by women in ACP countries and main challenges and opportunities.

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Partners in the Briefing:

- CTA
- European Commission (DG DEVCO)
- ACP Secretariat
- CONCORD



Isolina Boto



Viwanou Gnassounou



Jean-Pierre Halkin

Isolina Boto, Manager of the CTA Brussels Office and coordinator of the Brussels Briefings set the scene and introduced the Briefing, which is part of a series held bimonthly and co-organised by CTA, the European Commission/DG DEVCO, the ACP Group and Concord. This Briefing addresses the main challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector and how women, producers and entrepreneurs are connected to the markets especially in added-value products. Empowering women groups of farmers and processors across the value chain is a priority to deliver on agricultural transformation in the ACP countries. The Briefing was structured in two panels: the first panel reviewed the key challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in ACP countries and the second panel looked at examples of successes from the field and highlighted a number of success business models from several ACP countries.

In his introductory remarks, **Viwanou Gnassounou, Assistant-Secretary General of the ACP Group**,

commenced by emphasizing that women entrepreneurship represents an area of particular interest for the ACP Group. The main challenge world agriculture will face by 2050 is food production, which will have to increase by 70 percent. Against this background and given the determining role that women play in agriculture, the economic emancipation of women represents a crucial issue. Within the ACP Group, projects are defined in a way that allows the creation of jobs for women and puts them at the forefront. Empowering women is one of the most stringent guidelines of the ACP Group and it is encompassed in the Cotonou agreement. It is essential to identify success stories and copy them elsewhere, share experiences with other regions. A critical aspect is to give priority to those programmes, which would result in job creation for women.

Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit, Rural Development, Food Security, Nutrition, EC, emphasized the importance of food security and agriculture sector of intervention for



Michael Hailu



H.E. Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa



Stephanie Barrientos

the European Union up to 2020. Food security and agriculture have always been firmly linked to gender issues since both areas encompass the inequity dimension: being food insecure represents a form of inequity, as well as being undernourished or suffering from stunting. For this reason, the EU policy on nutrition and resilience recently published includes a strong gender dimension. Nonetheless, addressing the gender issues from a nutrition and food security perspective is an incomplete approach: ensuring that women will not suffer from stunting or from chronic undernutrition is not enough. This is why the debate on women entrepreneurship is of critical importance: women who live in rural world should be given the opportunity of a bright future, access to decent jobs etc.

Michael Hailu, CTA's Director, made some final introductory observations on women entrepreneurs in agribusiness. First of all, transforming agriculture from subsistence into business is critical, otherwise inclusive growth, the eradication of poverty or the realization of SDGs are not achievable. Thus, it is imperative that agriculture is perceived as a business so it could offer employment and income for millions of people who depend on it. When tackling the agricultural transformation, one cannot fail to include the need for full engagement and empowerment of women, as they represent at least 50 percent of

agricultural labor in ACP countries. Research shows that women do not have access to resources in agriculture such as land, finance etc., whereas if they are given similar opportunities, they are equally efficient as men in terms of production. Consequently, access to resources is a major constraint that must be addressed. Women's economic empowerment impacts the overall economy and agricultural productivity throughout ACP countries. Furthermore, studies show that women who have higher incomes are most likely to spend them on their families in terms of food, education for children etc.

In the renewed CTA strategy, empowering women through skills and knowledge is one of the main aspects. Moreover, CTA systematically documents networks with successful cases and has a successful programme oriented towards young female scientists in ACP countries. Finally, 2015 is significant for women as it is the African Union year of women's empowerment.

Panel 1: Enhancing women's-led agribusiness development was chaired by H.E. Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa, Ambassador of Lesotho. This Panel provided an overview of women entrepreneurs in agribusiness, lessons learned from research and practice, as well as the key challenges and opportunities.

Stephanie Barrientos, Professor, Institute of Development Policy and Management and Associate Director, offered a brief overview of gender dimensions and value chains in order to set the context. Agribusiness covers all the actors involved in bringing products from the very initial design, followed by production, distribution, retail to the final consumption. One significant aspect is that all segments of the value chains are gendered: there are socially determined roles for men and women in the value chains. The middle of the value chain, characterized by larger and smaller retailers, agrofood processing, various agribusiness companies, tends to be male dominated. On the contrary, the production end of the value chain, including larger scale farms as well as smallholder farms, is female dominated. Some examples include South African fruit, which is primarily larger scale, where 53 percent of employees are women; Kenyan flowers and vegetables, where 75 percent of employees are women. Furthermore, unpaid family labor is a high-priority issue in agribusiness. In spite of the critical role played by women in the agricultural value chain, their work is often not recognized nor supported. One can argue that a chain is as strong as the weakest link: if women are not being supported and yet they are playing a decisive role, then the value chain is weak. In addition, one of the key challenges of the production end is the issue of the land tenure, i.e. women are not recognized as land owners, thus

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Christian Planchette



Mereia Volavola



Jacqueline Church

they are unable to get access to credit, to inputs etc. Nonetheless, in the value chains there are also some great opportunities: the increasing recognition of the need for quality and standards. There is a gradual recognition of the critical role women play in the quality segments of the value chain and that in order to enhance productivity and quality women must be supported. Finally, it is necessary to differentiate where economic upgrading in value chains leads to social upgrading and where the opposite happens. For example, economic and social upgrading have gone together in the field of floriculture in Kenya and Uganda, whereas economic and social downgrading happened in the field of cocoa in West Africa.

Christian Planchette, Senior Training Officer, Enterprise Competitiveness, International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations spoke about factors of competitiveness of women entrepreneurs and their participation in trade. Women in businesses still face considerable impediments, such as unequal access to finance, to productive assets, to networks, to education and skills training. One significant aspect is a serious shortage of self-confidence, which is also maintained by society as in a vicious circle and needs to be addressed. Social effects of women's economic empowerment endure for generations: studies show that women invest more income in family education and health than men, children benefit greatly from the control of the householding income

by women. Women's economic empowerment is essential for the elimination of poverty in the next 15 years. Closing the gender gap would be equivalent to adding a "new China" to the global economy.

The ITC, together with partners around the world, launched a Call to Action within the Women Vendors and Exhibition Forum in Sao Paulo in order to bring one million women enterprises to market by 2020. The key pillars of the Call to Action are data collection, analysis and dissemination; trade policy; corporate procurement; public procurement; certification; financial services; ownership rights etc. The Women and Trade Programme of the ITC has four key components, which are policy advocacy; institutional strengthening; women enterprises competitiveness strengthening; buyer engagement and business generation. Other projects of the ITC are women yam farmers in Ghana, women coffee farmers in Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda; women cotton farmers in Zambia; linking village women agricultural produce to the tourism industry in Vanuatu etc.

Mereia Volavola, CEO, Pacific Island Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), discussed challenges and opportunities for women in agribusiness development in the Pacific. Women are involved in agribusiness in an informal way, as farmers, market and roadside vendors. The main challenges women engaged in agribusiness

face are lack of access to finance; high transportation costs; lack of access to training and information; lack of land ownership rights for women; lack of efficient mechanized farming. Furthermore, for this particular region, there is the reality of the climate change particularly for the small islands. In terms of opportunities, areas in which women could be more engaged are hotels, restaurants and supermarkets; spa and beauty products; cruise ships; value addition in regional and export markets.

Jacqueline Church, Policy Officer, European Investment Bank (EIB) presented the support from EIB to women entrepreneurs and to the agribusiness sector. The EIB is the EU Bank owned by the 28 member states and has been working in ACP regions for more than 50 years; its current mandate is given by the Cotonou agreement. Some of the types of support it provides are: credit line for small and medium sized enterprises; private equity; direct lending to corporate; microfinance etc. Microfinance has been an important area of activity since the Cotonou agreement, but the new element is that with the 11th European Development Fund, the EIB was given the mandate to take risk for more development impact: the Impact Financing Envelope which allowed to invest more in agriculture and agribusiness and also to address the vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

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H.E. Paolelei Luteru



Lovin Kobusingye



Simone Zoundi



Alberta Vitale



Rosemund Benn

Questions and comments focused on instruments suitable for various types of smallholder farmers; good practices from the private sector to tackle unpaid work and ownership and control over land; new programmes to encourage meetings among women; the lack of data.

Panel 2: Women's entrepreneurs successes in ACP regions was chaired by H.E. Paolelei Luteru, Ambassador of Samoa. This panel presented successful business models developed by women entrepreneurs in various ACP countries and the drivers of success for upscaling or replicating.

Lovin Kobusingye, Managing Director, Kati Farms Uganda, spoke about the successful experience in adding value to aquaculture products and increase market access, which led to the creation of Kati farms Uganda Ltd, an agro fish-processing enterprise founded in 2011 that sells new fish products including fish sausage and samosas. Fish farmers in Uganda face obstacles in finding market outlets for their fresh farmed fish. In order to address this issue, Kati Farms adds value to fish through the production of processed fish products, such as fish sausages or samosas. Key success factors are: venturing in innovative fish products fit for present generation; customizing products to customers' different tastes. Prestigious awards boosted their confidence as well as the trust of the 1037 fish farmers

that accepted to supplying fish on credit to Kati Farms which solved initial capitalization problem. Up until now, some of the main achievements are new innovative products in market; employing 38 staff; PPP with government etc.

Simone Zoundi, CEO, Sodepal, Burkina Faso, shared her experience in entrepreneurship. Food and nutritional security has been one of the Government's main concern in Burkina Faso. Several policies have been developed to boost the agricultural sector. Women entrepreneurship represents one of the main driving forces behind women's economic empowerment with all the advantages this implies for overall economic growth. Sodepal SA was founded in 1991 for the purpose of producing nutritional supplement foods based on Codex Alimentarius standards. The company promotes local products with a variety of foods marketed nationwide and on a subregional scale on the basis of three production lines: bakery production line; biscuit production line; and fortified instant infant cereals production line. Nonetheless, Sodepal encounters difficulties in terms of the weak purchasing power of the general public; sourcing and storing facilities; loans; heavy tax burden and high customs duties; fraud and corruption factors.

Alberta Vitale, Associate Director, Women in Business Dev. (WIBDI), Samoa, presented the successful

programme "Organic Farm to Table", designed by chef Robert Oliver in 2013, who developed it in the Caribbean. "Farm To Table" aims to get hotels and restaurants use ingredients available in Samoa and reduce imports of fresh and goods, rewrite menus to incorporate Samoan cuisine, train local chefs, contract local farmers to supply Farm to Table and encourage the use of locally grown organic produce. As part of the programme, Women in Business Development provide training and continue to nurture farmers; supply seeds and seedlings; find and secure markets for farmer products; create value addition and branding farmer products; weekly evaluation based on the outcome and objective of the project, and importantly, provide organic certification through WIBDI ICS. One significant outcome of the programme is its contribution to identifying roles of women in the value chain.

Rosemund Benn, President, Pomeroun Women Agro-Processor Association, Guyana, illustrated the path from the spoilage of fruit, which grew in abundance in the Pomeroun area to women's empowerment. The Pomeroun Women's Agro-processors Association was launched in 2001 and comprised 14 women with four products: starfruit cakemix, seasoning sauce, hot pepper sauce and fruit wine. IICA provided them training in management, food preparation, sanitization, brand

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Tepsy Ntseokane



ACP Embassies representatives



Participants

development. Furthermore, Women Agro-Processor Association is part of WADDNET, formed in 2011, which is a women agroprocessors development network and of CANROP, and it further provided training on advertising and marketing online and networking. Currently, three more products were added: green seasoning; green mango achar; and virgin coconut oil. Future plans include expand marketing to other supermarkets; increasing to 20 members by attracting young women entrepreneurs, including strengthening computer skills and adding three products to the current supply portfolio.

Tepsy Ntseokane, Eve's Eden Farming Enterprise, South Africa offered an example of successful business in the field of cattle and maize production supplied to local market. Eve's Eden Farming Enterprise was established in 2007 and it is composed of two enterprises: beef production and maize production. The main successes are related to job creation, food security, better living conditions, instilling a culture of enterprise in agriculture.

Furthermore, a section 21 company was established, called Gauteng Rural Development, whose objective is to fight poverty among women and people with disability. Programmes include social gathering of the aged and development of rural women-led businesses.

H.E. Paolelei Luteru, Ambassador of Samoa, made some final comments, emphasizing that the common denominators of these presentations are 'success' and 'outcome'. The predominant challenges that women in all ACP countries face are related access to capital, infrastructure, taxes etc. and need to be tackled. Regarding access to capital, which has always represented a major hindrance for SMEs, there is one opportunity under the Investment Fund, provided by the ACP Group with the collaboration of the EIB, set up in order to assist the private sector development in ACP countries.

Michael Hailu, Director of the CTA, concluded with key messages raised in the Briefing, emphasizing once again the important role that women

play in agribusiness which is often unrecognized, but also the need to enhance data on this particular topic; the need to strengthen and deepen capacity-building and funding.

Further information available online:

- Brussels Briefings: www.brusselsbriefings.net
- Women agribusiness entrepreneurs: <https://brusselsbriefings.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/reader.pdf>
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