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Briefing Paper

Gendering Agro-Processing in the EAC Region

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Summary

This briefing paper discusses the level of involvement and unique challenges women face in agro-processing sub-sector in the EAC region. In spite of high absorption of the female task force, agro-processing industries often engage women in low-paid tasks that demand low skills and training. The paper presents the status of self-employed female taskforce in the EAC and level of engagement as well as the unique barriers they face including limitations in decision making power, access to land, credit, and training; and household responsibilities that usurp them of time and energy. The paper forwards gender-sensitive policy actions to improve the involvement of women in production, processing and marketing of agro-based products.

Background

Manufacturing in the East African Community (EAC) region is primarily agro-based. Agro-processing industries, referring to transforming products originating from agriculture, forestry and fisheries that reduce post-harvest wastage, enhance food security and boost income and living standards, account for more than 80 per cent of the total manufacturing sector in the region. Given the region's abundant agricultural resources and semi-skilled labour force, agro-processing has a huge potential to stimulate industrialisation and bring structural transformation in the EAC region. Certain agro-processing sectors employ more women than men, although the level of involvement and skills required are lower. This briefing paper discusses some of the unique challenges EAC women in agro-processing sub-sector face and proposes gender sensitive considerations to improve the involvement of women in production, processing and marketing of agro-based products.

Agro-Industry in the EAC

The manufacturing sector in the EAC has relatively small contribution to GDP compared to agriculture and services sectors (Table 1). Manufacturing contributes about 8.9 per cent of the region's industrial base, a far cry from the average target of about 25 per cent by 2032 for all the five Partner States¹.

Table 1: Share of sectors (% GDP), 2011-2015

Country	Manufacturing	Agriculture	Services
Burundi	10	39.3	42.2
Kenya	11	30.3	50.4
Rwanda	5	33.1	52.5
Uganda	10	27.2	50.8
Tanzania	6	31.5	43.5

Data Source: World Bank

Of all manufacturing industries, agro-processing industries are the biggest direct employer and have been identified to have a huge potential for indirect employment opportunities within the services sector through forward and backward linkages.² Food processing accounts for about 40 per cent of the total value added by agro-industry; and more than 30 per cent of the total manufacturing in the region.³ In Kenya, agro-processing accounts for over 73 per cent manufacturing production turnover⁴ of which manufacturing of food, beverages and tobacco sub-sector takes the lion's share. Agro-food industry, which is the biggest direct employer of all manufacturing industries, has huge implications on job creation particularly for women who are mainly engaged in processed fruits and vegetables value chains.

Relevant Regional Policies in the EAC

The region has industrialisation Policy and Strategy (2012-2032) that envision the region's industry to be a globally competitive, environment-friendly and sustainable industrial sector, capable of significantly improving the living standards of the people of East Africa by 2032. Agro-processing & agri-business are identified as one of the key sectors, in the short term, by the Strategy. EAC regional policy documents give priority and emphasis on agro processing industry.

¹ EAC Industrialisation Policy 2012-2032

² Ibid

³ Kilimo Trust (2011)

⁴ Cited in 'Mainstreaming Kenya's National Climate Change Action Plan into the Manufacturing Sector', Republic of Kenya

The overall guiding documents, the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community and the EAC Vision 2050 identify food and agro industries as one of the strategy and priority areas (Article 80 (1) (c) (iii)); and outline capacity and skills requirements for agro-processing industry, respectively. Furthermore, the Protocol on the Establishment of the EAC Common Market urges for promotion of agro-processing and value addition to agricultural products under Art. 45.2(e). Establishing and strengthening of agro-processing and agri-business for enhancing value addition is one of the strategic interventions for the 4th EAC Development Strategy (2011/12-2015/16). Recognising the strong link between the environment and agro-industries, the EAC Climate Change Master Plan (2011-2031), which is aligned to the EAC Climate Change Strategy and Policy mentions promoting agro processing and enhancing food storage facilities to ultimately develop adaptation framework for agriculture. Regional policy linkages between agro-industries and other sectors is stated in the Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Strategy (2005-2030) that urges for promoting agro-based development through appropriate agro-processing industries, among others.

Direct mention of women in relation to agro-processing has been made by the EAC Agriculture and Food Security Action Plan (2011-2015) in the development of training and technical support programmes for women in agro-processing sector.

Women in Agro-Industry

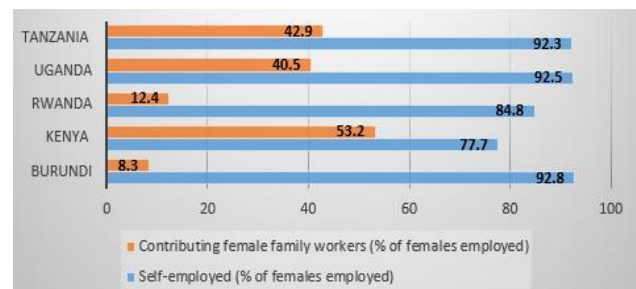
EAC's Female Taskforce

Overwhelming majority of women in the EAC region are self-employed, 77.7 per cent out of total females employed in Kenya and 92.8 per cent in Burundi; while of these self-employed females, many of them are contributing family workers⁵. In

⁵ According to the *World Bank*, contributing family workers are those who hold 'self-employment jobs' as own account workers in a market-oriented establishment operated by a related person living in the same household.

Uganda and Tanzania, contributing female family workers in 2014 were estimated to be 40.5 per cent and 42.9 per cent as compared to their male counterparts at 10.3 per cent and 31.8 per cent for the same period, respectively.

Figure 1: Self-employed Female Taskforce in the EAC, 2014



Data Source: World Bank

Female Employment in Agro-processing Industry

Despite facing unique barriers during production, processing and marketing as compared to their male counterparts, women have secured significant place in the industrialisation and economic progress of the region. Reports indicate that new jobs in export-oriented agro-industries often provide better opportunities for women than traditional agriculture. The horticulture sector has often been cited for its high levels of female participation, particularly in fruits, vegetables and flower. For instance, the share of female employees in selected high-value agro-industries of fruits and vegetables; and flower in Kenya stood at 75 per cent; in flower in Uganda at 75 per cent⁶; and 57 per cent⁷ in Tanzania.

Level of Involvement

In spite of high absorption of the female task force, agro-processing industries also feature gender occupational disparity as women often engage in

⁶ Maertens and Swinnen, 2009

⁷ FAO and UNIDO, 2009

low-paid tasks while men in agro-processing are likely to have jobs that require training with higher wages⁸. Men are commonly assigned tasks that do require physical capacity, supervisory capacity and mechanical skills⁹ and dominate in jobs with technology uptake¹⁰. The gender sectoral and occupational disparities hence give rise to gender vulnerability where inequalities are evident in income levels; job security; and health and safety.

Unique Challenges of Women in Agro-Processing in the EAC

Women face unique barriers in production, processing and marketing of agro-produce due to limitations in decision making power, access to land, credit, and training; and generally constrained by household responsibilities that usurp them of time and energy.

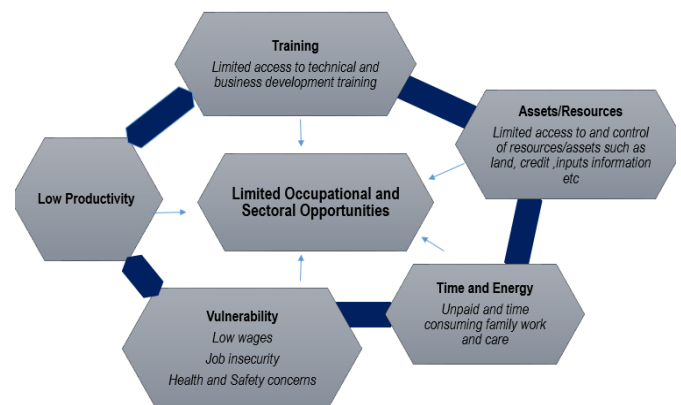
Limited access to assets/resources. Women as individuals or groups, find it difficult to make decisions on planting and cultivation; and later processing and marketing of commercial crops because of land ownership practices in the East African region. This also has direct impact on their ability to be members of cooperatives. The second order effect of such a patriarchal land tenure system is that women find it more difficult to have access to credit than their male counterparts. In the region, like most other regions of developing countries, the decision to use land as collateral for bank loans for agri-business rests on the man. In 2014, World Bank data reveals that borrowing by EAC women to start, operate or expand a farm or business was estimated to be only 21 per cent in Kenya and Uganda, 18 per cent in Tanzania, 12 per cent in Rwanda and only 7 per cent in Burundi.

Negative Impact on Food Security of Excluded Women Farmers: the growth of high-value supply chains may be detrimental to women farmers who are excluded in the value chain. For instance in

Kenya, the growth of high-value horticulture supply chains have been found to negatively affect rural women in Kenya as they were unable to cultivate vegetables for consumption and sale in local markets as land and labour resources were decided by men to be used for export vegetable production under contract¹¹.

Double work, double expectation: As much as women are expected to engage in income generating activities, either in informal or formal employment, they are expected to handle family work and care. Women often lack both the time and energy, as compared to their male counterparts, to explore business and training opportunities due to such double responsibilities that reinforcing employers' perception¹².

Figure 1: Myriad Challenges Faced by Women



Source: Author's own depiction

⁸ FAO, 2009

⁹ FAO, 2011

¹⁰ Silvander, 2016

¹¹ FAO and UNIDO, 2009

¹² A Ugandan employer stated 'Men can deliver better than women because they can offer labor year-round, while women are absent to meet family duties and when they are pregnant' (BSR, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

High percentage of self-employed women within the female taskforce and associated high percentage contribution to family work indicate that formal employment opportunities are limited within the region. This leaves the informal sector as a major employer, but one that happens to offer low skilled employment opportunities in micro and small enterprises and low earnings; job insecurities; and high vulnerability to health and safety hazards.

To improve women farmers and traders' capacities in production, processing and marketing, much work is needed. As stated in the EAC Industrialisation Policy, governments and non-governmental organisations should facilitate the formation and networking of women associations for inclusive value chains, more business opportunities and networking within and outside the region. In relation to this, members need to be trained on good cooperative governance¹³. Such networks are expected to strengthen linkages among women producers, processors and the market.

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- EAC Common Market Protocol

Women have unique challenges within different levels of value chains. Tailor programmes according to their needs by for instance establishing a separate extension services package for women agro-processing groups; and tailor training materials and technical support according to their needs- as gender-blind investment and services for agro-processing industries, or any sector for that matter, have limitations in narrowing gender imbalances.

States and non-state actors need to encourage and incentivise sectors that are labour-intensive, less dependent on land and asset ownership; and those that allow applications of traditional knowledge. Organic cultivation should also be promoted for it allows women to have easier access to inputs; and results less health risks from excessive use of chemicals, particularly during pregnancy. Furthermore, policy makers could incentivise micro-creditors that adopt practices of using moveable assets as collateral to allow easier access to credit for women agro-processing groups.

Through development and trade assistance, development partners could play a role in assisting EAC Partner States to meaningfully integrate women agro-processors in global value chains through programmes and policies, such as affirmative actions for women agro-processors and their groups.

¹³ A 2014 CUTS study on agricultural cooperatives in Kenya found that internal factors ail cooperative societies where many of them were found to be riddled with corruption and conflict of interest,

some members even describing them as *robbery without violence*.

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