

Policy pointers

- **Stronger gender analysis** and sensitivity in land-based investments, and the policies and practices that shape their outcomes, is crucial to ensure that agricultural investments benefit rural citizens.
- **Addressing women's access** to, and control over, land and natural resources could help empower a new generation to shape their own and incoming agricultural investments.
- **Crop choice and how** ventures are structured strongly affect how risks and benefits are distributed between women and men, but societal norms, legal and policy frameworks and business models also shape outcomes.
- **Income-generating** opportunities from investments, including wage labour and labour-saving infrastructure, can bring significant benefits to women but demand must be thoroughly understood, work must be decent, and potential limitations to access for some must be overcome.

The global land rush: securing a better deal for women

Research into gender and the global land rush tells us that women in particular are losing out. But different types of land-based investments in different contexts result in a variety of gender-differentiated outcomes. So how does the investment type and business model affect the losses and gains women face? This briefing discusses gender-differentiated outcomes from several agricultural investments in Africa. It shows that although outcomes for women cannot be generalised, women do not always get a fair deal; that broadly 'inclusive' investments do not automatically benefit women; and that wage labour may be more appealing to some women than is usually acknowledged.

Gender and the global land rush

Women make up a bigger proportion of the world's poor than men, and a large percentage of agricultural workforces. They often reap less financial benefit from agriculture than male counterparts. Yet research shows investing in women farmers to close this 'gender gap' generates better productivity and household food and nutrition outcomes than a gender blind approach.¹ And increasing women's participation in companies' smallholder sourcing and support programmes can deliver a number of business benefits.²

Analysis of the recent surge in farmland investments in the global South has highlighted opportunities, but also limitations and risks for family farmers and poor rural citizens. Gender analysis of these investments is thin, but emerging. Some studies have highlighted how women are likely to suffer more than men during large land acquisitions and poorly structured agricultural investments,³ but few have assessed the gender differentiated outcomes of different models and types of investments.

Despite strong research examining how risks and benefits from different agricultural investments (ranging from plantation models to nucleus estate and outgrower schemes, joint ventures and contract farming) are

distributed between companies, governments and local populations,^{4,5} 'inclusivity' of investments cannot be fully determined without solid gender assessments. This leaves a gap in emerging recommendations on how to ensure agricultural investments bring equitable benefits across society.

Investments bring different outcomes for men and women

Societal norms frequently constrain rural women's control over household and community-level decision making. Women's mediated, and hence often fragile, access to land, and their limited representation in customary land management institutions, can make them more vulnerable to dispossession. Women's low representation in farmers' associations, and their marginalisation from exchanges with local authorities, local planning processes and external investors, mean that their needs are less likely to be addressed or prioritised during negotiations on the terms of an investment.

Research has shown how new land-based investments that reduce access to natural resources (often common pool resources) can hit women particularly hard.^{3,6} Women may lose more income than men if they can

Gender-blind investments risk exacerbating underlying inequalities

no longer sell non-timber forest products, fuelwood and charcoal. They may also be burdened with travelling further afield to gather food and fuel for themselves and their families. Where families are displaced or relocated away from new farmland investments, female-headed households may need to buy in more labour to clear new land than their male counterparts. Research

into contract farming also shows that transitions from subsistence to cash crops may transfer land access away from women.^{4,5}

Access to new employment opportunities is also likely to be heavily gendered. While men usually dominate plantation work, some crop cultivation (and particularly processing) is likely to employ mostly women. In general, women have less time available to take up wage labour, and when they do, they often secure lower paid and less secure jobs than men. Culturally embedded norms and traditional divisions of agricultural labour, production and processing mean that the choice of crop will dictate who gets which jobs.

On the other hand, women's limited access to land and their multiple workloads can mean women gain more from wage labour than men. Women must often give their earnings to husbands or male family members, but some women report that even so, they have significantly more influence over household expenditure. For others, wages can mean access to their own income, and skills development may be empowering — although this is clearly only the case when work is 'decent', pay is equal and rights such as to sick leave, care leave and maternity leave are fully provided.

Corporate social responsibility initiatives or efforts by investors that secure better access to education, healthcare, transport and recreation services for local populations can directly help women with their care work and financial burdens (and may even transform their daily lives). So too can labour-saving technology for preparing food crops or improving access to water. Yet problems arise when needs are not properly assessed; where technology is not maintained or transfers control of processing from women to men; and where barriers to access by some women are not foreseen and overcome.

So we cannot generalise and say that women always lose out from agricultural investments and transitions to wage labour.

'Broadly inclusive' ventures still affect women and men differently

Outgrower schemes, where farmers cultivate their own or leased land, are often deemed more 'inclusive' than plantation models. In practice, they are often accessed

more by men than women, but this doesn't have to be the case. Research commissioned by FAO and IIED studied two 'broadly inclusive' commercial ventures (in Ghana⁷ and Zambia⁸ — described below) that include outgrower schemes. The studies confirm that close attention is needed to ensure women get a fair deal from agricultural investments.

Venture 1 in Zambia, produces sugar cane, which it sells to the Zambia Sugar Company for milling and sale with fair trade certification. The company started in 1980 as a joint venture between the Zambian government and the Commonwealth Development Committee, since privatised. It holds about 4,300 hectares (under a 99-year lease) with about half under cultivation. The company has a nucleus estate and uses contract farming on around 1,000 hectares sub-leased to 160 outgrowers through 14-year renewable contracts. An outgrowers' association holds a 13 per cent equity share in the company, and a district-level sugar cane grower association holds an additional 25 per cent.

Providing sub-leases without explicit bias towards male-headed households can give women better access and ownership to the scheme than when communities use their existing land. Initially, many plots went to men, but a succession clause in the agreements has led to many women taking over the plots and memberships.

The different ways men and women manage income from cane growing and the small area allocated for dwellings and food production has implications for households' food and financial security. Women tend to opt for monthly instalments that cover food and

A female outgrower for Venture 1 says:

"I am able to grow maize on the one hectare of dwelling space to meet my food security requirements and generate additional income for my households. I have built a three-bedroom house with a two-roomed servant quarters. My children are in school — except one who is about to enter college and another who is below school age. Female farmers invest more in household goods and family education. I own a car and have bought a 30 x 30 metre residential plot in Mazabuka town at K4.5 mn (about US\$1000). I have already bought 1,500 x 4 inch blocks. I want to rent the new house so that I diversify my risk portfolio. In addition, I have employed 25 irrigation workers, which most of the male farmers fail to do. And because [the company] has strict labour compliance audits through their Fair Trade affiliation, I pay the stipulated wages. My husband has been very supportive of me."

Table 1. Help and hindrance: factors that influence women’s access to agricultural investments opportunities.

	Sugar cane in Zambia	Mangoes in Ghana
Opportunities	<p>Land is provided, giving women greater access compared with existing farmland</p> <p>Succession clauses are now the main way women access the scheme</p> <p>Fire and rain insurance are particularly important to women, who have poorer access to credit and fewer assets in times of need</p> <p>Women growers are slightly more productive than men, perhaps because they often employ, and work with, casual labour (rather than relying on family) and follow technical guidance closely</p> <p>Payments can be made in monthly instalments which suits women better</p>	<p>Individual — not household — registration means more women can register</p> <p>Production is limited to 1 acre preventing displacement of domestic food production</p> <p>Packing and processing generates employment for women in some cases providing empowerment through earning a wage</p>
Limitations	<p>Low representation in company management and in smallholder association representation on company board</p> <p>Women hold just 11 per cent of full-time jobs and 20 per cent of seasonal employment</p>	<p>Women’s access to outgrower scheme reportedly limited by:</p> <p>Cost of \$15 or sack of maize to join</p> <p>Perception that tree crops are a male domain, making it hard for women to get land for mango production</p>

household needs year round. Men prefer a lump sum. On the home plots, female-headed households focus on growing food for domestic consumption whereas men opt largely for cash crops.

But wage employment on the plantation still suggests unequal access as women secure just 11 per cent of full time jobs and 20 percent of seasonal work.

First established in 1999, Venture 2 (Ghana) produces organic mangoes using a plantation, outgrower scheme, packhouse, processing unit and tree nursery. The company holds just 180 hectares, and 1300 smallholders grow mangoes on up to half an acre of their own land. The outgrowers establish their trees by means of a long-term no-interest loan. Repayments start in year five. An outgrowers’ association negotiates fruit prices with the company. Only 12 per cent of outgrowers are women. But this is high for mango producer groups in Ghana, where women generally have limited land access and rarely hold land for tree crops. This relatively high number is partly because individuals as well as households can become outgrowers. Sometimes both wives and husbands are growers. In one district, chiefs made land for growing mangoes available to any community member, and this area accounts for 50 per cent of the female outgrowers. But land access remains a barrier for other women, as does the registration ‘fee’ of US\$15 equivalent or one bag of maize. Women have less access to maize than men and are less likely to relinquish potential household food supplies.

Importantly, registered, married female outgrowers believed that they have earned greater respect and

can contribute more to household decisions because of their registered participation in the scheme. In contrast, wives of male outgrowers generally receive little benefit from the increase in household income that participation in the scheme brings, and cannot influence how it is used.

But gender issues go beyond growers. The processing unit employs mostly women, yet women still secure only 15 per cent of permanent jobs (compared with 71 per cent of temporary jobs). This highlights the need to consider all stages of the value chain when designing inclusive models.

Good practice for investors and policy

As gender-blind investments risk exacerbating underlying inequalities, and given the business case for increasing women’s participation in company sourcing strategies, a more proactive strategy is needed from investors and governments.

Investor good practice. Strategies should address gender bias that arises through particular crop choices, membership fees, land ownership requirements and selection criteria. Good practice should also rebalance gender representation on management boards and in producer associations. In addition, investment good practice should incorporate:

- Environmental and social impact management to international standards and in compliance with national laws.

- Transparent and inclusive consultation mechanisms that ensure equal and effective participation for women and men — seeking free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) before investments and ensuring equitable access to compensation.
- Employment that meets equal opportunity and ‘decent work’ standards.
- Social infrastructure that reduces work and care burdens and increases incomes — based on local livelihood needs and addressing any potential access limitations.
- Third party certification that guarantees social and environmental standards designed to safeguard women, men and children.

Priorities for government policy and practice reforms.

Governments promoting investment as a means to improve rural livelihoods need to carefully consider both crop type and production models from a gender perspective and build on participatory processes for identifying ventures that support rural women's livelihoods. Additional policy measures that can increase women's access to schemes and benefits include:

- Strong environmental and social impact assessment legislation and enforcement by the responsible agencies, that gives particular attention to gender

analysis and differentiated impacts for men and women.

- A clear FPIC policy that is rigorously implemented, so as to increase women's representation in negotiations.
- Improved access to education and skills training for women.
- Strong labour laws and enforcement to ensure decent work standards and equal opportunities, together with policies and strategies for increasing women's representation in management and in unions.
- Resourcing and capacity building for government land sector agencies on gender and women's equal access issues, in particular to address situations where patriarchal norms and traditional authorities are limiting women's rights to land and their control over resource-related decision making. Collective titling for customary land and common pool resources may be one strategy that can support this objective.

■ EMILY POLACK

Emily Polack is a researcher in the Land Rights Team in IIED's Natural Resources Group.



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Contact: Emily Polack
 emily.polack@iied.org
 80–86 Gray's Inn Road,
 London WC1X 8NH, UK
 Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
 Fax: +44 (0)20 3514 9055
 Website: www.iied.org

Notes

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