Fact sheet: Burkina Faso - Women, agriculture and rural development

Population: 9.5 million
Growth rate: 2.8%
Fertility rate: 6.5
IMR: 132/1000 births
GNP/head: US$ 290

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Importance of agriculture to the economy

Burkina Faso is essentially an agricultural country, with 83.9% of the labour force working in the agricultural sector. In 1990, agriculture contributed approximately 44% of the GDP. The principal cash crop is cotton, and in 1990 ginned cotton accounted for 56.7% of the value of merchandise exports. Livestock rearing is also important to the economy, contributing 14.1% of the export revenue in 1990. The principal subsistence crops are millet, sorghum and maize. In non-drought years, Burkina Faso is almost self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs.

Sectoral Contributions to GDP and Employment

Source: Europa World Yearbook, 1994

Role of women in agriculture

Approximately 95% of women work in subsistence agriculture or the informal sector, using low levels of technology. According to the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism, women play an important role in the utilization and management of forest resources.

Division of Labour by Gender. Women divide their time between agricultural and domestic tasks, spending as much as 16 hours a day in such work, including food processing and preparation. Their limited access to water and fuel increases their work burden. Data is needed on the gender division of labour in agriculture.
Gender Relations in Decision-making in Farming Activities. Social and economic decisions in the family and the community are usually made by men and the elderly. Although public life is dominated by men, since the 1980s a growing number of women's groups have been promoting the interests of women.

Sharing of power and decision-making

Members and Officers of Agricultural/Rural Organizations.

Data collection needed.

Women in Decision-making Positions in Ministries and Government Bodies. Women's participation in decision-making is very low at all levels. In 1992, there were 2 women Ministers out of 22. Data collection is needed on the numbers of women in other high-level positions in technical ministries or other government bodies.

Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women

National Machinery. The National Supervisory Commission for the Implementation of Strategies and the Plan of Action for Strengthening the Role and Position of Women in the Development Process (CONAPAF) was established in 1993 within the Ministry of Finance and Planning. It is charged with drawing up, monitoring and evaluating programmes, and with promoting the coordination of programmes and projects benefiting women. Although its activities have been limited so far due to its recent establishment, members of the Commission have undergone training in gender analysis and development, and plan to popularize this concept with the aim of incorporating gender issues into project planning.

WID Units or Focal Points in Technical Ministries. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has been creating, since 1988, Bureaux for the Promotion of Women's Activities (BPAF) in the Regional Centres for Agro-Pastoral Promotion. The focus of these bureaux is on food processing and marketing activities. However, they are hindered by lack of qualified personnel and inadequate infrastructure.

The Ministry of Finance and Planning has a Bureau for the Integration of Women in Development. While there are no specific women's units or focal points in other Ministries, a number of them have specific programmes or components directed to women. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism gives priority to women in its National Action Plan for the Environment (PANE).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Emerging during the drought years of the 1970's, NGOs have increased in number to about 165, including 104 foreign NGOs and 61 national. Since the International Year of Women in 1975, a number of NGOs have developed WID projects or created women's components. There are about 140 women's groups and NGOs, some of which focus on specific issues such as women's rights and family planning. The Federation of Women of Burkina Faso brings together women's organizations for the purpose of strengthening
their work in areas such as protection of the environment, savings and credit, health, agriculture, village water supply, literacy, training and information.

In order to improve coordination with NGOs, the government has created a number of structures, including a Permanent Secretariat for NGOs (SPONG), Office for Support of NGOs (BESONG), NGO Liaison Bureau (BELONGA) and an Officer for the Coordination of Women's Groups and NGOs.

**Women's legal rights**

Burkina Faso ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1984. The 1991 Constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex in employment and wages, and national legislation gives men and women equal rights in the area of marriage, inheritance, and access to land. However, these measures are not widely enforced and, therefore, have had a limited impact. The majority of women are unaware of their rights because of lack of information, illiteracy and the weight of tradition.

A Directorate for the Promotion of the Family in the Acting Ministry of Social Welfare is undertaking an information programme on the Family Code. The Directorate's Service for the Social Protection of the Family is responsible for collecting and disseminating texts on the family and for proposing measures to the Assembly of Deputies.

**Dimensions and determinants of rural poverty**

The following factors contribute to overall rural poverty:

- Structural Adjustment Programmes
- Women's low social status, inside and outside marriage
- Women's lack of access to land, credit, and technical information, which lowers the productivity of women in agriculture
- Lack of an adequate planning and organizational framework
- Environmental degradation

**Access to agricultural resources and services**

**Land.** Few women own land, due primarily to socio-cultural factors. The Property Service estimates that less than 6% of women are landowners, despite the revision of Agrarian and Land Reform which abolishes all discrimination in this domain. While the data is not available for rural settings, a study in 1990 in five towns revealed that 91% of the landowners were men.

**Livestock.** Data collection needed.

**Forestry.** Because of the significant role women play in the utilization of forests, a number of projects have been implemented to integrate women in the management of nurseries, reforestation and other forestry activities. In particular, a programme for improved stoves has
resulted in a significant saving of forests. Constraints include the lack of personnel, insufficient credit for women's forest activities and the insufficient involvement of women foresters. Moreover, women's lack of access to land ownership limits their forestry activities.

**Water.** Data collection needed.

**Credit.** Women have very limited access to credit from commercial banks. The government has created a Fund for Support to Women's Income Generating Activities (FAARF). The National Agricultural Credit Bank also extends credit to women. People's Credit Unions are becoming more widespread, and in Ouagadougou, women's membership has grown from 13% in 1985/6 to almost 26% today. A number of NGOs also finance women's activities. Data collection is needed on the percentage of credit or funding extended to women.

**Extension services and agricultural training.** The agricultural extension service of the country is limited by lack of personnel. Activities directed to women primarily focus on improved nutrition and the conservation of fruit and vegetables. Data collection is needed on the extent to which women benefit from extension services or training. However, the country has a very low rate of literacy and school enrolment. In 1992, only 8% of women were literate compared to 23.5% of men. In 1988/90, the net primary enrolment of women was 23% and the gross secondary enrolment was 5%. The gross tertiary enrolment of the population, both male and female, is 1%. Of this, women represented 22.5% of the student population at the University of Ouagadougou in 1991/92, and 12.22% of those undertaking sciences. The agricultural training programme for out-of-school rural youth reaches only a small number of young people.

Women comprise less than 10% of agricultural extension staff.
Selected programmes in support of women in agriculture, forestry and fisheries

Policy Planning and Research.

· A National Plan of Action (1991-1995) has been drawn up to strengthen the role of women in development, and to promote women's productivity, alleviate their work burdens and eliminate oppressive structures and practices.
Legal and Policy Reform.

· The project "Popularization of the Personal and Family Codes" is translating and disseminating the texts of this legislation into local languages.

Access to Credit.

· In the framework of the National Plan of Action and international development cooperation, a number of projects and project components are targeting women, particularly in the areas of credit and income-generation.

Areas to be strengthened

Policy Planning and Research.

· A national policy on women should be developed.

· Women's participation in decision-making structures should be increased at all levels through raising quotas for women and awareness building among women.

· Data collection and statistics are required to measure the contribution of women's work.

· Awareness building is needed at all levels.

· The capacity of existing structures for the promotion of women should be strengthened.

· Meetings should be organized for those working in structures for the promotion of women.

Legal and Policy Reform.

· Legal literacy efforts should be increased in order to improve the implementation of women's legal rights.

· Adequate legal instruments should be put in place to enable women to fully exercise their rights.

Access to Agricultural Resources and Services.

· Efforts are needed to improve women's access to credit, land and training. In particular, existing credit institutions should be strengthened and new ones created that take account of women's needs; the Agrarian and Land Reform measures need to be implemented, especially in regard to women's land rights; training should be directed to women in the management of their affairs.

· Efforts are required to alleviate the work burden of women, in particular to: build awareness of the need for a more equitable distribution of domestic tasks; implement a policy that takes
account of the need for food security through appropriate distribution, storage structures, and reduction of post-harvest loss; increase women's access to food processing technologies such as mills, and to energy-saving technologies; improve access to energy supplies; increase child care centres; and provide training to women in the use of technologies and in management in the informal sector.


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