



نزرع للغد

ICBA
AGRICULTURE FOR TOMORROW

Report

Outcome of the Regional Strategic Dialogue “Climate Change and Women in Agriculture - Challenges and Opportunities in the Central Asian Countries (CAC) Region”

22-23 October 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan



ICBAgriculture

WACAA

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Executive Summary

This report, an outcome of the Regional Strategic Dialogue on Climate Change and Women in Agriculture held in Baku, Azerbaijan on October 22-23, 2024, addresses the critical role of women in the Central Asian Countries (CAC) Region’s agricultural sector and the challenges they face due to climate change and systemic gender inequalities. Women constitute a significant portion of the agricultural labor force but often lack agency, ownership of land, and access to resources, which hampers their productivity and resilience. The dialogue held in Baku brought together 30 experts, policymakers and specialists from various academic institutions and organisations across the region, where they worked together to identify key challenges and discuss possible solutions. Challenges highlighted at the dialogue included a lack of women in leadership roles, prevalent gender stereotypes within the society, limited decision-making power among women, and women’s inadequate access to technology and financial services in the agriculture sector. This report highlights the key points discussed as well as the main outcomes from the dialogue.

Introduction

Women play a critical role in agriculture in developing countries, accounting for an average of 43% of the agricultural labor force, yet their contribution often goes unrecognized (FAO, 2011). Moreover, women are involved in producing much food in developing countries but own only 15% of the agricultural land (FAO, 2018). Persistent and growing insecurity in women's land ownership, access, and control continue to impede the strengthening of communities' resilience to the negative impacts of climate change. Climate change is not gender-neutral. Women, particularly those in farming communities, are among the vulnerable groups disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change around the world (United Nations, n.d.). In addition, women lack equal access to skills, resources, and opportunities to make the most of their farming activities. They also do not have much say in decision-making on climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture.

The Central Asian Countries (CAC) region is significantly dependent on agriculture, which employs about 67% of the total labor force and contributes around 31% to the GDP of the region, establishing it as a critical economic sector for livelihoods (FAO, 2021). Similar to other regions, the CAC faces major challenges due to climate change, with an expected increase in the frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and unpredictable weather patterns. These climatic disturbances are predicted to reduce agricultural yields by 10-20% by 2050, particularly affecting vital crops such as wheat and cotton, which are staples in the region (World Bank, 2020). Women, who represent approximately 43% of the agricultural labor force in the CAC region, are disproportionately affected due to their restricted access to essential resources, land ownership, and participation in decision-making processes (UNDP, 2019). In Kazakhstan, for instance, only about 12.8% of agricultural land is owned by women, markedly limiting their capacity to adapt to climate change (UNDP, 2019). Furthermore, traditional roles and gender norms often exclude women from critical training and information sessions related to climate-smart agriculture practices, exacerbating their vulnerability to climate impacts.

The Women Alliance for Climate Action in Agriculture (WACAA) is one of the initiatives ICBA has launched during COP28 hosted by the United Arab Emirates in 2023. It aims to bring together women leaders, scientists, policymakers, farmers, and organizations working to address gender issues in agriculture. It works to mobilize all stakeholders and efforts to support women-led climate action in agriculture through policies, measures, programmes, or incentives that empower women and help make agriculture more sustainable, environmentally friendly, and resilient under climate change. WACAA serves as a forum and voice for advocating gender equality in agriculture, providing support and resources for women in agriculture, promoting sustainable farming practices, and addressing specific issues that affect women's engagement in and contribution to policy, science, and innovation. The Women Alliance offers a platform to exchange best practices, perspectives, insights, policies, and recommendations on women's engagement in science, innovation, and agriculture under climate change. It also aims to provide resources, tools, and opportunities for women to contribute to decision-making in agriculture.

Overview of the Regional Strategic Dialogue in Baku

As part of the WACAA initiative, in October 22-23, 2024, ICBA with support from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), partnered with regional and local partners in Baku, Azerbaijan to organize a two-day regional strategic dialogue. This dialogue aimed to bring together experts from research and academic institutions in fields related to agriculture and/or climate change from countries across the Central Asian Countries (CAC) region. The event included a multitude of panel discussions, trainings and group activities to engage the participants in discussion and dialogue to help stimulate participants' thinking on gender mainstreaming within the agriculture sector. Participants at the dialogue included 4 ICBA team members and 30 (22 women and 8 men) experts, policy-makers and specialists. At the end of the event each participant received a certificate of appreciation for participation in the dialogue event. A detailed agenda and list of participants can be seen in the appendices section of this document.

Key points discussed at the dialogue

Over two days of dialogue, round tables and presentations, all participants discussed the following topics and challenges:

- The importance of enabling and empowering women, highlighting the critical role men play in advocating for women's issues.
- The importance of women in the agricultural sector, underlining the significance of this event in supporting and appreciating women's contributions in agriculture.
- ICBA's new strategy for 2024-2034, and the power of partnerships, knowledge sharing, and the use of data, AI and technology in agriculture.
- ICBA's scientific solutions like climate-smart crops and the Gene Bank, and the ongoing efforts to support and empower women in various countries through the WACAA, which includes enabling meaningful participation and facilitating climate finance solutions.
- Gender concepts such as equality, equity, intersectionality, women's empowerment, and gender mainstreaming, elucidating their implications for shaping equitable and inclusive agricultural policies and aligning with Sustainable Development Goal #5.
- The role of gender in agriculture alongside an overview of women's empowerment programs. This was complemented by group discussions focused on sharing successful experiences and innovative strategies from various CAC countries to further advance gender equality within the sector. Success stories and lessons learned from the CAC region, which provided practical examples of effective gender-sensitive practices in agriculture, include:
 - **Azerbaijan:** The Women Farmers Association in Azerbaijan provides support to Azerbaijani women engaged in agrarian activities, helping them to build their capacity and expand their agricultural endeavors.

- **Kyrgyzstan:**
 - The Sustainable Land Management program, in collaboration with ICBA and national partners, provides mentoring and vocational training for women in agriculture, integrating both international and national efforts.
 - A GIZ program addresses the loss of land rights for women after marriage, helping women to secure their legal rights to land ownership.
 - The "One Village – One Product" program promotes localized agricultural development, empowering women through entrepreneurship and farming opportunities.
 - Programs specifically designed for women entrepreneurs are also in place to support women in starting and growing their businesses.
 - GALS (Gender Action Learning System) and BALI projects are part of broader national efforts to improve gender equality and women's empowerment within the agricultural sector.
- **Tajikistan:**
 - The Sustainable Land Management program also operates in Tajikistan, offering mentoring and vocational training to women in agriculture.
 - GIZ programs support women in securing land rights, addressing issues related to women's access to land after marriage.
- **Uzbekistan:**
 - The Association of Women in Agriculture (an NGO) supports women's agricultural initiatives, offering a platform for advocacy and development.
 - A specialized school under the Ministry of Agriculture provides women with targeted training, enhancing their skills in agricultural practices.
 - UNDP and FAO jointly run programs aimed at supporting women in agriculture, improving their economic opportunities and involvement in agricultural activities.
 - Uzbekistan also advances gender equality through its "Gender Equality Strategy 2030," gender-oriented budgeting, and interest-free loans for women's education, while aiming for 30% female representation in decision-making positions.
- **Kazakhstan:**
 - UN Women leads initiatives to support women in agriculture, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities to thrive.
 - The Women Entrepreneur Support Center provides resources and guidance to help women entrepreneurs develop their businesses.
- Sharing success stories of general agricultural practices from the CAC region:
 - **Kyrgyzstan:** Promotion of cost-efficient technologies to enhance agricultural yield, with a specific focus on engaging youth. Also, initiatives to grow diverse tree species are aimed at food production and ecological rehabilitation.

Additionally, adoption of conservation agriculture practices to sustainably boost agricultural productivity.

- **Uzbekistan:** Implementation of training programs on quinoa cultivation, addressing challenges such as market access and integration into the local diet.
- **Kazakhstan:** Strategies to improve water management and the promotion of advanced agricultural technologies.
- **Azerbaijan:** Research conducted in Azerbaijan's Lankaran-Astara region, which examined the impact of climate change on agriculture and biodiversity, emphasizing the need for conservation strategies in response to environmental stressors.
- The impacts of climate changes on women's empowerment in agriculture, highlighting the disproportionate effects on women and outlining strategies to empower women within climate-smart agricultural practices.
- Community-based approaches to enhance climate resilience and food security, illustrating how local actions and women's involvement lead to more resilient food systems.
- Innovative agricultural technologies for climate mitigation, detailing new tools and practices that could revolutionize agriculture by improving sustainability and efficiency.
- The impact of climate change on household food and nutrition security, focusing on the implications for the four pillars of food security in climate-vulnerable communities and the proposed solutions to these challenges.
 - **Availability:**
 - **Challenges:** High costs of agricultural inputs like machines and seeds, dependence on imported seeds, income-dependent food availability, lack of rural farmer markets, high logistic costs for rural-urban product transfer, soil degradation, salinization, and water scarcity all contribute to reduced availability of food.
 - **Solutions:** Improve leasing systems for equipment, enhance organic seed production, minimize taxes, apply better technology for productivity, improve the quality of the production chain, introduce biomass economy technologies, and expand urban employment to increase healthy food production. Also, support low-interest loans for farmers to open markets and invest in halophytic farming and drip irrigation.
 - **Utilization:**
 - **Challenges:** Limited diet diversification, absence of food quality standards, reliance on cash crops, lack of cold storage facilities, incomplete value chains, and women's restricted financial gains from seasonal crop sales exacerbate issues in food utilization.
 - **Solutions:** Increase capacity building for diet diversification, diversify local agricultural brands, create more cold storages through

cooperatives, build women's capacity to diversify crop production with micro-loans, and improve water resource legislation.

- **Access:**
 - **Challenges:** Barriers include limited access to microcredits, challenging market access, inefficient post-harvest logistics, high agricultural product prices, and significant out-migration impacting agricultural production.
 - **Solutions:** Promote inter-country exchanges and agreements for agricultural inputs, enhance community wellbeing and education, and improve infrastructures for product sharing and market access.
- **Stability:**
 - **Challenges:** Factors like droughts, inadequate integrated agricultural approaches, minimal government support, climate change, geopolitical influences, poor household budget management, uncertified seed use, and a shrinking agricultural workforce threaten the stability of food security.
 - **Solutions:** Develop comprehensive value chains, climate adaptation and mitigation measures, early warning systems, and climate-resilient agriculture practices. Also, balance demand and supply, certify seed production, enhance crop diversification, and engage youth in agriculture.
- The importance of women in leadership within the agricultural and environmental sectors, discussing empowerment strategies and barriers to their participation.
- The potential for creating a women-led network in the CAC region to support climate adaptation and sustainable agriculture initiatives.
- The necessity of expanding biodiversity in marginal lands of the Caucasus, the promotion of non-traditional crops, the development of digital agricultural databases, and the need for advanced breeding and genetic engineering in the region.
- The importance of women's participation, which includes the fact that women are crucial to family and societal welfare, and their rational thinking, organizational skills, and conflict resolution abilities make them indispensable leaders and decision-makers whose improved conditions can benefit overall societal health.
- The general challenges women leaders face in all sectors in the CAC region, which include cultural stereotypes and family responsibilities that restrict women's leadership opportunities, as well as unequal work-life balance due to reproductive roles. This all results in less social engagement and lower income.
- The challenges women leaders in the agriculture sectors in CAC region face, which includes gender imbalances in policymaking and the fact that they are often underrepresented as large landowners and farmers. Women also have limited access to knowledge transfer and capacity-building programs that hinder the implementation of innovative technologies.

Key outcomes of the dialogue

Various outcomes are presented below as a result of the regional dialogue, including ways to move forward. These include:

- **Enhanced Understanding and Intentions for Policy Enhancement:** Participants deepened their understanding of the critical connections between gender issues, agricultural practices, and climate change. The dialogue facilitated a shared commitment to exploring gender-sensitive approaches within agricultural policies, with recommendations focused on supporting women's roles in the sector.
- **Exchange of Ideas and Capacity Building Initiatives:** The dialogue fostered a rich exchange of ideas and experiences, highlighting innovative practices from various countries. Discussions emphasized the need for developing community engagement models and capacity-building initiatives that can be tailored to different contexts, particularly those that support women's leadership and decision-making in agriculture.
- **Proposals for Improving Agricultural Techniques and Technologies:** Participants discussed actionable steps for enhancing agricultural extension services and adopting more efficient irrigation techniques. There was a strong interest in exploring new technologies that could lead to better agricultural practices and improved water management across the region.
- **Focus on Youth Engagement and Scientific Development:** The sessions underscored a commitment to engaging youth in agriculture, with discussions about potential employment opportunities and exchange programs aimed at inspiring and educating young agricultural professionals about advances in agricultural science and technology.
- **Discussion on Agricultural Policy Support and Cooperative Development:** Dialogue participants discussed the importance of supporting farmers' cooperatives and enhancing policy support at regional levels. Examples like Kyrgyzstan's strategy for cooperative support by 2030 were mentioned as potential models to consider for enhancing economic stability for farmers.
- **ICBA's Intent for Expanded Regional Collaboration:** ICBA expressed its intent to expand collaboration with CAC governments. The focus would be on fostering practical agricultural programs and enhancing regional collaborations that could facilitate cross-country learning opportunities.

Appendices

Agenda of the Regional Strategic Dialogue in Baku

ORGANIZED BY: International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), Dubai, United Arab Emirates

SUPPORTED BY: ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (ISDB), JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA

COLLABORATION WITH: Genetic Resources Institute, Ministry of Science and Education, Baku, Azerbaijan

SPEAKERS:

Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General, ICBA

Dr. Charbel Tarraf, Chief Operations and Development, ICBA

Ms. Nour El Jundi, Project Development Specialist, ICBA

Ms. Maha Gaad, Gender Consultant, ICBA

Prof. Zeynal Akparov, Director Genetic Resources Institute, Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Prof. Kristina Toderich, MIE University and International Platform for Dryland Research and Education, Tottori University, Japan

Dr. Bekzod Zakirov, Director of the Center for Policy Research and Outreach (CPRO), Westminster International University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Dr. Rukhangiz Mammadova, Plant Genetic Resources Institute, Azerbaijan

TUESDAY 22ND OCTOBER 2024

DAY 1: Tuesday 22 October 2024		
Time	Session	Session Objective
8:30 – 9:00	Registration	• Registration and Networking
9:00 – 10:00	Session 1: Opening session	
9:00 – 9:30	Opening Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Speech: Dr. Charbel Tarraf, Chief Operations and Development, ICBA • Welcome Remarks: Prof. Zeynal Akparov, Director General, Genetic Resources Institute, Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan • A brief about the “The Women Alliance for Climate Action in Agriculture (WACAA)”, Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, Director General, ICBA
9:30 – 10:00	Coffee Break	• Coffee break and group photo
10:00 – 1:00	Session 2: Gender equality and women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector (Ms. Maha Gaad, Gender Consultant, ICBA)	
10:00 – 10:30	Gender concepts: Equality, Equity, Intersectionality, Women’s Empowerment, Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on the difference between Gender Equity, Equality and Justice • Clarity on the concept of Intersectionality • Provide a brief on the UN Gender SDG – Goal #5

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on the concept of Women's empowerment • Exploring the concept of gender mainstreaming, its importance to participants' work and how participants can take account of gender when planning and implementing policies and strategies
10:30 – 11:00	How to achieve Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and understand the importance of gender in the field of agriculture • Overview of current global and local women's empowerment programs in the agriculture sector • Analyzing the effectiveness of gender equality in the agriculture sector - Success stories and areas needing enhancement
11:00 – 11:50	Discussion in groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion in groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchanging knowledge on known programs and personal experiences of women's empowerment in agriculture ○ Brainstorm methods of how to achieve gender equality in the Agricultural Sector in their respective countries ○ Each group to present 1 known program on WE in agriculture and 1 idea on how to achieve gender equality in the Agricultural Sector
11:50 – 12:00	Wrap up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap • Provide list of specific tools and resources on gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture related subjects
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch break	
1:00 – 2:30	Session 3: Enhancing Climate Resilience and Livelihoods through Community-based Actions with a Reference to Women Empowerment and Engagement	
1:00 – 1:15	Presentation on the "The Impacts of Climate Changes on Women's Empowerment in Agriculture", Dr. Rukhangiz Mammadova, Plant Genetic Resources Institute, Azerbaijan	
1:15 – 1:30	Presentation on "Facilitating citizen-science and community-based approach to enhance climate resilience and food security in CAC Region", Prof. Kristina Toderich, MIE University and International Platform for Dryland Research and Education, Tottori University, Japan	
1:30 – 1:45	Presentation on "Enhancing the role of women in promotion of halophytic mixed farming, nutrition and food security with reference to Central Asia and Caucasus drought and salt prone landscapes", Prof. Kristina Toderich, MIE University and International Platform for Dryland Research and Education, Tottori University, Japan	
1:45 – 2:15	Discussion	Working in groups (Questionnaire to be distributed)
2:15 – 2:30	Coffee break	
2:30 – 2:50	Presentation on "Sustainable future through women's participation in agriculture in Uzbekistan", Dr. Bekzod Zakirov, Director of the Center for Policy Research and Outreach (CPRO), Westminster International University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan	
2:50 – 3:00	Q&A	

WEDNESDAY 23RD OCTOBER 2024

DAY 2: Wednesday 23 October 2024		
Time	Session	Session Objective
9:00 – 9:30	Session 4: Innovative agricultural technologies (Dr. Charbel Tarraf, Chief Operations and Development, ICBA)	
9:00 – 9:30	Presentation on innovative technologies in agriculture and their potential for climate mitigation	

9:30 – 11:00		
Session 5: Impact of climate change on food systems and household nutrition security (Ms. Nour El Jundi, Project Development Specialist, ICBA)		
9:30 – 9:50	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the impact of climate change on household food and nutrition security
9:50 – 10:30	Group discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion (challenges and opportunities across the 4 food security pillars) template
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break	
11:00 – 1:30		
Session 6: Women in leadership (Ms. Maha Gaad, Gender Consultant, ICBA)		
11:00 – 11:30	Strategies for Empowerment and Overcoming Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the importance of women in leadership and decision-making • Introduce the significance of empowerment strategies and the need to overcome existing barriers in agricultural and environmental leadership. • Explain the importance of local relevance and adaptability of strategies
11:30 – 12:30	Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion in groups: Ask participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflect on 3 points regarding why women's participation matters ○ Discuss the challenges women leaders in CAC Region face (generally in all sectors) and the unique challenges women generally in CAC Region face in the agricultural and environmental sectors ○ Brainstorm how can women leaders support agricultural and environmental initiatives suitable for their communities. • Each group to present in 3-5 minutes • Encourage each participant to write down one actionable step they'll take to bolster their leadership and decision-making role in their respective areas
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch break	
1:30 – 3:00		
Session 7: Success stories, lessons learned and way forward (Prof. Kristina Toderich, MIE University and International Platform for Dryland Research and Education, Tottori University, Japan)		
1:30 – 2:00	Success stories and lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to voices from the region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mrs. Gulniso Nekushoeva, Soil Research and Agrochemistry Institute, Tajikistan ○ Dr. Nataliya Akinshina, National University of Uzbekistan ○ Dr. Gulea Kunypiyayeva, Kazakh Research Institute of Agriculture and Plant Husbandry, Kazakhstan ○ Dr. Dr. Nurzat Totubaeva, Kyrgyz_Turkey Manas University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
2:00 – 2:15	Women-led network in the CAC region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the potential of creating a women-led network/platform in the CAC Region to exchange best practices on climate adaptation in agriculture.
2:15 – 2:30	Coffee break	
2:30 – 3:00		
Session 8: Recommendations and closing		
2:30 – 3:00	Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic dialogue recommendations • Closing remarks • Certificates distribution

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