

Equality and Equity

The **social and economic inequalities between women and men** undermine food security and hinder economic growth and progress in the agricultural sector.

Gender equality is when women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.

For FAO, gender equality is equal participation of women and men in decision-making, equal ability to exercise their human rights, equal access to and control of resources and the benefits of development, and equal opportunities in employment and in all other aspects of their livelihoods.

Gender equality makes good economic and social sense. The [FAO State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11 report](#) shows that if female farmers had the same access as male farmers to agricultural inputs and services, they could substantially increase the yields on their farms. A World Bank report concluded that reducing gender inequality leads to falling infant and child mortality, improved nutrition, higher economic productivity and faster growth. For the global community, gender equality is also a commitment, embedded in international human rights agreements and in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

FAO has placed gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making among its key strategic objectives in agriculture and rural development for the next 10 years. By creating social relations in which neither of the sexes suffers discrimination, gender equity aims at improving gender relations and gender roles, and achieving gender equality.

The essence of equity is not identical treatment - treatment may be equal or different, but should always be considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. *Gender equity connotes a sense of justice between men and women; insisting on the absolute equality of numbers is not always fair. When women and men in a community have unequal status and unequal access to knowledge and resources, women need special treatment and affirmative action before their "starting point" can be considered equal: that is, positive discrimination.* Since male predominance in the family, public policy and institutions - not only in rural areas, but worldwide - has long obscured women's interests and concerns, a key strategy for gender equity lies in women's empowerment. Development must encompass rural women's long-term needs and aspirations, their decision-making power, and their access to and control of critical resources such as land and their own labour.



Drawn from: <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-why/en/> and from the FAO brochure "[FAO Policy on Gender Equality: Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development](http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-why/en/)".
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/gender/docs/FAO_FinalGender_Policy_2012.pdf