



The path to gender inclusivity in the Amazon's and the Cerrado's production chains

Solidaridad

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The past few decades have been marked by women's empowerment, as several institutions have strived to approach gender in a way that allows them to identify inequalities and their causes, and come up with strategies to address them. Gender analysis has become a management tool that farming organizations can employ to check whether the activities carried out in their projects contribute towards promoting changes in gender relations across the board, especially amid families that benefit from these projects.

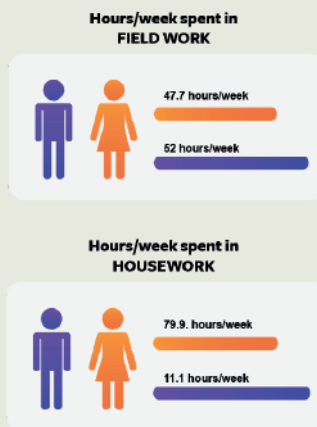
Gender inclusivity is part of **Solidaridad's** strategy and policy as an essential part of promoting the systemic change necessary to tackle the global impacts and challenges of population growth. Additionally, **Solidaridad** wants to contribute towards the UN's Agenda 2030, namely the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims to reach full gender equality and empower women and girls.

To that end, **Solidaridad** Brasil carried out a study to look into gender relations in the production chains in areas covered by its programmes in the Brazilian Cerrado and Amazon. The study sought to understand how women fit into this context and their roles, as well as identify their demands and challenges in connection with the production units, region, and industry. Thus, recommendations were made on how to increase their participation rate and self-reliance. The study looked into the soybean production chain in Western Bahia, and the cocoa and livestock production chains around the Trans-Amazonian, in Pará.



WOMEN IN FAMILY FARMING AROUND PARÁ'S TRANS-AMAZONIAN

Work in the field is unevenly distributed between men and women, according to an article by Maria da Conceição Moura and Renata for *Mediações* magazine. The authors say female farm workers and farmers work **47.7 hours** a week on average, whereas their male counterparts work **52**. On the other hand, women spend **79.7 hours** a week on average in housekeeping and caregiving, a stark difference from the **11.1 hours** a week spent by men on these chores. Although they make up a substantial percentage of workers in family agriculture, seldom is their work in and out of rural areas formally recognized.



Overall, women that work on family farms in Brazil, especially in farming settlements, quilombos, and indigenous communities have no civil and legal documents. Also, they are deprived of formal education and healthcare, live in adverse conditions, and, in many cases, are victims of domestic violence.

In spite of their vulnerable status, **25% of the rural women** have to single-handedly support their families, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) from 2015. In an article written for *Parcerias Estratégicas* magazine, Sergio Schneider points out that they make up a substantial part of rural families' income through their access to anti-poverty programmes like Bolsa Família, of which they are beneficiaries, accounting for 10% of the families' income in family farming today. Female smallholder farmers and farm workers are also directly involved in production activities – even though they are paid half what men are – and add income through informal activities, like selling food and providing services in urban areas.

THE RESEARCH IN THE **TRANS-AMAZONIAN** REGION CONSISTED OF:



A prior diagnosis by surveying secondary data



Individual interviews with female farm workers, female cooperative leaders, and female cocoa processing plant workers



A focal group with farming technicians



Workshops with women and young people

RESULTS

- Most women in family farming are isolated, powerless, and submissive to their husbands;
- Local female smallholder farmers require more training, better technical support to manage their property, set up new business ventures, and establish cooperatives or associations to market regional products, job opportunities outside the farm, cultural and leisure spaces, and women's groups to debate their needs and community life;
- There's still a limited number of women in cooperatives;
- Cooperatives and associations must provide places where women can be heard and exchange knowledge and experience;
- Cocoa processing plants in the areas covered by the study are aware of the challenge to reach gender inclusivity in the production chain, and they are concerned about and willing to address that issue. However, they don't have any specific programmes in place.



From our findings talking to female smallholder farmers and other players, we can recommend three focus **areas of intervention** that encompass gender-inclusion issues and key actions for the family farming production chains:

1 RAISE AWARENESS AND BOOST EMPOWERMENT

Empowering women by raising their awareness of their rights and connecting them to knowledge, content, and information. To do that, it is important to provide inspiring references to other women and places that have made strides towards gender inclusivity by setting up periodical meetings to foster a support network among them.

Some recommended subjects for these meetings:

- Women's health;
- Self-esteem and feminism;
- Violence against women;
- Environmental issues;
- Recognition and valuation of housework;
- Women in agriculture;
- Toxic masculinity;
- Parenting;
- Healthy, sustainable eating habits;
- Basic rights and responsibilities;
- Family planning.

2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INCOME

Seek to hire more women and strive for workplace gender inclusivity in the area;

Provide Technical Support and Rural Extension that promote gender inclusivity. Field technicians should invite women to visit farms and recommend they attend all training courses, which should primarily be offered at times that accommodate them;

Ensure conditions and opportunities for women to undertake **new business** ventures, like making and selling chocolate, homemade sweets, and fruit pulps;

Train female smallholder farmers on:



Sales and business
management



Office
Package



Entrepreneurship



Financial education
and accounting

3 NETWORKING

Build a network to support gender inclusivity in the production chains of local family farms. It is a complex challenge that requires a framework of solutions and a portfolio of converging policies, which can only be addressed if society joins forces with both the public and private sectors.



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SOYBEAN PRODUCTION CHAIN IN WESTERN BAHIA

The number of women working in agribusiness rose 8% between 2004 and 2015, mainly in permanent jobs. Most of this growth, according to the 2019 special edition of *Mulheres no Agronegócio*, published by the University of São Paulo's Center for Advanced Studies in Applied Economics (CEPEA), has been seen in the agroindustry and services, while men are usually employed in the primary sector. Women are also outnumbered when it comes to managing non-family farms. Data from the 2017 Farming Census shows they make up a mere 15% of the owners of rural establishments in Western Bahia.

To understand how important women's participation rate in the soybean production chain in the Cerrado is, the research focused on two municipalities: Barreiras and Luís Eduardo. Both are important soybean-producing centers in Western Bahia. Data from the literature was surveyed and interviews with women who work in this industry were made, as well as with men who work in other levels of production, such as the sale of grain and inputs, unions, and producers' associations. Both company officials and local producers say that today women participate across all segments, including areas they were not present before. They began to work directly in the field, especially by providing services and operating machinery, but they are still mostly active "behind the scenes," that is, doing jobs that support the farming activity.



Even though they don't usually head the business, women claim they are absolutely ready to take on the managerial and operational aspects. They carry out activities that are mainly connected with managing the farm and work together with their husbands, who are usually the legal representatives and decision-makers.




Farms are still usually registered in men's names. However, the women's share of the family business and community property regimes ensure they also own the assets. On the other hand, women also have an important role outside the agricultural production, which may reflect the lower number of women who own the farms. Nevertheless, they reveal how important it is to raise their awareness of the fact that they also own the estate and they may take on several fronts within the family business. Still, they say that should be done carefully to avoid any potential conflicts.

Despite women's lower participation rate in comparison to men's – which is further aggravated by the fact that it's a male-dominated field –, they have nonetheless been gaining ground in the production chain.

RESULTS

- Women still make up a small share of the workforce “within the premises”, that is, in activities directly linked to crop-growing on farms or in production units. Only **one or two out of ten** jobs are taken up by women in this segment;
- The grain industry has been changing fast and there have been more opportunities for women recently;
- The number of women who own farming establishments is still small, and even smaller in larger properties;
- Leadership and industry representation positions are still mostly taken up by men.

The study has identified several obstacles to increase women's participation rate in the soybean production chain:

-  **Physical**, such as the lack of exclusive lodging for women on the farms;
-  **Cultural**, such as the fact that naturally there are fewer job opportunities for women in certain areas and the notion that there are male or female-exclusive jobs;
-  **Political and institutional**, since the programmes aimed at boosting gender inclusivity are few and far between.



Women's increased participation rate in the grain industry, as well as across several other industries in Brazil, results mainly from empowering them and boosting their self-reliance, whether it is due to their higher educational level in comparison to men or the set-up of regional women-in-agribusiness groups. Initiatives from companies, governments, and the society to bolster the presence of women in formerly male-dominated industries can further increase their participation rate in this sector.

Some **strategic actions** focused on the soybean production chain that apply to companies, trade associations, farms and NGOs are important:

- A look into women's roles in the organization. What positions do they take on? What are their jobs?
- Listen to women's demands;
- Promote qualification for women, encompassing both technical and leadership aspects;
- Partnerships with universities and technical schools to recruit women;
- Encourage an even distribution of jobs between men and women, without distinction;
- Advertise success cases of women in the production chain;
- Raise employees' awareness of gender inclusivity;
- Offer more flexible working hours for men and women who have small children;
- Support the set-up and formalization of women sectorial groups.



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