



Policy Brief: Advancing Gender Inclusivity in Agriculture through Technology and Innovation

Insights from the International Seminar on 'Technology and Innovations for Gender Inclusivity in Agriculture' (19-20 March 2025)

Dr. Veenita Kumari¹,
Dr. Sugandha Munshi²,
Ms. Shaguna Gahilote³ &
Ms. Madhu⁴ Manjari

1. Background

Agriculture in India is increasingly feminized, yet women farmers continue to face systemic barriers in access to resources, decision-making, and technological advancements. The **International Seminar on 'Technology and Innovations for Gender Inclusivity in Agriculture'**, held from **19-20 March 2025**, was organized by **MANAGE** in collaboration with International Rice Research Institute, **IRRI South Asia Regional Center (ISARC)**, **UN Women India**, and **Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) Plantwise Plus**. The event brought together policymakers, government officials, researchers, scientists, extension professionals, scholars and women farmers to discuss actionable solutions for a more inclusive agricultural landscape.

The seminar focused on three critical aspects for a gender inclusive agriculture system:

- a. **Policy interventions** to strengthen gender-responsive agricultural systems
- ✓ b. **Innovations for gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture**
- ✓ c. **Enhancing women's leadership and participation in agribusiness and rural entrepreneurship**

Considering the declaration of **2026 as the International Year of Women Farmers**, this policy brief outlines key recommendations that can guide **government actions, institutional frameworks, and policy reforms** to make gender inclusivity a long-term reality in Indian agriculture. It is the time to recognise that the transformative approaches and innovations in agriculture needs to incorporate a diverse approach whereby convergence between different stakeholders becomes the key. The wide range of perspectives, ideas, and methods coming from different actors and stakeholders for an innovative and inclusive agriculture system will act as the catalyst for a sustainable change.

Deputy Director (Gender Studies), MANAGE, 2. Senior Associate Scientist & Lead Specialist, Sustainable Impact Platform, IRRI 3. Programme Analyst UN Women India Country Office, New Delhi 4. Agri-Digital Tools Coordinator- South Asia, CABI

2. Key Policy Recommendations

A. Institutional Representation and Decision-Making

- Mandate a minimum **30% representation of women** in policy discussions and decision-making forums, with an aim to scale this to **50% by 2030**.
- Ensure active participation of **Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs), Women Farmer Producer Organizations (WFPOs), Women Farmers' Collectives (WFPCs), and Mahila based organisations** in agricultural policy and program design.
- Establish an **Annual National-Level Policy Dialogue** with women farmers, policymakers, researchers, scientists, practitioners and extension professionals.



B. Gender-Responsive Policy, Research, and Evidence Generation

- Conduct **gender-disaggregated data collection** at the national and state levels to track gender gaps in land ownership, credit access, technology use, capacity building programmes and agricultural productivity.
- Evidence generation around different transformative roles being played by women and innovations being led by them in addressing climate change using climate resilient technologies in agriculture and their efficient use in scaling of those innovations
- Develop a **Women Leader Model** (e.g., CM Deedi in Jeevika, Bihar) where **one trained woman leader guides 100-150 women farmers** in each district.
- Establish a **national task force** on gender-responsive agricultural policy, ensuring schemes are designed **with and for women farmers**.



C. Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment

- Ensure **joint bank accounts under Jan Dhan Yojana** for women farmers to enable financial independence and direct access to government benefits.
- **Remove age restrictions** on women farmers applying for agricultural loans and entrepreneurship grants.
- Provide **gender-sensitive value chain interventions** and direct market linkages for women-led agricultural enterprises.

D. Digital and Technological Empowerment

- Appoint a **dedicated Subject Matter Specialist (SMS-ICT) in every Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)** to implement digital innovations for women farmers.
- Access and affordability of the digital tools made directly to women.
- Establish **community-based digital literacy hubs** to equip women farmers with skills in **digital finance, mobile-based market access, and smart farming technologies** establishing interface
- Scale up **successful models like ‘Lakhpati Didi’** to encourage women’s leadership in agripreneurship.

E. Climate-Smart and Women-Friendly Agricultural Innovations

- Integrate **gender-sensitive approaches into Climate-Resilient Agriculture Programs** to ensure women farmers have equal access to technologies and benefit from climate adaptation strategies.
- Design **women-friendly farm mechanization tools** that are ergonomically suitable for women.
- User friendly and interactive information, education and communication (IEC), training materials to be developed and disseminated using local dialects, visual depiction, audio etc. for women farmers.

F. Land Rights and Resource Access

- Introduce policies that allow **women farmers to lease unused government land** for agricultural purposes.
- Strengthen **legal land rights for women farmers** and ensure joint land ownership policies are effectively implemented.
- Conduct **legal literacy campaigns** for women farmers to help them claim property rights and government entitlements.

G. Gender-Responsive Extension and Advisory Services

- Establish **gender-responsive agricultural extension services** with dedicated gender sensitive men and women extension officers.
- Capacity building of the extension officials (both men and women) at district, state and national level on gender responsive agriculture system.
- Increase recruitment of **women agricultural extensionists** to create an equal level playing field in the system.
- Promote **women-led Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Community Learning Centres** for knowledge-sharing.

H. Women-Centric Agri-Entrepreneurship and Start-ups

- Support **women-led agri-tech start-ups** through **dedicated incubation programs, funding, and mentorship**.
- Provide **customized business development services** for women transitioning into agripreneurship.
- Strengthen **gender-responsive supply chains and branding opportunities** for women-led agricultural enterprises.

I. Recognizing and Compensating Women's Agricultural Labor

- Nominating women farmer ambassador at the block levels.
- Include **women's unpaid labor in agriculture** in **official economic statistics and national accounts**.
- Develop policies for **fair compensation of women's contributions in family farms and cooperatives**.
- Implement **social security measures** such as **maternity benefits, insurance, and pension schemes** for women in agriculture.



3. Strategic Vision for the International Year of Women Farmers (2026)

With **2026 designated as the International Year of Women Farmers**, India must seize the opportunity to:

- ✓ Establish **50% representation of women in all agricultural schemes, policies, and committees**.
- ✓ Make **gender-disaggregated data collection mandatory for all agricultural policies**.
- ✓ Provide **customized digital literacy and climate-resilient training for 1 million women farmers** by 2026.
- ✓ Scale up **successful models like Lakhpati Didi and Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)** across all states.



These actions will ensure that gender inclusivity in agriculture is **not just an agenda for 2026 but create a pathway for a long-term, systemic transformation of agriculture system**.

4. Call to Action

We urge the **National Gender Resource Centre in Agriculture (NGRCA)**, **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**, and all relevant stakeholders to take the following immediate steps:

1. **Establish a High-Level Task Force** to implement and monitor gender-responsive policies.
2. **Develop and Pilot Gender-Responsive Agricultural Schemes**, with a focus on technology adoption and entrepreneurship.
3. **Create a National Gender and Agriculture Data Portal** for tracking and evaluating gender disparities in agricultural development.
4. **Institutionalize Annual Gender-Agriculture Consultations** with policy experts, scientists, practitioners, researchers, livelihood missions and women farmers.
5. **Enhance collaboration between Government, Research Institutions, and Women's Organizations** to foster gender-responsive agricultural innovations.

5. Conclusion

This policy brief which includes the voices of women farmers provide a roadmap for **integrating technology and innovation into gender-inclusive agricultural policies and programs**. The implementation of these recommendations will ensure that **women farmers are recognized, empowered, and their needs and aspirations are included in India's agricultural transformation journey**.



By leveraging the **International Year of Women Farmers (2026)**, we can establish a **legacy of gender equity in agriculture**, ensuring that women farmers are not just beneficiaries but **key decision-makers and leaders** in shaping the future of Indian agriculture.



National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)

(An Autonomous Organization of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India),
Center For Gender In Agriculture, Nutritional Security And Urban Agriculture,
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500 030, Telangana State, India