

"Land ownership is more than a right; it's a pathway to equality, stability, and growth for women farmers everywhere."



## Policy Brief - 6

# ***Barriers to the Land Ownership for Women Farmers***

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# Introduction



Land ownership is a transformative asset for economic empowerment, social stability, and autonomy, especially for women farmers. Despite women contributing significantly to global food production, only about 13% of agricultural landholders are women secure land ownership grants access to critical resources such as credit, technology, and inputs, while also empowering women to make independent decisions, improve household food security, and drive economic growth. However, gender-based barriers—spanning legal, economic, and socio-cultural domain prevent women from fully exercising land ownership rights. Addressing these barriers is essential for promoting gender equity in agriculture, enhancing productivity, and advancing sustainable development goals (SDGs), including poverty alleviation (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), and economic growth (SDG 8).

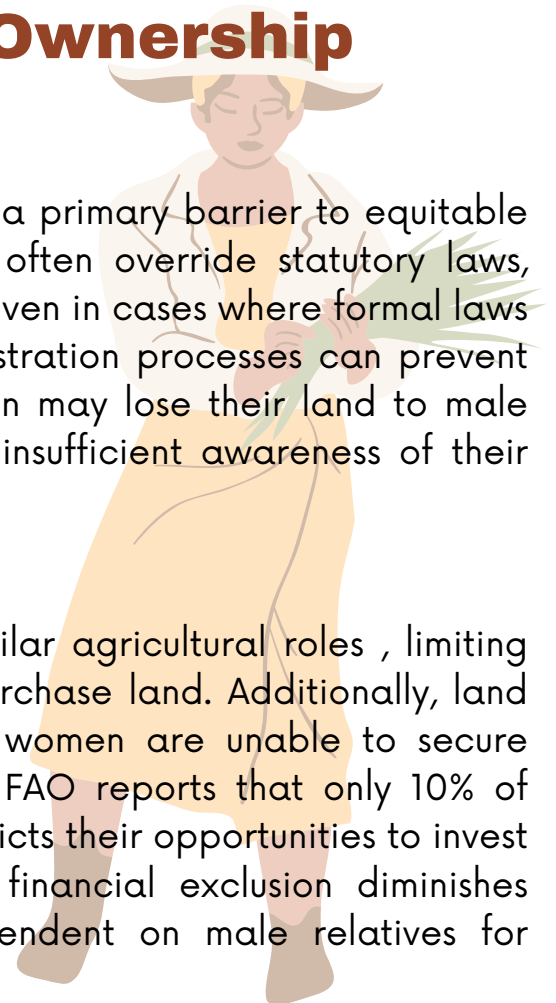
## Barriers to Women's Land Ownership

### 1. Legal and Institutional Barriers

Inheritance laws that prioritize men over women are a primary barrier to equitable land ownership. In numerous regions, customary laws often override statutory laws, making it difficult for women to inherit or retain land. Even in cases where formal laws support women's land rights, complex and costly registration processes can prevent women from formalizing ownership. As a result, women may lose their land to male relatives due to the lack of legal documentation or insufficient awareness of their rights.

### 2. Economic Barriers

Women generally earn 20-30% less than men in similar agricultural roles, limiting their ability to accumulate the savings required to purchase land. Additionally, land often serves as collateral for loans, and without it, women are unable to secure financial resources to either buy or lease land. The FAO reports that only 10% of women in rural areas have access to credit, which restricts their opportunities to invest in land and agricultural productivity. This cycle of financial exclusion diminishes women's economic autonomy and keeps them dependent on male relatives for resources.







### 3. Socio-Cultural Norms

Social norms that prioritize male land ownership are prevalent in many rural societies, where women are typically viewed as caretakers rather than independent landowners. In South Asia, for example, less than 2% of rural women own land despite their extensive involvement in agricultural labor. Educational gaps compound this issue, as women with limited literacy are less likely to understand their legal rights or the processes involved in acquiring land. Community pressures to transfer inherited land to male relatives further undermine women's ownership rights, restricting their autonomy and economic potential.



# Policy Recommendations

## 1. Legal Reforms and Enforcement

Governments should urgently reform inheritance laws to ensure women have equal rights to own and inherit land. Clear statutory laws that take precedence over customary practices can significantly improve women's access to land. Streamlined and affordable land registration processes, alongside government-provided legal aid, are essential to empower women with legal ownership. In parallel, national campaigns should focus on raising women's awareness of their land rights, enabling them to navigate complex land systems .

## 2. Financial Inclusion Programs

To overcome financial constraints, countries must develop inclusive credit products specifically for women farmers, allowing access to microloans without requiring land as collateral. Financial literacy programs and low-interest loans can support women in purchasing land and investing in their agricultural activities. Additionally, targeted grants or subsidies for single mothers and rural women could serve as a catalyst for land acquisition, strengthening economic resilience and security .

## 3. Community Awareness and Education Campaigns

Shifting socio-cultural norms is vital to promoting women's land ownership. Governments, NGOs, and community leaders should work together to create awareness campaigns that demonstrate the benefits of women's land ownership for household well-being and community prosperity. Education initiatives tailored to young women and rural communities are critical to fostering long-term change. Engaging men as allies in these campaigns can help dismantle traditional stereotypes that inhibit gender equality .



# Strategies for Implementation

## 1. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Effective implementation requires collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and financial institutions. Joint programs can integrate financial support with training on legal rights, helping women navigate land ownership processes. Local community leaders should play a role in advocating for women's rights to land, building community support for change.

## 2. Capacity-Building Programs

Training programs focusing on legal literacy, financial management, and agricultural best practices are essential. By equipping women with the skills and knowledge needed to manage land effectively, these programs promote sustainable land ownership. Community-based organizations and NGOs can act as hubs for capacity-building initiatives, reaching rural women in need of support.

## 3. Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Data collection and monitoring systems should be established to track progress on women's land ownership and evaluate policy impacts. Regular data reviews allow for timely adjustments to programs, ensuring they remain responsive to evolving challenges and local contexts. Transparent reporting will also highlight successes and areas for improvement, driving accountability among stakeholders.

## Expected Outcomes

Addressing barriers to land ownership for women can have significant socio-economic benefits. Studies show that if women farmers had the same access to resources as men, they could increase agricultural yields by 20-30%, which would raise overall agricultural output by 2.5-4% and potentially reduce global hunger by 12-17%. Women with secure land rights are more likely to invest in family welfare, leading to improved nutrition, education, and health outcomes. Additionally, women's land ownership fosters broader economic empowerment, enabling women to take on leadership roles in their communities, drive innovation in agricultural practices, and contribute to economic resilience.



# Conclusion

Empowering women through land ownership is essential for gender equity, agricultural productivity, and socio-economic stability. Breaking down the systemic barriers to women's land rights will require targeted legal, financial, and cultural interventions, supported by multi-stakeholder collaboration and sustained community engagement. By committing to these policy recommendations, countries can foster a more inclusive and resilient agricultural sector, contributing to the achievement of critical sustainable development goals. International cooperation, local advocacy, and government accountability are paramount in making women's land ownership a reality, thereby creating lasting socio-economic change.





Complete report on 'Barriers to the Land Ownership for Women Farmers'  
' is available at [www.manage.gov.in](http://www.manage.gov.in)

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## Citation

Warshini, A. , Kumari, V., Verma A.and Doharey R.K.(2024). Barriers to Land Ownership for Women Farmers Manage- Center For Gender In Agriculture, Nutritional Security And Urban Agriculture, National Institute Of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, India.

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