

Gender and Agricultural Innovations in Developing Countries: A Reality Check

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Abstract

Women's active involvement in farming and their important roles in warranting food security came more to the fore in the wake of increased male out-migration that seriously endangered the viability of small-scale agriculture, particularly in developing and emerging countries. However, multiple barriers prevent women from more actively engaging in and benefiting from agricultural innovations such as labour-saving practices and machines, resilient and high yield seeds, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), etc., even in cases where women consist of the major labour input of farming activities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) clearly states the international commitment to achieving gender equality and inclusive rural development through promoting women's roles in agricultural development. Yet, in the narratives of agricultural development research and policy, women are still perceived as passive victims or instruments to increase productivity overlooking the diversity of women's needs and realities, and their agency to pursue their own farming strategies, therefore they are neglected in the policy and programme designs and receive limited services in agricultural innovations. The majority of relevant studies emphasise on how gender factor affects the adoption of innovations and agricultural productivity by making use of quantitative data. However, to provide more customised services and appropriate technologies to women's specific needs and realities, understanding the diverse patterns of how women and men farm is crucial which requires a more qualitative approach. At the same time, there is a need to follow up on the progress of the development and utilisation of gender-responsive (or women-targeted) innovations in practice. To date, surprisingly there is very limited knowledge on the current status of gender-responsive innovations and technologies. Minding this research gap, this paper studies to what extent agricultural innovations are gender-responsive in policy and programmes in developing countries and what types of innovations are readily available for women farmers in practice by employing an exploratory systematic review. The results of this study will provide opportunities for both social and natural/engineering scientists to identify more research agendas in gender-responsive agricultural innovations and open up a more interdisciplinary platform to collaborate and contribute to improving and empowering rural women.

Keywords: *Gender equality, small-scale farming, agricultural innovations, developing countries,*

Biography

Daun (Dawn) Cheong is a Ph.D. candidate at Wageningen University and Research (WUR). Her research investigates the diversity of farming styles of smallholder farmers, focusing on gender, intersectionality, and agricultural innovations. She has ten years of experience as a rural and agricultural development expert at Save the Children, KOICA and UNWOMEN, specialised in inclusive rural development, food security and livelihoods, and women's economic empowerment working across four continents.