



CIRDAP–SAARC Collaborative International Online Training Program On Redefining Women's Roles in Agri-Food Systems in the Asia-Pacific Region

DATES
15–17 June 2026

VENUE
Online (Zoom)



REDEFINING WOMEN'S ROLES IN AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS

From the Fields to the Future,
We Cultivate Change.

WE PRODUCE SUSTAINABLY
Nourishing People and Planet

WE INNOVATE AND ADAPT
Leveraging Knowledge and Technology

WE RESEARCH AND CREATE
Driving Innovation for Better Food Systems

WE ADVOCATE AND INFLUENCE
Shaping Policies, Building Equitable and Inclusive Food Systems

WE LEAD ENTERPRISES
Building Resilient Businesses and Creating Jobs

WE EMPOWER COMMUNITIES
Strengthening Families and Building a Better Tomorrow

WE HARNESS DIGITAL SOLUTIONS
Connecting, Informing and Transforming

EQUITY | INCLUSION | SUSTAINABILITY | RESILIENCE

When Women Thrive,
Food Systems Thrive.



Background & Rationale

The Feminization of Agriculture

The agricultural landscape is undergoing a profound demographic shift often characterized as the "feminization of agricultural works," driven largely by male out-migration to urban centers in the Asia-Pacific region. Women now constitute approximately **40–50% of the agricultural workforce** in the region, with figures rising significantly in South Asian contexts (FAO, 2023). Despite their increasing responsibility for farm management and food production, women remain systemically disadvantaged, holding limited access to essential productive resources such as land, credit, support services, and digital technologies.

Recent assessments by the Asian Development Bank (2025) and the United Nations Development Program (2024) highlight that while women are central to agri-food systems, they are disproportionately concentrated in informal, low-wage, and labor-intensive roles. This resource gap creates a "productivity penalty," where female-managed farms yield **24% less** than their male counterparts solely due to unequal access to inputs rather than a lack of skill (FAO, 2023; UN Women, 2024). Therefore, it is high time to redefine women's role in agrifood system shifting the narrative from viewing women as passive beneficiaries or unpaid family labor to recognizing them as capable **agri-entrepreneurs and key agents of climate adaptation**.

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) emphasizes expanding women's leadership, enhancing access to technology and finance, and integrating gender equality into policy frameworks as pivotal for sustainable transformation of agrifood systems. Furthermore, integrating women into decision-making processes in the agri-food value chain is essential for sustainable development. Closing gender gaps in productivity and wages could increase regional GDP and reduce food insecurity significantly, underscoring the economic imperative of women's full participation and empowerment in agrifood value chains.

This training program aims to equip the policymakers and development practitioners from the Asia Pacific region and beyond with practical tools to design and implement gender-responsive policies and interventions aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, enabling them to address persistent gender inequalities that restrict women's access to land, finance, technology, markets, and leadership roles within agri-food systems. This will ultimately help promote systemic transformation by positioning women as key drivers of sustainable and resilient agri-food systems.

WHAT YOU WILL ACHIEVE

Training Objectives

The overall objective of this training is to enhance participants' understanding of women's critical roles in agri-food systems and to strengthen their capacity to design, implement, and advocate for gender-responsive policies, programs, and innovations that promote inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agricultural development. Specifically, by the end of the training, participants will be able to:

01 ANALYZE

Analyze the current status, challenges, and contributions of women in agri-food systems, including production, processing, marketing, and agribusiness value chains.

02 UNDERSTAND

Understand gender disparities related to access to land, finance, technology, extension services, markets, and decision-making in rural contexts.

03 APPLY

Apply gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches in agricultural and rural development planning, policy formulation, and project design.

04 PROMOTE

Promote climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive, and sustainable agriculture practices that empower women and enhance household and community resilience.

05 INTEGRATE

Integrate international frameworks and regional commitments on gender equality, food security, and rural development into national strategies and programs.

06 DEVELOP

Develop action plans or policy recommendations tailored to participants' country contexts for advancing women's roles in agri-food systems.

Who Should Attend & How We Learn

This online training is designed for professionals and practitioners engaged in agriculture, rural development, gender equality, and food systems transformation across the region. Priority participants may include:

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

- Program managers and technical specialists from Government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and civil society organizations.
- Researchers, faculty members, and policy analysts from agricultural universities, rural development institutes and gender-focused research organizations.
- Leaders and managers of farmer cooperatives, producer associations, and women-led agribusiness groups involved in agri-food value chains.
- Women entrepreneurs, social enterprise leaders, and agribusiness managers.
- Professionals engaged in agriculture, agribusiness, rural development, gender advocacy, and food systems innovation.

TRAINING APPROACH

The training approach will be interactive, participatory, and practice-oriented, considering the regional diversity and online delivery constraints. However, blending of following approaches will be adopted.

Interactive Lectures

- Presenting short and focused key topics such as gender roles in agriculture, women-led innovations, and regional best practices.

Case Study Analysis

- Discussing on real-life examples from Asia-Pacific countries showcasing women's contributions in agri-food systems.
- Encouraging participants to analyze challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned.
- Promoting live discussion on replicability of best practices in participants' contexts.

Knowledge Sharing & Networking

- Encouraging participants to share experiences from their countries or organizations.

Scenario-based Exercises

- Designing gender-sensitive agri-projects, analyzing value chains, or solving rural challenges.

Three-Day Session Plan

DAY 1

15 June

Women in Agri-Food Systems: Gender-Responsive Approaches & Policy Frameworks

09:00 – 10:30

Ms. Sabnam Shivakoti

Regional Overview, Challenges, and Emerging Opportunities:

- Women's roles across agri-food value chains
- Gender gaps in access to land, finance, technology, and markets
- Socio-cultural and policy constraints
- SDGs, gender equality, and social inclusion frameworks

10:45 – 12:15

Dr. Sadika Haque

Gender-Responsive Approaches & Policy Frameworks:

- Gender analysis tools in agriculture
- Women's empowerment frameworks
- National gender policies and agricultural strategies
- Legal and institutional reforms

DAY 2

16 June

Women's Entrepreneurship, Value Chain Integration, Climate Resilience, Innovation & Digital Agriculture

09:00 – 10:30

Dr. Bisakha Dewan

Economic Empowerment and Agribusiness with Success Stories:

- Women-led agribusiness models
- Inclusive value chains
- Access to finance & digital services
- Cooperatives & producer organizations

10:45 – 12:15

Ms. Lakshmi Raj

Women as Agents of Innovation with Success Stories:

- Climate-smart agriculture
- Indigenous knowledge
- ICT tools for women farmers
- Reforms on policies viz extension services

DAY 3

17 June

Leadership, Collective Action and Social Transformation: Way Forward

09:00 – 10:30

Dr. Chandana Jayawardena

Women in Decision-making:

- Leadership development
- Women in cooperatives and producer groups
- Negotiation and advocacy
- Addressing social norms and care burdens

10:45 – 12:15

Dr. Raman Wadhwa

Redefining Women's roles in Policies & Programs of Agri. Food Systems

- Designing gender-responsive programs
- Monitoring & evaluation indicators
- Partnerships and financing
- Regional cooperation mechanisms

REGISTRATION

FREE

Participation in this CIRDAP - SAARC international online training is fully sponsored.

PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE(FREE):

<https://forms.gle/Vx8QESeNvkiKzBxb8>

LAST DATE TO REGISTER:

10 June 2026

DURATION:

3 days • 2 sessions/day • 1.5 hrs each

VENUE:

Online

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Participants enhanced their understanding of women's roles across agri-food value chains, including production, processing, marketing, agribusiness, and policy spaces.
- Improved awareness of gender-responsive approaches, climate-smart agriculture, and inclusive rural development.
- Participants capacitated to identify policy gaps and reform priorities to strengthen gender inclusion.
- A complete set of training modules generated in book form on gender-inclusive agri-food systems after the training.

CONTACT • COURSE DIRECTOR

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About the Organizers

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) in collaboration with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)- Agriculture Centre, Dhaka Bangladesh is organizing this international training program.

CIRDAP brings together 15 member countries from Asia and the Pacific - **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.** Since its establishment, CIRDAP has served as a platform for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and policy innovation to strengthen integrated rural development across diverse contexts.

SAARC, founded in 1985, unites eight South Asian countries- **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka-** in pursuit of economic, social, and cultural collaboration. Within this framework, the **SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC)** was established in 1998 in Dhaka as a specialized regional institution. SAC's mandate is to promote sustainable and resilient rural development in South Asia by strengthening agricultural research and extension systems, supporting pro-poor policy formulation, encouraging innovation, and advancing knowledge management.

Together, **CIRDAP** and **SAC** combine their expertise and networks to deliver impactful training programs that empower professionals, policymakers, and researchers to recognize and redefine the changing roles of women in agri-food systems.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Distinguished Resouce Persons



Ms. Sabnam Shivakoti
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Environment,
Government of Nepal,
Kathmandu



Dr. Raman Wadhwa
Deputy Director
National Rural Livelihoods
Promotion Society (NRLPS),
Ministry of Rural
Development, Government of
India, New Delhi



Ms. Lakshmi Raj
District Programme
Manager – Farm Livelihood
KUDUMBASHREE
State Rural Livelihood Mission,
Kerala, India



Dr. Chandana Jayawardena
Senior Lecturer
University of Peradeniya,
Kandy, Sri Lanka



Dr. Sadika Haque
Professor
Department of Agricultural
Economics, Bangladesh
Agricultural University,
Mymensingh, Bangladesh



Dr. Bisakha Dewan
Associate Professor
Department of Agribusiness
and Marketing, Faculty of
Agribusiness Management,
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural
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