in the household. After the intro-
duction of a groundnut project in
West Africa, the Samanko women’s
group not only earned cash from
new groundnut varieties but also
began to influence community de-
cision-making (Hill Rojas, 2004).  
Agricultural biodiversity is largely
shaped by human activities and
management practices, and large numbers
of people depend on it for sustainable
livelihoods. However, gender analyses
have made clear that men and women
often manage, use and control natural
and agricultural resources differently.
Moreover, agricultural systems, and the
roles, rights and responsibilities of men
and women who farm, differ according
to geographic and cultural context. By
understanding these differences, and the
gendered power relations behind them,
agricultural programmes and policies
achieve greater equity and efficiency.

- Agricultural extension services and new technologies should fulfi l
the needs of men and women from local communities.
- Empowerment of women to raise levels of nutrition, improve
production and distribution of food and agricultural products,
and enhance living conditions.
- Provision of unbiased access for men and women to credit, new
technologies, land, education, farming tools and other agricultural
inputs from supporting institutions.
- Protection of local communities’ rights, particularly those of women
and indigenous groups, through legal frameworks.

Chambers, K.J. and Henshall Momsen, J. (2007). From the kitchen and the field: Gender and maize diversity in the Bajío region of
Agricultural Development”. In Warren et al., Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Implications for Agricultural and International

Challenges

- Further study of the linkages between gender, agrobiodiversity,
agriculture, and poverty reduction.
- Development of clear guidelines, tools and methodologies to main-
tream gender into biodiversity management.
- The need for equitable access to agricultural resources and inputs
to support biodiversity conservation. Both women and men work-
ning with plants and animals need credit, technical support and
extension services in order to mitigate or reduce potentially harmful
practices.
- Need for gender-disaggregated data to highlight women’s contribu-
tion to agriculture. Additionally, more data is needed on women’s
crops, gender differences in the timing and labour supply, and
access to labour-saving equipment.
- Diversity across communities not captured in policies and services
for men and women in agriculture.

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Underpinning the Convention on Biological Diversity is recognition
that humans, themselves a diversity of cultures and knowledge, are an integral
component of ecosystems as both users
and managers of resources. Because it
is human management of agricultural
landscapes that shapes agricultural biodiversity, gender-based differences in
knowledge and responsibilities greatly
impact management activities.
Gender roles of women and men include different labour responsibilities, decision-making processes, and knowledge. According to their needs, men and women often use resources differently and thus manage their resources in different ways. The gendering of local knowledge, including knowledge used for managing agricultural systems, has key characteristics (Huisinga et al., 2006).

- Both men and women farmers play an important role in agricultural biodiversification throughout the world. Nevertheless, the role of women is less recognized, even though rural women produce half of the world’s food, and in developing countries, they are responsible for 60–80% of food production. In Southeast Asia, for example, women provide up to 90% of the labour for rice cultivation, while in Egypt they represent 53% of all agricultural labour. In sub-Saharan Africa, women produce up to 80% of basic foodstuffs both for household consumption and for sale (FAO, 1996).

- In many countries, women play a crucial role in smallholder agriculture and are the primary savers and managers of seeds. Up to 90% of planting material used in smallholder agriculture is derived from seeds and germplasm which women have produced, selected and saved (FAO, 2001). However, their knowledget is restricted to edible plants. In Mali, for example, certain vegetable species are valued because of the ingenuity and tenacity of women who preserve them and use them for basket making, Kingi, weaving, pottery, etc (NBSAP Mali).

- Women’s intercropping of diverse species is to be undermined by monocultural practices. For example, in the Kurichiyas community in Kerala, India, women tend to intercrop while men are normally responsible for the best breeds for the local environmental conditions (FAO, 2006).

- Despite the fact that both men and women contribute to the production of secondary crops, such as legumes and vegetables, women, however, play a crucial role. In Mali, for example, women play a key role in the conservation of aromatic plants and several vegetable species like the shea tree, néré, edible tamarind, sesame plant, fonio, seat pea and voandzou (NBSAP Mali).

A trend towards the ‘feminization of agriculture’ has been observed in many parts of the world. Men’s participation in agriculture has declined because of migration from rural to urban areas and death caused by war, sickness and HIV/AIDS. In Africa, for example, the male population in rural areas is decreasing rapidly, while the female population remains relatively stable. In Malawi, the rural male population fell by 21.8% between 1970 and 1990. This trend has resulted in an increase in the proportion of households headed by women. Approximately one-third of all rural households in sub-Saharan Africa are now headed by women (FAO, 2008).

- Social norms define female work and male work. In Tamil Nadu, India, both male and female agricultural workers agreed it would be humiliating for a man to be paid the same as a woman, even for the same work (Hill Rojas, 2004). Gender inequality exists in the access to valuable resources such as land, credit and agricultural inputs, technology, extension, training and services that would enhance their production capacity. In Liberia, women produced 10% of all crops, and despite the lack of access to farmland, their low level of technologe training and knowledge, and lack of financial assistance (Liberia NBSAP).

- Income and organization can lead to political participation for women and increased decision making.