



Inequitable Food System

Why in News

According to a [United Nations](#)' report on the Food System, today's food systems are heavily afflicted by power imbalances and inequality, and do not work for most women.

- Women are affected disproportionately by the factors such as [Climate Change](#), [Covid-19](#), Discrimination, Less land rights, [migration](#) etc.
- The Report has **come ahead of the Food Systems Summit in September 2021.**

Key Points

- **Food Systems:**
 - [Food systems](#) are a complex web of activities involving production, processing, handling, preparation, storage, distribution, marketing, access, purchase, consumption, food loss and waste, as well as the outputs of these activities, including social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- **Findings from the Report:**
 - **Climate Change:**
 - Women farmers are disproportionately more affected by climate change and land degradation.
 - While women are more likely than men to notice the climate change impacts on agricultural productivity, livestock problems and water availability, they are less likely than men to receive key information on climate and agricultural information that would allow them to plan for climate concerns.
 - **Malnutrition:**
 - They face high levels of obesity and are more susceptible to chronic disease.
 - Indigenous women play a crucial role in eradicating hunger and malnutrition. But limitations in the recognition and exercise of rights have hampered access to equitable systems of food.
 - **Migration:**
 - Migration among youths over the course of urban transition have had impacts on the gendered nature of economic roles.
 - Such migration has entailed **a growing gap between the location of food production and food consumption.**
 - This may have been followed by a change in lifestyle, including dietary habits.
 - **Covid-19:**
 - A 2020 UN report had hinted how epidemics can significantly reduce women's economic and livelihood activities, increasing poverty rates and exacerbating food insecurity.
 - **Food Insecurity:**
 - **Rural women were among the worst affected** among the food insecure population of 821 million (as of 2017).
 - As many as 31 African countries depended on external food aid till 2019.
 - **Discrimination:**
 - Rural women accounting for nearly half the agricultural workforce in developing countries, face discrimination. They have very little land rights, face difficulties

obtaining ownership, do not have access to credit and are engaged in unpaid work.

- This lack of agency reflects in their dietary patterns: They eat least, last and least well. Women farmers who control resources generally have better-quality diets.

▪ **Suggestions:**

◦ **Independent Women Groups are Needed:**

- **Dimitra Clubs in the rural regions of sub-Saharan Africa** have been drivers of women's leadership for over a decade. These groups comprise women and men who shed light on the gender inequalities in households and communities.
- The UN has called for more such independent, social systems at the national as well as the regional level to strengthen institutional architecture and make decision-making processes related to food systems more inclusive.

◦ **Ensure Access to Fundamental Services:**

- It urged the systems **to adopt policies that eliminate barriers in access to fundamental services**, ensuring, for example, the right to food, shelter and health.
- The report **cited the example of German dual training system**, an institutional infrastructure that creates a path to jobs and better livelihoods. It integrates school-based learning with work-based practice by providing theoretical training for aspiring farmers as well as short-term courses on specific skills.

◦ **Making Governments and Businesses Accountable:**

- The UN stressed that **inequitable systems** and structures that enable and exacerbate inequalities for food systems workers and consumers **be dismantled** and **governments, businesses, and organizations be held accountable for ensuring equitable livelihoods**.

India's Initiatives for Equitable Food System

- **Class:** Small and marginal farmers FPO (Farmer producer Organisation), Cooperatives, cluster mode of working in most development programs .
- **Disadvantaged sections** (Agricultural labour and tribal population): Dedicated budget allocation for better inclusion in programs.
- **Gender budgeting**, incentives for ensuring greater participation, [mahila sashaktikaran pariyojana](#) (women empowerment scheme of M/oRD), National Gender Resource Center for agriculture.
- **Food and nutrition security:** [PDS](#), [One Nation One Card](#), [National Nutrition Mission](#), focus on nutri cereals.

UN Food Systems Summit

▪ **About:**

- It will be convened as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) by 2030.
- The Summit will launch bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems.
- The Food Systems Summit is organised around **five action tracks**.

▪ **Action Tracks:**

- Safe and nutritious food.
- Sustainable consumption patterns.
- Nature-positive production.
- Advance equitable livelihoods.
- Resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.

▪ **India at UN Food Systems Summit:**

- **India has volunteered, but not limited to, to the Action Track 4: Advance Equitable Livelihoods** for the UN Food System Summit 2021.
- **Agriculture being a State subject**, implementation of specific initiatives by state governments will be crucial.

Source: DTE

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/inequitable-food-system>