

Proceedings of the national consultation on **GENDER, CLIMATE & AGRICULTURE**

April 2025





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1 Executive Summary



The National Consultation on “Gender, Climate & Agriculture,” convened by FWWB India, brought together 83 stakeholders across government, civil society, academia and the private sector. This consultation emerged at a critical moment for Indian agriculture, marked by intensifying climate risks, systemic gender exclusion, and the urgent need to redesign agri-food systems to be equitable and resilient.

Despite forming the backbone of India’s agricultural workforce, women remain largely unrecognized as farmers, leaders, and decision-makers. They face structural barriers including lack of land ownership, limited access to finance, markets, and technologies, and exclusion from governance spaces like Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). Less than 2% of agricultural finance reaches women—a stark indicator of systemic neglect.

Participants emphasized that climate-smart agriculture must be grounded in local knowledge, gender equity, and institutional convergence. Smallholders, particularly women, are disproportionately affected by erratic weather and degraded natural resources but lack access to adaptive tools and information. FPOs offer a promising pathway, yet only 8% are women-led and most struggle with poor governance, compliance burdens, and undercapitalization.

The consultation called for moving beyond token inclusion toward genuine co-leadership by women in agriculture. It surfaced scalable models, policy innovations, and financing solutions that position women not as beneficiaries but as powerful agents of change. FWWB’s commitment to catalyzing women-led agricultural ecosystems was reaffirmed, with recommendations to inform both national policy and grassroots programming.

2 Context and Purpose



Context

India's agricultural sector is undergoing a profound transformation shaped by intensifying climate risks, shifting market dynamics, and an increasing recognition of the need for gender equity. Women constitute a substantial share of the agricultural workforce and form the backbone of rural farming systems, yet they remain largely unrecognized as producers, decision-makers, and leaders within prevailing policy and institutional frameworks. Concurrently, smallholder farmers and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are being called upon to innovate and lead the transition towards more sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient agricultural systems. However, systemic challenges related to gender disparities, limited access to resources, and climate vulnerabilities impede progress.



Purpose of the consultation

Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB), with over four decades of experience empowering rural women through financial inclusion, capacity building, and institution strengthening, convened this National Consultation to address these intersecting challenges. Building on insights from a recent scoping study conducted across Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha, FWWB aims to bring together stakeholders from government, civil society, private sector, academia, and grassroots communities to co-create actionable pathways for gender-inclusive, climate-smart agricultural development.

The consultation serves as a strategic platform to amplify rural women's voices, elevate grassroots innovations, and align institutional efforts towards fostering resilient and women-centred agricultural ecosystems.



Objectives of the consultation

- To gather diverse insights on the evolving roles of women, FPOs, and climate-smart agricultural practices in shaping India’s agri-food systems.
- To facilitate meaningful dialogue among government bodies, private sector actors, financial institutions, civil society, academia, and farmer organizations to harmonize priorities and programs.
- To draw on field experiences and grassroots innovations to inform inclusive, climate-responsive agricultural policies and programming.
- To co-develop actionable recommendations focused on mainstreaming gender across agricultural value chains, enhancing climate resilience among smallholders, and strengthening women-led FPOs and market linkages.



Format of the consultation

The National Consultation was structured to maximize interaction and shared learning through a combination of plenary sessions, expert panel discussions, and interactive workshops using mentimeter tool. This multi-format approach enabled stakeholders to exchange macro-level perspectives, showcase grassroots realities, and collaboratively formulate strategies that are grounded in practical experience and policy foresight.



Process of the scoping study

FWWB’s scoping study aimed to assess the current landscape of Farmer Producer

Organizations with respect to gender inclusion and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) adoption. It sought to understand the capacity gaps within FPOs, analyse women’s participation in governance and value chains, evaluate constraints to climate resilience, and identify strategic stakeholders for partnership. The qualitative study included 13 key informant interviews, 61 focus group discussions (split between FPO representatives and farmers), and surveys involving 326 FPO representatives (73% women) and 376 farmers (86% women), across Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha.



Key insights of the scoping study

- **FPO Challenges:** Common issues include weak governance, poor infrastructure, limited financial access, and low member mobilization. State-specific challenges vary: leadership fatigue in Andhra Pradesh; weak collectivization in Gujarat; time poverty and digital illiteracy in Maharashtra; and remote operations with limited NGO support in Odisha.
- **Ecosystem Support:** Government programs primarily drive FPO formation, while NGOs provide crucial but inconsistent skill-building and resource access. Odisha benefits from stronger government involvement but lacks robust NGO and private sector engagement.
- **Gender Dynamics:** Women’s participation in FPOs varies widely, highest in Andhra Pradesh due to strong SHG networks, moderate in Maharashtra and Odisha, and lowest in Gujarat (except in women-only

FPOs). Women face constraints including time poverty, cultural restrictions, limited mobility, inadequate training, and restricted decision-making power. The triple burden of domestic, farm, and care work, especially under climate stress, reduces their leadership engagement.

- Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA): While FPOs offer some CSA training and inputs, marketing support remains limited. Women-led FPOs show greater CSA engagement. Challenges include low CSA awareness, limited bio-input availability, weak market linkages, and insufficient training, particularly for women. State variations show Andhra Pradesh blending natural and chemical farming but weak market support; Gujarat and Maharashtra displaying low CSA adoption due to misconceptions; and Odisha lacking technical and expert support for CSA.



Recommendations

- Strengthen FPOs through targeted capacity-building focused on governance, financial management, and infrastructure.
- Mainstream women’s leadership by addressing barriers such as lack of training, mobility restrictions,

limited credit access, and inadequate recognition.

- Promote CSA adoption via exposure visits, demonstration plots, practical training, and better access to markets and finance.
- Facilitate convergence between government schemes and ecosystem actors to reinforce FPO and women farmer support.
- Enhance women’s agency by ensuring secure land rights, increasing representation in FPO governance, and providing support systems to alleviate unpaid care burdens.



Conclusion

This consultation represents a pivotal step toward transforming India’s agricultural landscape into one that is inclusive, gender-responsive, and climate-resilient. By centring women’s leadership, strengthening farmer collectives, and fostering cross-sector partnerships, FWFB envisions a future where sustainable agriculture supports equitable livelihoods and resilient rural economies. The insights and recommendations from this engagement will inform national policy and programmatic priorities, catalysing systemic change for women farmers and their communities.

3

Synthesis of Cross-Cutting Themes



Empowering women in agriculture

- Women must be recognized as leaders and not merely as labourers or beneficiaries.
- Structural barriers, land rights, finance, and governance, impede women's progress, not lack of skill.
- Less than 2% of agri-finance reaches women, showing systemic neglect.
- SHGs have proven resilient and need support to become economic institutions.
- Women are vital to climate-resilient, nutrition-sensitive agriculture but face time poverty and lack of recognition.
- Identity, dignity, and direct income-generation opportunities enhance women's participation and outcomes.

Agriculture cannot be sustained without the active involvement of women

– Takayuki Hagiwara, FAO



Strengthening FPOs and institutional support

- SHGs and federations must evolve into viable FPOs with appropriate policy and design backing.
- FPO quality matters more than numbers, governance, capital, and participation are key.
- Women's leadership in FPOs must be institutionalized through targeted support and policies.
- Public-private convergence must be leveraged with clearly defined returns for each stakeholder.

- Dedicated institutional mechanism, like a central FPO body, are critical for scale and sustainability.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions and local governance structures are crucial for outreach and last-mile service delivery.



Climate resilience through localised innovations

- Women are the most vulnerable to climate change but lack access to tools and advisory services.
- Gender-responsive CSA practices and climate/financial literacy are essential for resilience.
- Localized agri-advisory and crop planning services reduce climate distress.
- Women-led models in silage, mushroom farming, etc., offer proven resilience pathways.
- Traditional and ethnic practices hold potential for sustainable, value-added farming.
- Collective platforms led by women can drive wider adoption of CSA innovations.



Redesigning agricultural markets and finance

- Market systems remain skewed toward MSP/state procurement, limiting women’s role in value chains.

- Women-led FPOs need support across the entire value chain, from inputs to processing and sales.
- Direct market linkages, bundled services, and transparent pricing models are crucial.
- Rising input costs and counterfeit products hurt profitability, regulation is needed.
- Rural women-led enterprises and startups lack access to dedicated funding or CSR investments.
- Digital platforms offer potential for market access and extension but must be inclusive.



Building inclusive ecosystems (policy, data, tech, education)

- Policy must prioritize land use/control over ownership to empower cultivators.
- Most schemes lack gendered budgeting, affirmative action and accountability are critical.
- Extension systems, KVKs, and advisory services need redesign with a gender lens.
- Women-friendly technology design and distribution must be prioritized.
- Formal recognition of women farmers is essential to access entitlements and schemes.
- Climate-smart, inclusive education and capacity building must replace outdated agri-curricula.

4 Plenary: Gender, Climate & Agriculture



The plenary members are as follows:

- I. Reshma Anand, Regional Director, Ford Foundation Office for India, Nepal and Sri Lanka
- II. Michiel van Erkel, Agriculture Counsellor for India and Sri Lanka, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
- III. Pravesh Sharma, IAS (retired), Chair, Steering Group of National Association of Farmer Producer Organisations (NAFPO)
- IV. Girija Srinivasan, Board Member, FWWB



Objectives of the session

- To explore how climate change disproportionately affects women in agriculture, increasing their vulnerability and impacting food security and livelihoods.

- To advocate for integrating gender considerations into climate-smart agricultural policies and programs to ensure equitable access to resources and technologies.
- To promote women's leadership and participation in climate-resilient agriculture, recognizing their vital role in sustainable food systems.
- To encourage cross-sectoral collaboration to support gender-equitable solutions for climate adaptation and agricultural resilience.



Key Messages

- Rural women must be recognized as leaders and co-creators in agriculture, not just as beneficiaries or vulnerable groups; their knowledge, labour, and experiences must inform policy and practice.

- Structural inequalities such as limited access to land, credit, markets, and leadership roles are the main barriers to women’s empowerment, not lack of skills; inclusive, gender-intentional design is critical.
- India’s agricultural system is at risk due to income stagnation, ecological degradation, technological stagnation, and youth disinterest; empowering women and leveraging existing institutions like SHGs and FPOs can drive resilient transformation.
- Gender-blind climate and agri-policies must evolve into localized, integrated approaches that provide women access to climate-smart practices, finance, and decision-making platforms within a supportive ecosystem.
- Localized innovation vs. systemic transformation: Projects like micro-fermentation units are innovative but localized; others argue for deeper ecosystem reforms, land rights, access to finance, and inclusive governance.
- Smallholder agriculture viability vs. inclusion focus: While some stress the urgent economic revival of smallholder farming, others focus more on increasing women’s participation and visibility within the existing model.
- Technology/market-driven change vs. social empowerment: Divergence exists between advancing through tech/market competitiveness and prioritizing social recognition, resilience, and gender-sensitive governance.



Divergent views

- Top-down vs. co-designed approaches: Some interventions are designed from the top (e.g., donor-led models), whereas others argue solutions must be co-created with women based on their lived realities.
- Gender mainstreaming vs. targeted support for women: There is a divergence between integrating gender as a general principle vs. focusing explicitly on women-centric investments and structural changes.
- Commercial FPO models vs. inclusive, women-led FPOs: Mainstream FPOs often focus on market success and scalability, which can overlook the participation needs and constraints of women, unlike women-led FPOs with a focus on food security crops.
- SHG to FPO transition: assumed vs. supported: There is a gap between assuming SHG members can easily transition to FPOs and the reality that this shift requires intentional policy and institutional backing.
- Government as central actor vs. collaborative facilitator: Some view government as the main driver for agricultural reform, while others see its role as one among many stakeholders in a collaborative ecosystem.
- Economic value vs. recognition of unpaid labour: Tensions arise between measuring success through productivity/income vs. recognizing the invisible, unpaid labour of women in food systems and governance.
- Crisis framing vs. incremental progress: Some highlight agriculture

facing a perfect storm of crises; others point to grassroots resilience and women’s growing roles as opportunities for positive transformation.



Implications for Policy Practice

- Recognize rural women as farmers, leaders, and decision-makers in agriculture, not just as dependents or beneficiaries, by formally acknowledging their roles in policies and programs.
- Co-design agricultural solutions with women farmers based on their lived experiences, ensuring localized, context-specific, and inclusive interventions.
- Address systemic barriers such as unequal access to land, finance, markets, leadership roles, and extension services, rather than focusing solely on skill-building.
- Ensure gender-inclusive FPOs from inception, with dedicated support for women’s leadership, governance participation, and access to resources and markets.
- Leverage existing SHG and federation networks (like CLFs, FIGs, FMGs) to build women-led and inclusive FPOs, ensuring meaningful transitions from social to economic platforms.
- Increase targeted investments in women farmers and women-led agri- enterprises, redesign credit products to support climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and ensure access to agri-finance, not just microcredit.
- Integrate gender-disaggregated data and visibility of women’s labour and contributions in agriculture to inform policy, programs, and monitoring frameworks.
- Build ecosystem-wide support by transforming institutions, market systems, and service delivery mechanisms, not just focusing on individual capacity.
- Promote women-friendly tools, mechanization, and hands-on training through Farmer Field Schools, financial/business literacy, and climate adaptation education.
- Institutionalize climate resilience and gender equity across agriculture, ensuring co-anchored approaches and coordination between government, private sector, civil society, and knowledge institutions.
- Support diversification into high-value agriculture (e.g., dairy, horticulture, food processing) and non-land-based income models to enhance financial independence and resilience.
- Reorient agricultural policy to revive public investment, enhance technology access, improve global competitiveness, and ensure fair market linkages for smallholders, especially women.

"Recognizing women as farmers, not just labourers, is key to transforming rural agriculture."

– Pravesh Sharma, NAFPO

"Just one partner will not be able to do it... We work hand in hand and on equal terms with NGOs, the private sector, and all ecosystem partners."

– Michiel van Erkel, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands

"We need to design solutions that are inclusive, considering the complex realities that women farmers face."

– Girija Srinivasan, FWWB

"India's greatest untapped asset in agriculture is its social capital, built quietly and steadily by women."

– Reshma Anand, Ford Foundation

Panel Discussion -I: The State of Agriculture 5 Today



This panel discussion was moderated by Prof Sukphal Singh, Prof. and former Chairperson, Centre for Management in Agriculture, IIM-Ahmedabad and the panellists were as follows:

Panelist-1: P. V. S. Suryakumar
former Deputy Managing Director, NABARD

Panelist-2: Ravdeep Kaur
Associate Director -Agriculture, KPMG

Panelist-3: Yogesh Dwivedi
CEO, Madhya Bharat Consortium of FPOs

Panelist-4: Debaranjan Pujahari
Head of Agri Practice, Sattva Consulting



Objectives of the session

- To critically assess the current challenges facing Indian agriculture, including declining farmer incomes, resource degradation, lack of technological innovation, and the erosion of institutional support.
- To highlight the increasing but under-recognized role of women in agriculture, particularly their contributions, barriers to empowerment, and the need for intentional inclusion in policies and institutions.
- To explore systemic and structural reforms needed to ensure smallholder agriculture remains viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable in the face of climate change and shifting demographics.
- To identify pathways for strengthening agricultural ecosystems, such as through gender-inclusive FPOs, collaborative governance, climate-resilient practices, and equitable access to finance, markets, and technology.



Key Messages

- The belief that smallholders are inefficient is a myth; data shows they are productive and essential to India's food system, yet they lack adequate recognition and supportive policies.
- Women, tenants, and non-landowning cultivators are often excluded from agricultural benefits due to policies tied to land ownership, highlighting the need for more inclusive, control-based frameworks.
- Climate variability (heatwaves, erratic rainfall) is significantly disrupting traditional cropping patterns (e.g., pulses and soybean), pushing smallholders toward riskier alternatives like paddy.
- Input costs are rising disproportionately compared to returns, while the market is flooded with substandard agrochemicals, pointing to weak regulatory enforcement and urgent need for input quality control.
- Despite a ₹50 lakh crore agri-GDP, only ₹3 lakh crore is traded in formal markets; FPOs remain marginal players due to poor financial health, working capital constraints, and weak market access.
- Extension services have declined sharply, leaving farmers without guidance on crop choices or market trends, worsening the disconnect between on-ground realities and policy decisions.
- Corporates evaluate FPOs on volume, quality, consistency, and price—but most FPOs lack systems, capital, and professional support to meet these criteria, limiting effective partnerships.

- Technology adoption among farmers (e.g., WhatsApp, AI tools) is rising, offering promise for market access and decision-making, but institutional and financial frameworks must catch up to scale impact.



Divergent views

- Small farmers (Productive Vs Unsupported): Smallholders are productive and resilient but remain unsupported due to lack of inclusive policies and institutional backing.
- Eligibility (Ownership-Based Vs Cultivation-Based): Government schemes are linked to land ownership, excluding actual cultivators like tenants, sharecroppers, and women farmers.
- Climate Impact (High Vulnerability Vs Low Resilience Support): Climate variability severely impacts smallholders, with inadequate adaptive support systems for crops like pulses, soybean, and seeds.
- Input System (High-Cost Vs Poor Quality Control): Inputs are expensive and often spurious, with weak regulation and poor-quality assurance mechanisms.
- Knowledge Flow (Demand for Guidance Vs Collapse of Extension): Farmers seek reliable agronomic and market advice, but state extension services are non-functional and inaccessible.
- Policy Focus (MSP-Centric Vs Market Diversification): Over-reliance on MSP and procurement stifles private markets, contract farming, and decentralized procurement innovation.

- FPO Governance (Mission-Driven Vs Market-Ready): Many FPOs are built on social missions but lack business governance, working capital, and compliance systems to thrive in markets.
 - Corporate Engagement (Short-Term Deals Vs Long-Term Partnerships): Companies often approach FPOs for one-time transactions, not long-term value chain integration or partnership building.
 - Development Goals (Grant-Driven Vs ROI-Oriented): Development agencies emphasize grant-based support, while markets demand return-on-investment and scalability, creating a disconnect.
 - Support Systems (Fragmented Schemes Vs Institutional Anchoring): Government schemes lack coordination, continuity, and dedicated institutions to guide and support FPO growth holistically.
 - Technology Use (Emerging Platforms Vs Ecosystem Integration): Digital platforms are expanding, but their integration into formal FPO-business ecosystems is still limited and inconsistent.
 - FPO Strategy (Welfare Orientation Vs Business Focus): Many FPOs operate on welfare lines; there is a critical need to shift toward business models with robust planning and execution
- land control and access rather than just ownership. Current policies often exclude non-landowners and women, limiting their access to subsidies and benefits.
- Agriculture offers significant income potential beyond cultivation, especially through value chains, services, and market linkages, but policy and ground-level support remain inadequate, often ignoring producers’ food security and diverse market channels beyond MSP and state procurement.
 - Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), especially Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs), are promising institutional innovations but suffer from poor implementation, weak governance, low financial capacity, limited professional support, and inadequate policy backing. Focus should be on building fewer, high-quality FPOs with sustainable business models.
 - Climate variability, input cost inflation, and poor-quality control of seeds, chemicals, and bio-stimulants pose major production risks for small farmers, particularly those cultivating pulses and other sensitive crops. Adaptive crop advisories and regulatory reforms on seeds and pesticides are urgently needed.
 - Market linkage barriers for FPOs include lack of working capital, poor financial records, absence of competitive pricing, and difficulty meeting corporates’ demands for volume, quality, and consistency. Transitioning FPOs from grant-dependency to a market-oriented, ROI-driven mindset is critical.



Implications for Policy Practice

- Small farmers, including women and tenant cultivators, are highly productive and deserve recognition and inclusive policies that focus on

- Extension services are declining, creating knowledge gaps among farmers about suitable inputs, crop choices, and technology adoption. There is a pressing need to revitalize localized, accessible, multi-lingual advisory services and agribusiness education to build grassroots capacity.
- Public-private partnerships and corporates can play a transformative role if assured of returns and if FPOs improve financial management and competitiveness. However, Indian companies often lack maturity and structured engagement systems, unlike global players.
- Technology integration through mobile platforms, AI-powered apps, and real-time advisory services is key to connecting smallholders to markets and improving productivity in the next 5-7 years.
- State-level policy support remains fragmented and insufficient, with no dedicated institutional framework comparable to NDDDB for dairy. There is urgent need for exclusive support units, long-term funding, and rural agribusiness schools to address skill gaps and build local leadership.
- Genuine inclusivity in FPOs, across gender, caste, class, and activities, requires patience, clear collective purpose, leadership modelling, and community-driven trust, rather than top-down directives or tokenism.

“There’s money in agriculture, though not always on the farm.”

– Prof Sukhpal Singh, IIMA

“Inclusivity is not just about numbers, it’s about creating an environment where every voice is heard, especially the voices of women who have long been left out of the agricultural value chain.”

– Ravdeep Kaur, KPMG

“Social capital is a prerequisite for the success of FPOs. It is built over time through sustained grassroots engagement and community trust”

– P.V.S. Suryakumar, Ex-NABARD

“Corporates or buyers typically evaluate four key parameters when sourcing: volume must support their operations; quality must meet commodity-specific standards; supply and quality must be consistent; and pricing must be competitive—an aspect often overlooked in philanthropy-driven discussions.”

– Debaranjan Pujahari, Sattva Consulting

“Time and patience are the foundation of working with FPOs. Without these, no program will succeed, no matter how well-designed.”

– Ravdeep Kaur, KPMG

Panel Discussion -II: Gender and climate 6 intersection in agriculture



This session was moderated by Dr. Ranjitha Puskur, Principal Scientist (Gender and Livelihoods), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the panellists were as follows:

Pannelist-1: Anita Paul

Director, Grassroots Development Foundation

Pannelist-2: Neha

Senior Manager Gender (Asia Region), Solidaridad Asia Region

Pannelist-3: Ruchira Saini

Head Advocacy & Industry Affairs, India & South Asia Corteva Agriscience

Pannelist-4: Dr. Ramanjaneyulu

Executive Director - Centre for Sustainable Agriculture



Objectives of the session

- To understand how climate change disproportionately impacts women in agriculture due to their social and economic vulnerabilities.
- To share successful models where women have led or actively participated in climate-resilient agricultural practices and natural resource management.
- To discuss gaps in current policies and institutions that hinder effective integration of gender considerations in climate action.
- To emphasize the critical role of women as agents of change in promoting sustainable agriculture and building climate resilience.



Key Messages

- Women play a critical but often invisible role in agriculture, contributing most of the labour in South Asia, yet they lack recognition, land rights, and access to essential resources, leading to diminished motivation and declining participation.
- Climate change disproportionately impacts women in agriculture due to structural inequalities, but women are also key to building climate-resilient systems if given adequate support, resources, and decision-making power.
- Scalable, sustainable, and context-specific solutions, beyond diagnostics and pilot projects, are urgently needed, with an emphasis on what works, for whom, and why.
- Collective action through SHGs, FPOs, and cooperatives is a proven pathway to empower women, especially those without land, enabling them to access inputs, services, and markets more effectively.
- Institutional innovations and gender-intentional technologies, such as drought-resilient crops, bundled bio-input services, and market-linked value chains, are crucial to ensure women benefit economically and remain engaged in agriculture.
- Persistent barriers like lack of identity documentation, skewed policy implementation, weak gender budgeting, and underrepresentation in governance structures hinder progress and must be addressed through affirmative action and institutional reforms.

- Long-term transformation requires a paradigm shift in education, CSR policy, and gender-sensitive investments, recognizing women not just as contributors but as rightful leaders and beneficiaries of agricultural development.



Divergent views

- Recognition vs. invisibility: Women contribute most of the agricultural labour but remain largely unrecognized as farmers in formal systems, causing disenfranchisement.
- Labour vs. ownership: Many women work land they do not own and receive little compensation, limiting their incentive to adopt climate-smart practices.
- Diagnostic research vs. implementation: The current body of work is heavy on identifying problems but lacks scaled, sustainable solutions adapted to local contexts.
- Technology availability vs. accessibility: High-tech climate-smart innovations often exist but are not affordable or accessible to smallholder women farmers.
- Partnership rhetoric vs. reality: The term “partnership” is overused and often misapplied without genuine collaboration or aligned incentives among stakeholders.
- Funding for rural women vs. tech startups: Rural women-led enterprises face significant funding gaps compared to tech or urban startups, creating a skewed support ecosystem.
- Education focus vs. needs: Agricultural education remains centred on

industrial farming models, neglecting climate-smart, biodiversity-rich, and gender-sensitive curricula.

- Women as labour vs. beneficiaries: There is a prevailing perception of women as unpaid labour rather than as owners of income and decision-making in agriculture.
- Youth interest vs. agricultural disengagement: younger generations, especially women, are losing interest in farming due to lack of dignity, resources, and economic opportunity.
- Policy progress vs. stagnation: Despite decades of discourse, little progress has been made in gender budgeting and creating gender-responsive policies.
- Land ownership vs. tenant farming: Current policies inadequately address tenant farming and land leasing, disproportionately disadvantaging women.
- Data scarcity vs. policy needs: Lack of gender-disaggregated data on investments in women farmers hinders evidence-based policy formulation.
- Sustainability vs. economic viability: Climate-smart technologies must be both environmentally valid and economically viable (the “EV” concept) to ensure adoption and scaling.
- Top-down policies vs. grassroots realities: Government schemes often fail to reach or adequately support women at the grassroots level due to bureaucratic and institutional weaknesses.



Implications for Policy Practice

- Formal recognition of women as farmers: Policies should institutionalize women’s identity as farmers (e.g., joint/individual identity cards) to improve their access to government schemes and benefits.
- Address structural barriers: Land ownership, tenancy rights, and access to resources must be prioritized to enable women’s meaningful participation in agriculture.
- Scale actionable solutions: Shift from diagnostic studies to implementing and scaling context-specific, sustainable, and gender-responsive climate-smart agricultural interventions.
- Strengthen women’s collectives and institutions: Support Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) to provide holistic support and enhance women’s resilience.
- Expand women’s role in entire value chains: Support women-led enterprises beyond input supply, covering post-harvest processing, marketing, and income generation.
- Invest in rural women entrepreneurs: Establish dedicated funding mechanisms and startup programs focusing on rural, especially women-led, agricultural enterprises.
- Revise education and training: Reform agricultural education to focus on climate-smart, inclusive, and gender-sensitive practices and promote youth engagement in agriculture.

- Enhance partnerships: Foster genuine multi-sectoral partnerships involving government, private sector, research, and local institutions for sustainable gender integration.
- Integrate gender budgeting: Ensure affirmative action and adequate gender budgeting in agricultural policies to close persistent gender gaps.
- Promote data-driven policy making: Collect and use robust gender-disaggregated data to measure investment impacts and tailor gender-responsive agricultural programs.
- Reform certification and CSR policies: Include land users (not just owners) in organic certification and encourage corporate social responsibility investments targeting women farmers.
- Empower women beyond labour: Recognize women as rightful beneficiaries entitled to income, technology, information, and decision-making roles in agriculture.
- Address youth disengagement: Reintroduce agriculture in education systems and create incentives to retain youth, especially young women, in farming livelihoods.
- Promote climate resilience through women’s leadership: Build on women’s diverse roles across crops, livestock, forestry, and fisheries for climate-smart agriculture.

The day women decide to withdraw from agriculture; we are not going to be able to feed ourselves.

- Dr. Ranjitha Puskur, IRRI

“Shift the view of women from being unpaid resources to rightful beneficiaries and economic actors.”

- Neha, Solidaridad Asia Region

“Without concrete, actionable steps, we risk repeating the same conversations about women in agriculture a decade from now.”

-Anita Paul, Grassroots Development Foundation

“Sustainability must also make economic sense to achieve scale and long-term impact – this is what we call ‘EV’: Economically Viable and Environmentally Valid.”

“Agricultural technologies can only be deemed successful and sustainable when they result in tangible income and benefits for women farmers.”

-Ruchira Saini, Corteva Agriscience

“A dedicated rural enterprise startup program focused on women entrepreneurs is urgently needed, with at least 40% of the budget earmarked for women farmers to ensure equitable support.”

- Ramanjaneyulu, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture

7

Field Innovations & Case Studies



Sl. No.	Initiative (location, lead)	Focus area & model	Key innovations & outcomes	Main challenges	Gender focus highlights
1	Organic Cotton Value Chain (Maharashtra, Chetna Organic / Nandakumar)	Farmer-led, certified organic cotton supply chain	>10,000 farmers; direct link to global brands; premium prices	Certification excludes women without land; capital shortage	Women excluded from certification due to land titles
2	Agri-Finance & Solar Processing (Gujarat, FWVB / Himanshu Vaghela)	Blended finance model combining loans & grants	Solar dryers, fruit pulping units; value chain control	Collateral issues; sustaining value chain control	Interest subsidies & capacity building for women-led FPOs
3	FPO Governance Reform (UP & WB, Grameen Foundation / Shatarupa)	Data-driven decisions; SHG integration in FPOs	>50% FPOs with women on Boards; climate-smart tech adoption	Scaling tech & data systems	Women-led FPOs outperform; strong women representation
4	Millet FPO Model (Andhra Pradesh, SABALA / Saraswati M)	Women-led millet FPO with seed production & processing	Millet seed production; grassroots processing unit	Bank distrust; lack of collateral; non-female friendly machinery	Women-led governance & enterprise despite systemic barriers
5	Seed FPO with Digital & Climate Tools (Odisha, Dvara e-Registry / Pankaj Ghose)	Women-led FPO using climate finance & digital advisory platform	1000+ women; 200MT seed procured; finance without land	Land ownership issues; financial access	Women as business correspondents; digital inclusion

Sl. No.	Initiative (location, lead)	Focus area & model	Key innovations & outcomes	Main challenges	Gender focus highlights
6	FPO Board via Village Institutions (Karnataka, FES / Ranjit Mohanty)	Village institution-based board selection & oversight	Broader community representation; accountability to villages	Ensuring board performance & transparency	Inclusive governance beyond shareholders
7	Women Dairy Coops (AP & Telangana, Mulukanoor & Shreeja MMPCL)	Women-only dairy cooperatives	₹135 cr turnover; strong women leadership	Replication to other sectors & value chains	Exemplary women leadership & empowerment
8	Market Access via Trust-Based Finance (Madhya Pradesh, Ramrahim PPC / Animesh Mondal)	Trust-based finance & community engagement for FPO growth	₹2.5 cr credit limit; ITC linkages; self-sustaining	Collateral shortage; lack of institutional finance	Women included, overcoming socio-cultural barriers
9	ICARE Framework for Gender Inclusion (Odisha, Trickle Up / Purna Roychowdhury)	Holistic gender inclusion framework for FPOs	Improved women participation & decision-making	Initial low participation; need continuous engagement	Framework focuses on intentional inclusion
10	Women-led Tech Adoption in Potato FPO (Maharashtra, SV Agri / Ritesh Pandey)	Women-led FPO adoption of high-yield seed tech	25% yield increase; expanded farmer participation	Gender roles persist at home despite income gains	Economic empowerment via tech; gender roles remain
11	Women-led Silage Production (Gujarat, Corteva Agriscience / Ruchira Saini)	Climate-resilient fodder & women agri-preneurs	2,000 women trained; fodder security; new markets	Post-harvest losses; need institutional support	Income & identity boost for women via new agri enterprise



Key synthesis

- **Common challenges:** Access to finance (collateral, trust), institutional support, and gender-specific barriers like land ownership and certification criteria.
- **Innovative approaches:** Farmer-led models, blended finance, integration of SHGs in FPOs, data-driven governance, community/village-based oversight, and advanced climate-smart technologies.
- **Gender strategies:** Intentional inclusion frameworks, women-led governance, business correspondent roles, capacity building, and subsidies to empower women.
- **Outcomes:** Enhanced incomes, improved market access, institutional sustainability, scalable models, and stronger women representation.

Delhi Declaration:

8 Key Recommendations



Pillar	Focus Area	Key Stakeholders	Top 1-2 actions
1. Policy & Legal Reform	Land rights, inclusive farmer definitions, input regulation	Govt, CSOs, Donors	Redefine “farmer” to include women & tenants; pass long-pending seed and pesticide legislation
2. Strengthening FPOs	Fragmented, under-capitalized, male-dominated institutions	Govt, Incubators, Pvt. Sector	Create FPO Development Board; provide working capital + subsidized compliance support
3. Gender-Inclusive Agriculture	Women lack IDs, land access, and representation	Govt, CSOs, Donors	Ensure 40% of agri-program funds benefit women; institutionalize women’s IDs and leadership roles
4. Climate-Resilient Practices	Climate tools/ services are gender-blind or inaccessible	Govt, Pvt. Sector, KVKs	Scale localized crop advisories + water/soil conservation; invest in women-led CSA demonstrations
5. Market Access & Finance	Tenants and women face credit gaps, market exclusion	Banks, Pvt. Sector, SHGs	Recognize tenancy rights; co-invest in women-led rural startups and value chains
6. Tech, Data & Youth Engagement	Agri-tech and curricula ignore gender and climate resilience	Govt, Edu bodies, Donors	Scale AI-powered localized tech; reform agri-education with inclusive, climate-smart content



Policy & Legal Reforms

- Enactment of long-pending laws on seeds, pesticides, nutrient management, and bio-stimulants is essential to eliminate spurious inputs and ensure quality standards. Policies must redefine the term “farmer” to include women, tenants, and sharecroppers, basing entitlements on land use rather than ownership. Land ownership needs to be decoupled from land use rights to empower marginalized and women farmers.
- Development of state and national-level FPO policies with operational guidelines, compliance standards, and convergence mechanisms is crucial. Strengthening of input regulations must align with agro-climatic conditions, soil health, and sustainability goals. Ensuring access to diverse, high-quality inputs, promoting appropriate technologies for women, and redesigning incentive structures to encourage adoption are equally important.
- Compliance with enhanced input standards, investment in safe, traceable supply chains, and support for women-centric technologies and FPOs are key contributions from market actors.
- Investments in policy research on land use rights, capacity-building of women-led FPOs, and support for multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms are critical for inclusive agriculture.



Strengthening Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)

- Priority must shift from expansion to quality, governance, and long-term sustainability. Addressing critical gaps in working capital, equity mobilization, advisory services, and regulatory compliance is essential. Mechanisms like Equity Matching Grants and Credit Guarantees need reinstatement for earlier FPOs.
- Establishment of a central “FPO Development Board” and district-level agri-business schools can drive incubation and capacity-building. Gender-inclusive budgeting and leadership roles should be embedded, especially in migration-prone areas.
- ROI-driven engagement, development of value chains, investment in quality standards, and support for infrastructure and compliance will enhance private sector involvement.
- Support for incubation ecosystems, leadership development, and gender-inclusive pilots will help build sustainable and market-linked FPOs.



Climate-Resilient Practices

- Integration of climate-resilient cropping systems, agroforestry, seed and water banks, and wind barriers into agricultural programs must be prioritized. Adaptive planning and crop advisories based on climate data will aid in resilience.

- Public investments need to focus on decentralized irrigation, post-harvest infrastructure, and market access. Conservation of soil and water, organic matter enrichment, and cropping pattern shifts aligned with water availability are foundational.
- Development and scaling of EV-compliant, climate-smart technologies, support for market linkages, and collaboration for adaptive solutions are critical roles for the private sector.
- Funding for climate-smart value chains, infrastructure, and institutional strengthening of KVKs and farmer platforms will enhance resilience efforts.



Gender-Inclusive Agriculture

- Redefining “farmer” to include women, tenants, and sharecroppers, along with institutional recognition via joint or individual IDs, is essential. At least 40% of program budgets should benefit women, with gender support built into design.
- Women’s involvement must be promoted in para-agronomy, extension, FPO governance, and climate negotiations. Certification systems should recognize land-use-based claims, not just ownership. Gender-equitable models should be embedded in carbon markets and regenerative practices.
- Co-development of women-centric technologies, integration of gender into certification, and partnerships with women-led enterprises will enable inclusive market growth.

- Investments in EV-compliant technologies, carbon market reform, and leadership platforms will foster women’s participation across the agricultural value chain.



Finance & Market Access

- Recognition of tenancy rights will help improve access to credit and schemes. Market reforms are necessary to ensure transparent pricing, open access, and buyer-seller information symmetry.
- Integration of SHGs, local institutions, and FPOs will improve governance. Agribusiness schools and tailored financial instruments can stimulate rural entrepreneurship. End-to-end support, particularly for women and smallholders, must include post-harvest processing and direct market access.
- Strategic co-investment in startups, development of equitable value chains, and support for financial literacy and compliance are vital roles for private entities.
- Targeted financial instruments, innovation hubs, and scalable models linking women and smallholders to value chains can address funding gaps and foster inclusive growth.



Technology & Data

- Scale-up of AI-powered, hyper-local advisories through accessible platforms is essential. Localization and simplification of tools for smallholders will boost adoption.

- Agriculture and climate literacy must be mainstreamed in school curricula and rural training institutions. Rural agri-business schools should embed inclusive and climate-smart content.
- Collection and use of gender-disaggregated, smallholder-specific data is essential for designing responsive and inclusive policies. Institutional partnerships and participatory consultations will bridge the gap between policy and practice.
- Co-development of mobile tools, rural tech incubation, and market-oriented, climate-smart innovations can expand reach and relevance.
- Investments in digital infrastructure, scalable tech platforms, and rural innovation that reflects lived realities—especially of women and marginal farmers—are vital.

9 Annexures



Annexure-I Participants & Stakeholders

A total of 83 participants attended the national consultation, comprising 39 women (47%) and 44 men (53%), reflecting an encouraging stride toward gender-inclusive dialogue. The consultation drew a wide and diverse range of participants from sectors that are directly or indirectly linked to the core themes of the event, gender equality, sustainable agriculture, and climate resilience.

Representatives came from various institutional backgrounds, including 5 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), 23 NGOs, and 2 cooperatives, underscoring the grassroots-level participation essential to discussions on

rural development. The consultation was further enriched by contributions from community-based organizations (CBOs), international NGOs (INGOs), National NGOs, donor agencies, consulting firms, business organizations, and private companies involved in agriculture and development.

High-level participation included: CGIAR institutions such as ICARDA, IRRI, and IFPRI; ICAR representation through MANAGE; Government representation via National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM); UN agencies, with participation from FAO India; Diplomatic engagement from the Royal Netherlands Embassy; Academic institutions, including IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Bangalore & Edu Excelsior; Research institutions like CSE, CEEW, CRISP, WRI and BISA.

Prominent 9 consulting agencies such as KPMG, SATTVA, Microsave, Intellicap, DVARA, CMS etc brought strategic insights, while 3 financial institutions including SAMUNNATI, SiCAN and NABARD highlighted critical enablers for inclusive growth. Donor agencies like the Ford Foundation, GIZ, Solidaridad, Rabobank foundation, agroecological fund and the Reliance Foundation provided perspectives on funding and scaling community-led initiatives.

From the private and agri-business sectors, key players such as Corteva Agriscience, C Garg & Associates, SV Agro, Prabhat Food & Future participated actively. Influential think tanks added policy depth and innovation foresight to the discussions.

Sl. No.	Name	Organization
1	Pravesh Sharma	Ex-IAS, Sammunati
2	Reshma Anand	Ford Foundation
3	Takayuki Hagiwara	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
4	Michiel Van Erkel	Netherlands Embassy
5	Girija Srinivasan	Board Member, FWWB
6	PVS Suryakumar	Ex -NABARD
7	Yogesh Dwivedi	Madhyabharat
8	Shukpal Singh	Centre For Management in Agriculture (IIMA)
9	Debaranjan Pujahari	Sattva Consulting
10	Ravdeep Kaur	KPMG India
11	Dr. Ranjitha Puskur	IRRI - International Rice Research Institute
12	Anita Paul	Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation
13	Dr Ramanjaneyulu Gv	Centre For Sustainable Agriculture, India
14	Neha	Solidarad Network Asia Ltd.
15	Ruchira Saini	Corteva Agriscience
16	Shiv Kumar	CMS
17	Ajay Singh	Central Project Management Unit (CPMU) DAY-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development
18	Alfiya	Digital Empowerment Foundation
19	Animesh Mondal	Ramrahim Pragati Producer Co. Ltd.
20	Arnelit Philip Mani	Accion
21	Balakrishnan S	Samunnati
22	Chhavi Mahaur	Sustainable Food Systems, Centre for Science and Environment
23	Cs Reddy	APMAS
24	Dheeraj Mutreja	Rabobank Foundation

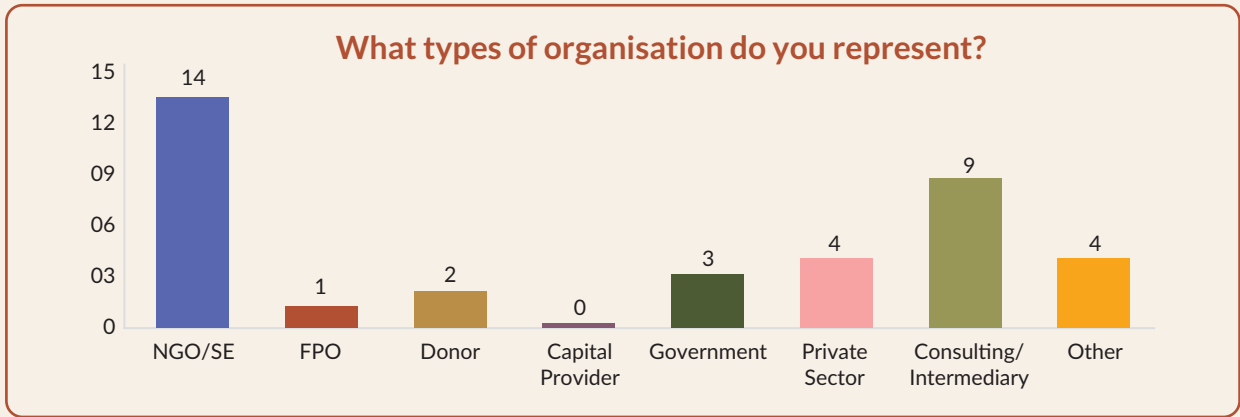
Sl. No.	Name	Organization
25	Divya Gaur	Council On Energy, Environment and Water.
26	Dr. Jaison	Caritas India
27	Dr. Muzna Fatima Alvi	IFPRI - International Food Policy Research Institute
28	Dr. Shiv Kumar Agarwal	ICARDA
29	Jiji Mammen	Dhan Foundation
30	Maitri Singh	Digital Empowerment Foundation
31	Mallika Arya	Kapla Impact (Ex-Head of Strategy Omidyar Network India)
32	Manoj Kumar	Sattva - Agri Practice
33	Nilanjan	GIZ
34	Nupur Kulkarni	World Resources Institute
35	Prabhat Labh	Prarabdh Food and Future Private Limited
36	Purna Roychowdhury	Trickle Up
37	R. Nandakumar	Chetana Organics
38	Radha Thakur	Reliance Foundation
39	Rakesh Supkar	Practical Action
40	Ranjit Mohanty	Foundation For Ecological Security
41	Rashi Singh	Council On Energy, Environment and Water.
42	Ravindra Goyal	Central Project Management Unit (CPMU) DAY-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development
43	Riya Gupta	BISA - Borlaug Institute for South Asia
44	Sanjana Mohanty	Sewa Bharat
45	Saraswati M.	Sabala
46	Seema Bhaskaran	Institute For Financial Management and Research (IFMR)
47	Shaji John	Best Care - Smart FPO Project
48	Shatarupa Kashyap	Grameen Foundation
49	Shruti Deora	Intellectap
50	Subhash Misra	Vrutti
51	Subrat Das	Ford Foundation
52	Suryamani Roul	Feed (Ex-Agrisystems, Ex-Technoserve, Ex-Access, Ex-Care)
53	Trilochan Sastry	Indian Institute of Management Bangalore.
54	Urvi Mishra	National Association for Farmer Producer Organisations.
55	Varun Kashyap	Humble Bee
56	Venkat Raman	Practical Action

Sl. No.	Name	Organization
57	Yogesh	Buzz Women
58	Nivedita Ravindranath	Agroecology Fund
59	Vibhusha Gupta	Agroecology Fund
60	Ashwini Kumar	Sican
61	Dr. Veenita Kumari	Manage
62	Ritesh Pandey	Sv Agri- Siddhivinayak Agri Processing Private Limited
63	Ramalingam Kasinathan	NABARD
64	Amit Naphade	Krushi Vikas Ngo
65	Guru Koppa	Microsave Consulting
66	Dr Anamika Priyadarshini	Passing Gifts- A Subsidiary of Heifer International
67	Nilanjan Ghose	GIZ
68	Pankaj Gaur	Dvara E-Registry Private Limited
69	Smita Kaul	ICARDA
70	Vatsalya Srivastava	Aceworx
71	Dr. Alok Pandey	GIZ
72	Pranjal Rawat	Access Development Services
73	Manov Maity	Ambuja Foundation
74	Ankita Borah	FAO
75	Nimisha Mittal	Centre For Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP)
76	Thakur Aritya Singh	KYGPS
77	Divyanshu Pandey	Access Development Services
78	Sandeep Bhattacharya	GIZ
79	Tejinder Sandhu	Catalyst
80	Priyamvada Tiwari	Catalyst Group
81	Upasana Dhankhar	Edu Excelsior
82	Chunky Garg	C Garg and Associates
83	Priyanuja Dutta	Sewa Bharat

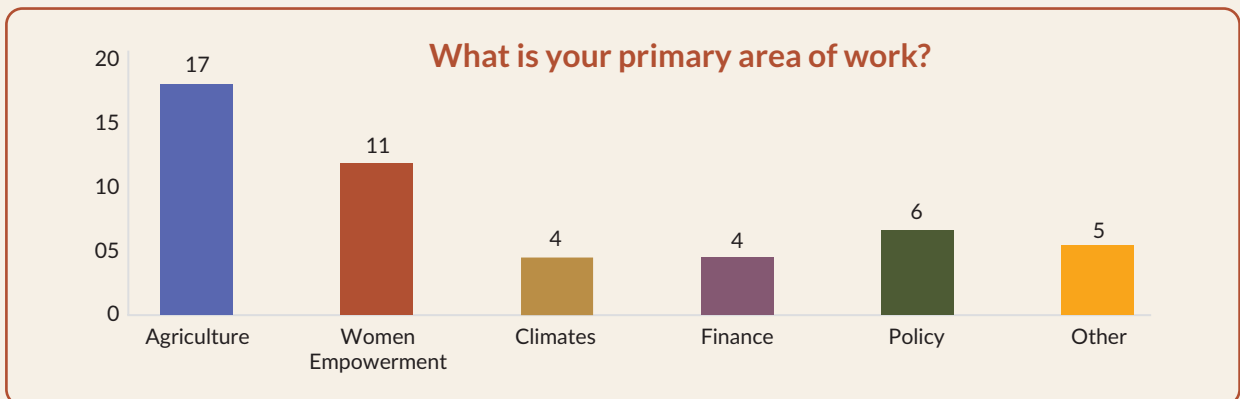
Annexure-II

Mentimeter results summary

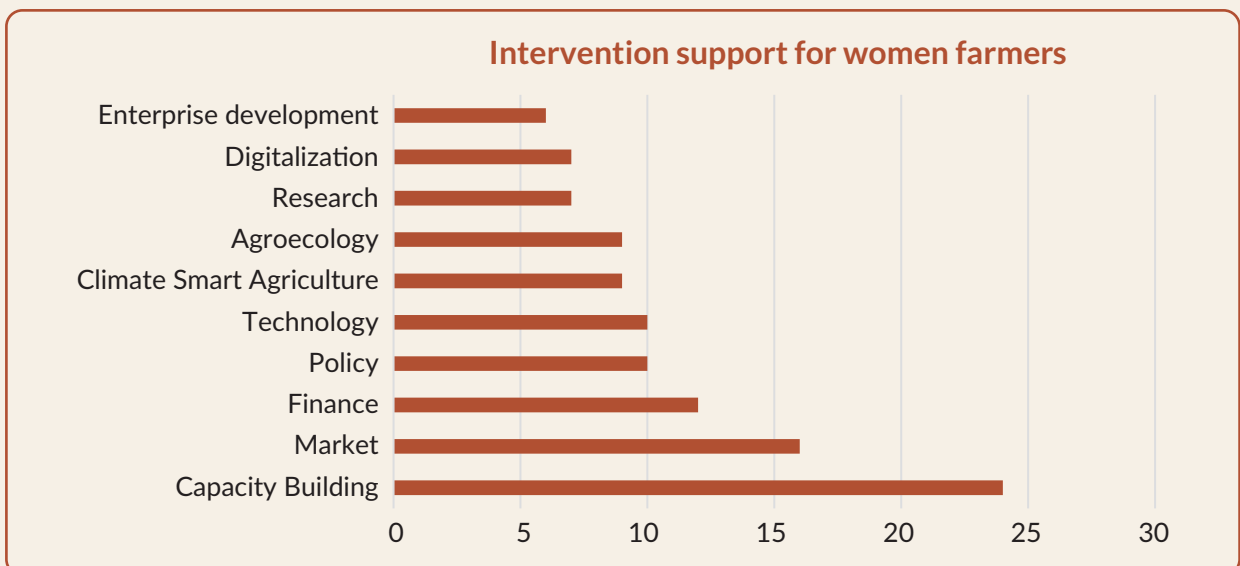
Question-1:



Question-2:



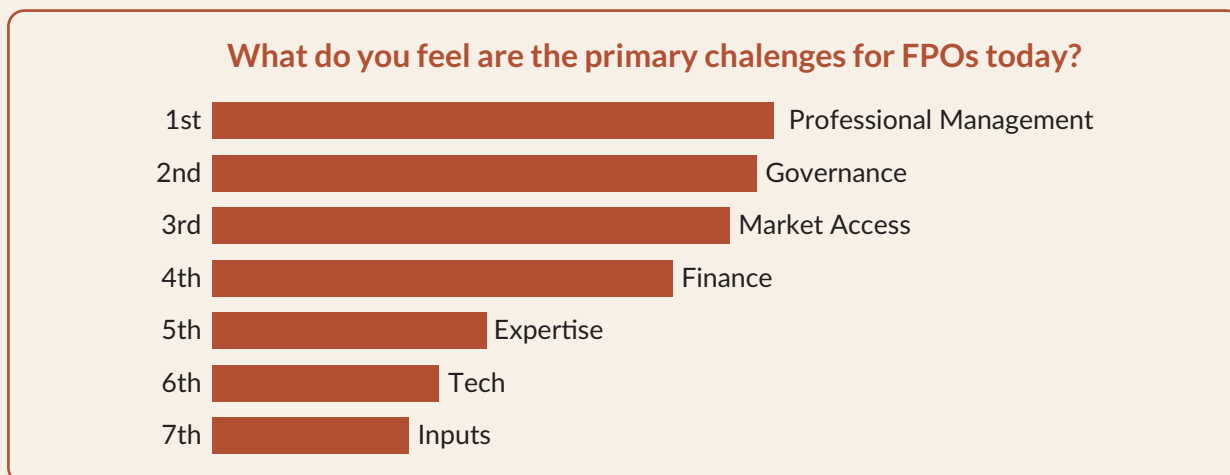
Question-3: What kind of intervention support do you provide around women farmers?



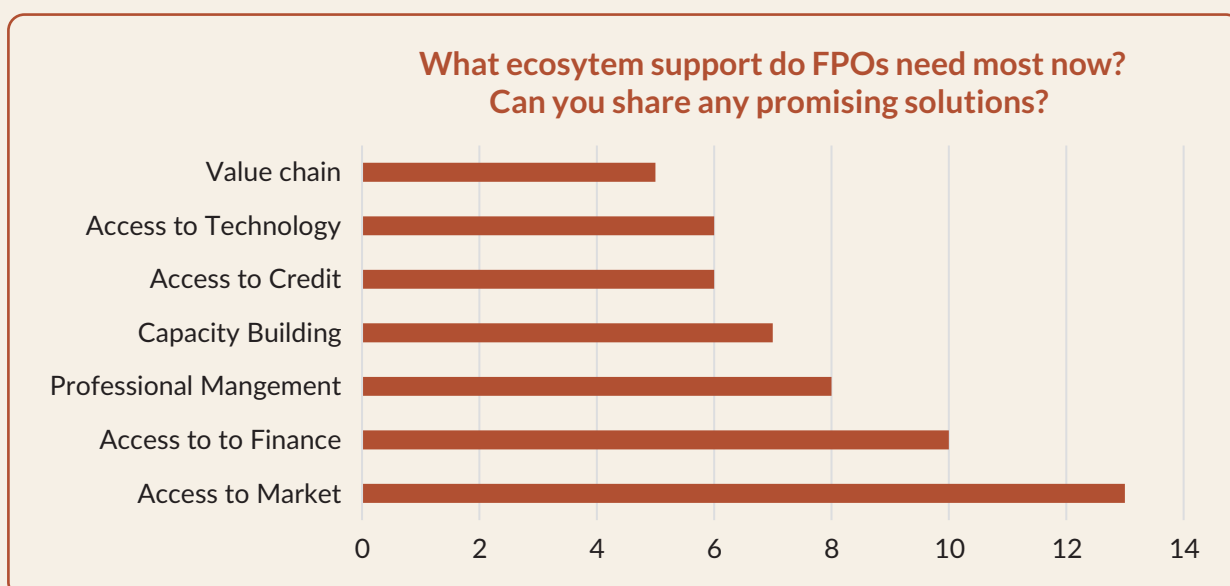
Question-4:



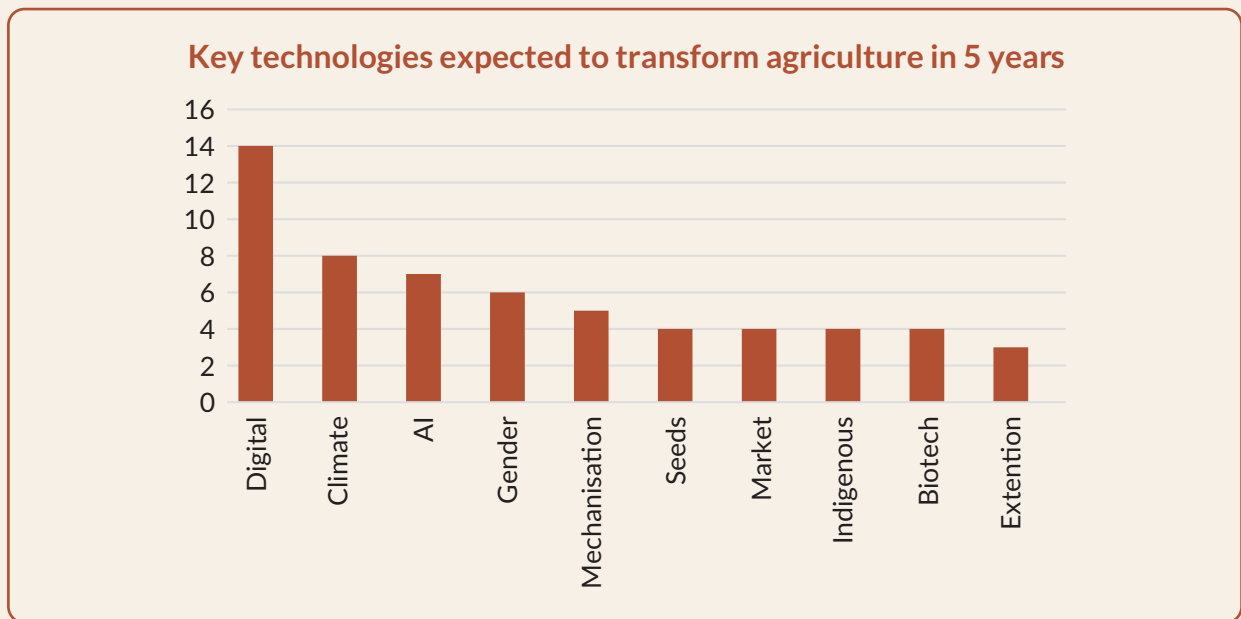
Question-5:



Question-6:



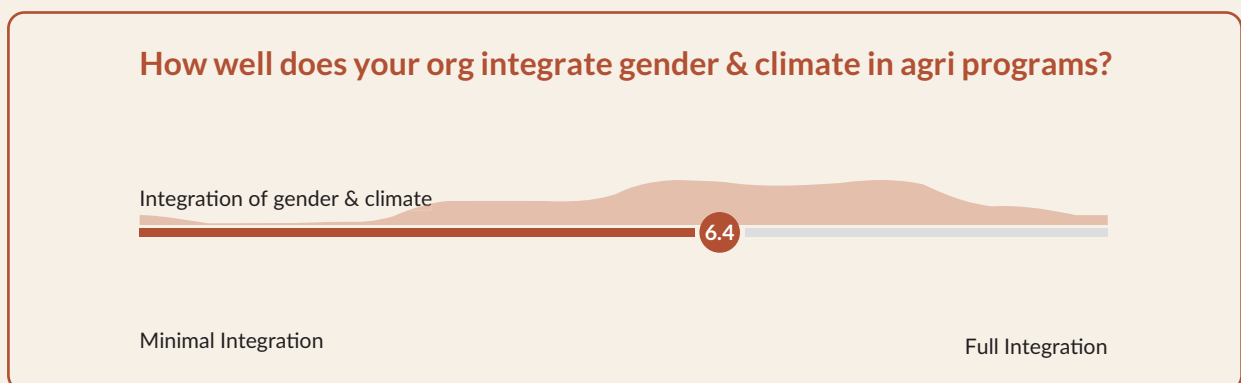
Question-7: What technology will transfer agriculture in 5 years?



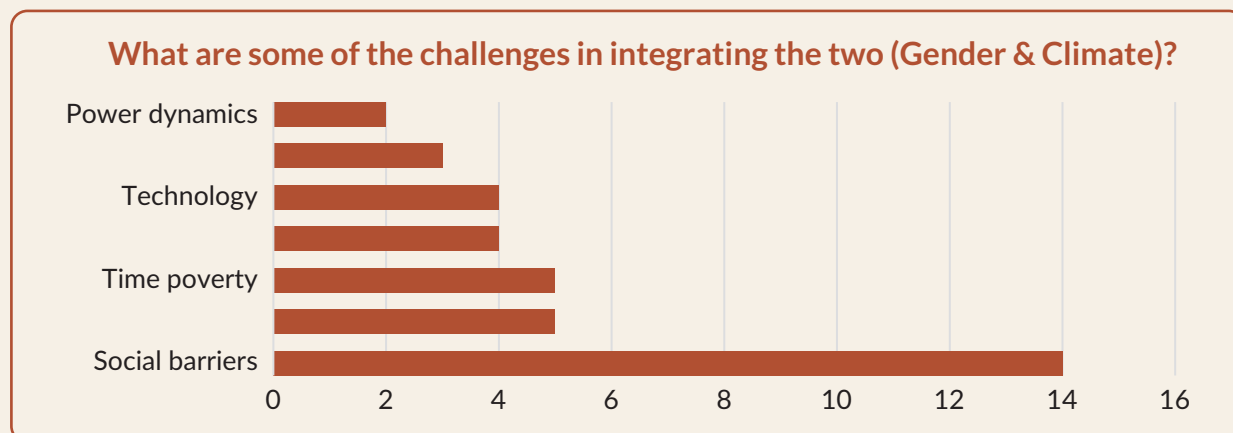
Question-8:



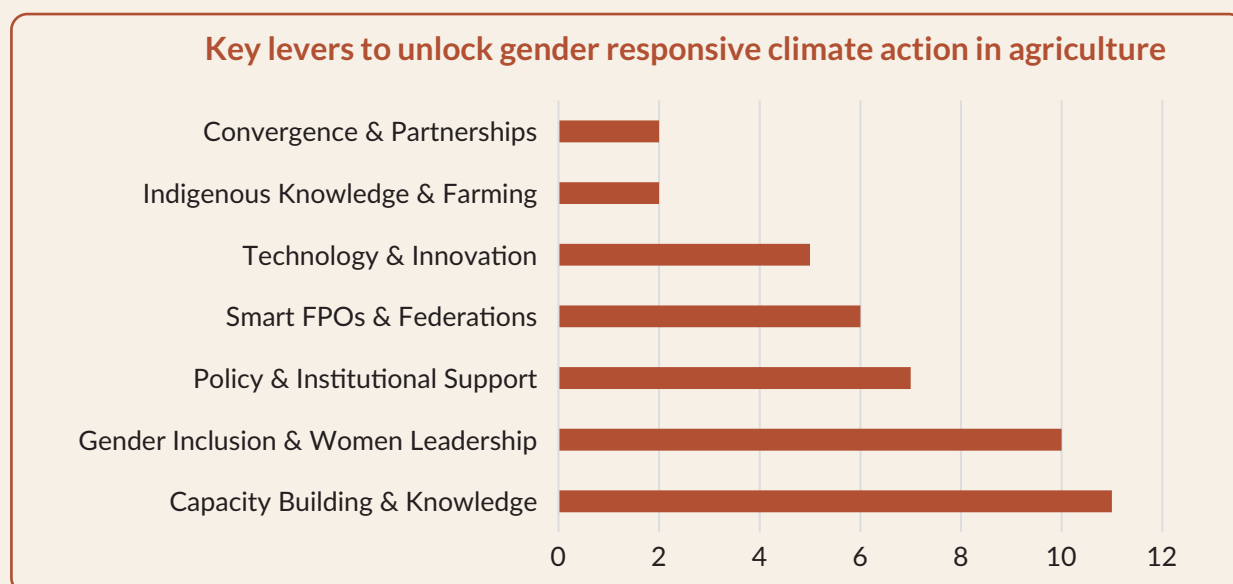
Question-9:



Question-10:



Question-11: What one solution or lever could unlock impact in this area?



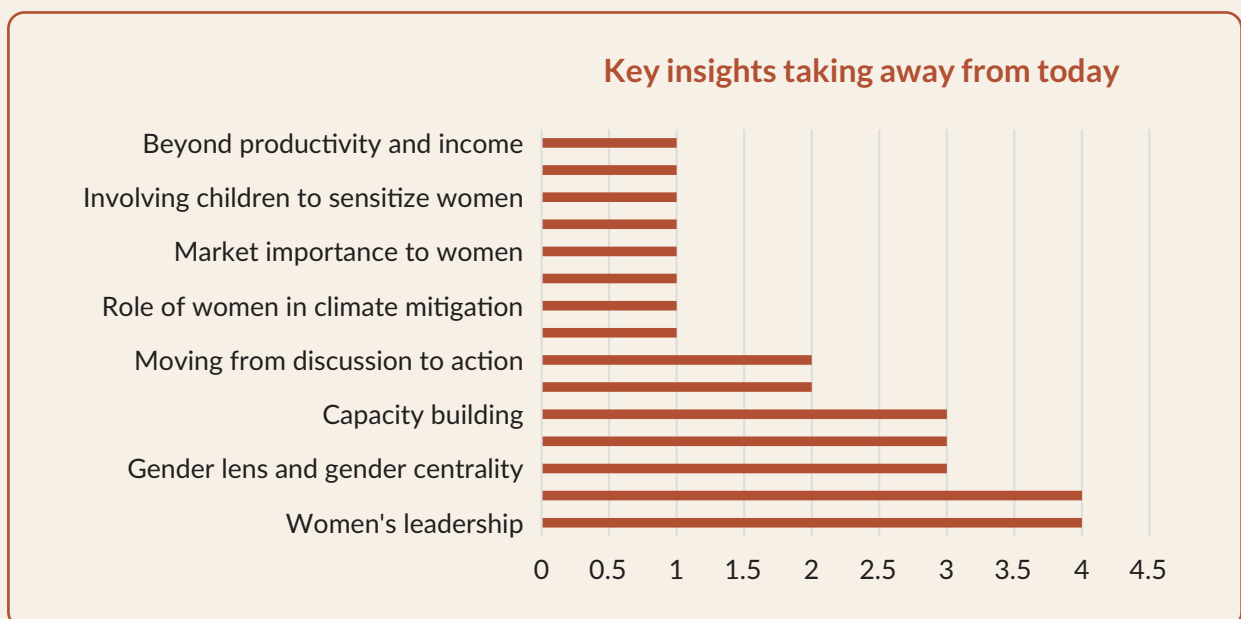
Question-12: What should policy makers, philanthropy, private sector, and civil society focus on to strengthen this initiative?

Theme	Key points	Frequency
Women’s participation & gender equity	Gender in leadership, procurement, budgeting, climate-smart agriculture	5
Strengthening FPOs & institutional support	Access to financing, tax exemptions, infrastructure, compliance simplification, institutional support	5
Systems thinking & integration	Aligning policy, finance, tech, markets for inclusive change	4
Civil society role	Capacity building, governance, critical self-reflection, collaboration, facilitation	4
Private sector engagement	Partner with women’s groups, value chain support, targeted CSR/procurement	3
Philanthropic support for inclusive models	Long-term flexible funding, support experimentation, failure-based learning	3

Question-13: What kind of intervention or support do you provide around women farmers?



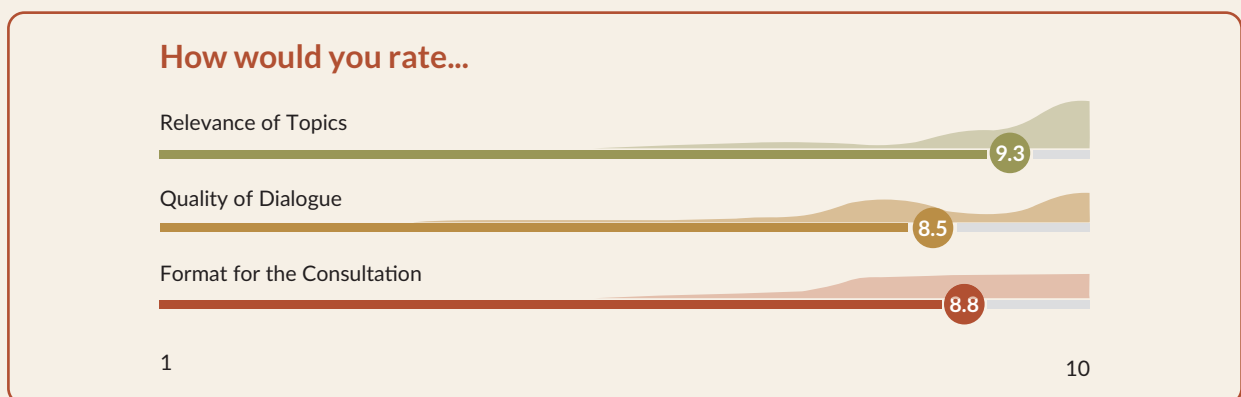
Question-14: Please share one key insight you are taking away from today.



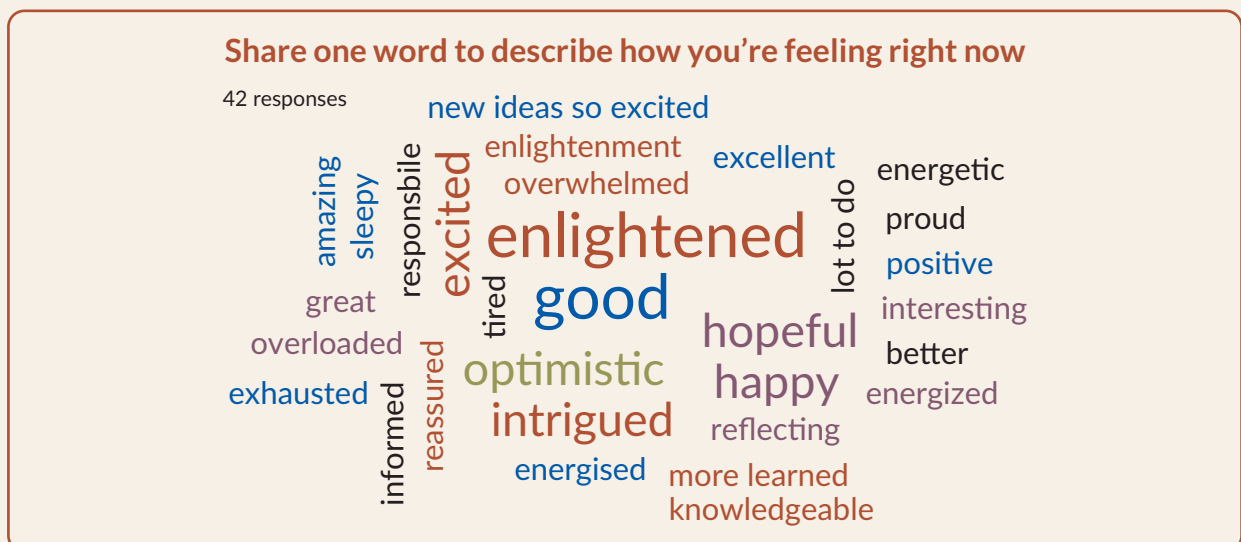
Question-15: Please share one commitment you are taking back to your organisation.



Question-16: How would you rate relevance of topics, quality of dialogue and format of the consultation?



Question-17: Just share one word to describe how you are feeling?



Annexure-III Photographs





Friends of Women's World Banking, India
101, Sakar-1, Opp. Gandhigram Railway Station
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009. Gujarat, India
Call: +91-79-26580119 | mobile +91 9686625411
Website: <https://fwwbindia.org/>

