

**FAO WEBINAR**  
**“Breaking Barriers: Gender Equality, Water and Financial Inclusion in Agrifood  
Systems in Asia and the Pacific”**  
**(International Rural Women's Day event)**

**Date and Time:** Tuesday, 17 October 2023, 11.00 - 12.30hrs (Bangkok time)

**Organizer:** The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

**Venue:** Hybrid event (Zoom) – the event will be held in English

**Background**

The FAO report “The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems”, published in 2023, underscores the urgent need to empower women as a pivotal step towards sustainable development, calling for immediate action against gender inequalities. Recognizing the vital role of rural women in food and agriculture, the proposed event aligns with the International Rural Women's Day (IRWD) theme, "Financing for Rural Women's Empowerment", as well as with the 2023 World Food Day theme, “Water is life, water is food. Leave no one behind”. It emphasizes the nexus between gender equality, water and financial inclusion, aiming to foster change and collaboration for equitable and sustainable agrifood systems.

In the Asia and the Pacific region, women play vital roles across food systems, encompassing agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock. However, their contributions are often overlooked. The FAO report exposes persistent gender-based inequalities within these systems across various dimensions, including water and financial inclusion.

Evidence shows that rural women bear a heavier unpaid workload, including water collection duties. Globally, 80% of those lacking clean drinking water live in rural areas, with women and girls primarily responsible for collecting water, often over long distances. This disproportionately affects young girls, hindering their education and well-being. Furthermore, the report links gender-based violence to water insecurity, noting that violence against women is often rooted in gender norms, which also assign water-related household tasks exclusively to women.

Moreover, multiple barriers impede women's access to financial products and services, including limited resources and discriminatory policies. As highlighted in the report, financial inclusion is a potent tool for empowering rural women and communities. Access to financial services like savings, credit, insurance, and digital payments can substantially enhance economic opportunities, income, asset accumulation, and overall resilience, particularly in the face of water scarcity and climate change. Furthermore, digitization can provide opportunities for enhancing financial inclusion, providing women with financial independence and privacy.

This event seeks to contribute to the implementation of the Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 for Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan emphasizes the need for FAO and its Member Nations in the region to prioritize gender equality as a fundamental element in sustaining future food systems. The webinar serves as a platform for learning and reflection, addressing challenges and opportunities in the quest for gender equality. The event will showcase experiences from the Asia-Pacific region, based on insights gathered from FAO country offices and regional development partners. By doing so, it fosters collaborative efforts to establish equitable, efficient, inclusive, and sustainable agri-food systems, aligning with the regional strategy's goals.

**Tentative programme:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Details</b>
10:00	Moderator	5 mins	Brief introduction on the event, objectives, guest speakers and agenda
10:05	Opening Remarks	5 mins	Welcome remarks by <b>Robert Simpson</b> , Special Adviser to the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP)
10:10	Keynote on the theme	10 mins	Importance of advancing gender equality and rural women's empowerment for the region, particularly in relation to water and finance  <b>Miguel Rafael V. Musngi</b> , Assistant Director/Head of Poverty Eradication and Gender Division, Human Development Directorate, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department, ASEAN Secretariat
<i>Experience from the region on mainstreaming gender in the context of water, finance and agrifood systems</i>			
10:20	Speaker #1	10 mins	Evidence on the gender-water nexus in the region, focusing on agrifood systems  <b>Sara Duerto Valero</b> , Regional Advisor on Gender Statistics, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
10:30	Speaker #2	10 mins	Promoting gender equality through financial inclusion in the region  <b>Prasun Kumar Das</b> , Secretary General, Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA)
10:40	Speaker #3	10 mins	FAO field experience on promoting gender equality and rural women's empowerment- Transforming the Indus Basin with climate resilient agriculture and water management  <b>Emelda Berejena</b> , Technical Advisor, FAO Representation in Pakistan
10:50	Discussion and Q&A	25 mins	Q&As from participants
11:15	Closing Remarks	10 mins	Closing remarks