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## Reducing rural poverty and gender disparities in Togo's agricultural industry

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### Key messages

- **Over 70% of rural households are poor and more than 80% of the population does not have access to basic services.**
  - Investment in education, health, drinking water and irrigation infrastructure is essential.
  - Improving access to credit may help households increase their incomes and reduce poverty.
- **More investment is needed in agricultural infrastructure to allow farmers to meet international standards and export more produce.**
  - This will help to reduce the rate of poverty amongst farm workers.
- **Measures are needed to promote equity in endowment distribution and equalize opportunities for disadvantaged groups.**
  - Women have fewer land rights than men (24% and 31%, respectively).

### Contributing heavily but barely rewarded: agriculture in Togo

The agricultural sector has a predominant role in the Togolese economy. It contributes about 38% to the real GDP and employs 40.7% of the total workforce (FAO, 2012)<sup>1</sup>. Despite this, levels of poverty were higher among households headed by farmers in 2015 (INSEED, 2016)<sup>2</sup>. Poverty remains largely rural in Togo and farm households represent 95.8% of the rural population. It's clear that many farm workers are not benefitting from their own industry, despite the amount it provides to the national economy.

The National Agricultural Investment and Food Security Plan (PNIASA) was implemented in 2011 with the aim of increasing farmers' incomes and improving living conditions for rural people. Despite these efforts, Togolese agriculture still faces huge issues. A lack of infrastructure, poor equipment and misguided governance all contribute to the ongoing problems. There also remains a disparity between men and women in terms of how much they benefit from investments in agriculture, their productivity at work and their overall living standards.

A team of local PEP researchers sought to **assess the impact of agricultural investments on farming productivity and poverty reduction in rural areas**, with the aim of informing new policies to improve the situation and ensure that both genders feel these benefits.

<sup>1</sup> FAO. (2012). Cadre de programmation pays (CPP-TOGO), 2013–2017

<sup>2</sup> INSEED. (2016a). Profil de pauvreté 2015. Lomé-Togo: INSEED



### The analysis

The researchers gathered their information using the Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS) through which they surveyed over 4,500 households in four townships in rural areas of Togo. Alongside this, a rider questionnaire was issued to collect additional data.

The study analyzed the effects of agricultural investments on productivity of plots managed by women as compared with those managed by men. Furthermore, it also examined the gender wage gap in the agricultural sector.

## Key findings

The results of the analysis highlight the **extreme poverty faced by those living in rural areas of Togo**. In the rural townships surveyed:

- The proportion of households below the national rural poverty threshold was 78.43%
- Poverty incidence was higher among women than men.
- About 75.60% of farmers have an average monthly income lower than the Interprofessional Guaranteed Minimum Wage (SMIG).
  - Non-farmers' average annual income is also higher than that of farmers.

The research looked at the effects of investments in agriculture and found the following:

- Farmer's productivity increased due to public or community and private investment. Such investment helped to reduce the number of farmers below the poverty line in rural areas
- Public investments in health, education and telecommunication infrastructure improved the productivity of farmers.
- More than 90% of farmers do not practice new agricultural techniques and none of them have health or accident insurance.
- Only 28.88% of farmers have land rights,
- Only 3.08% and 3.75% of women and men respectively have access to credit.
- The majority of women and men have no access to insurance from natural disasters.

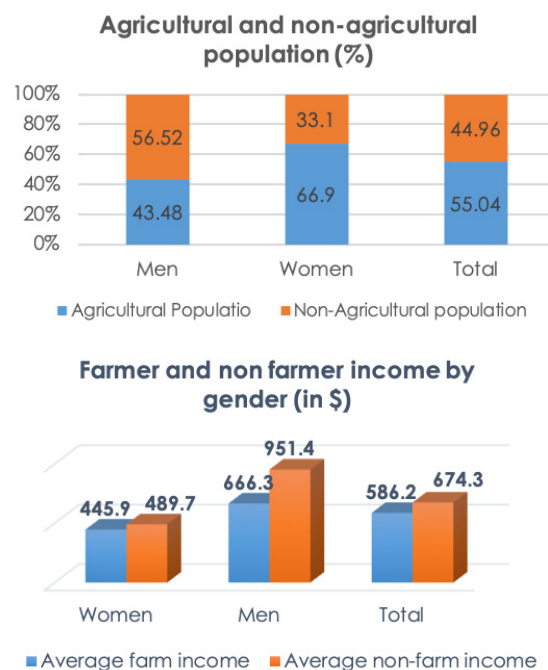
Additionally, the research highlighted the following gender disparities from these rural (and predominately agricultural) communities:

- 3.1% of women are unemployed compared to 1.7% of men.
- More female farmers have no education (41.85%) compared to male farmers (15.10%).
- The estimated income gap between male and female farmers is 43.9%
- The annual income for men is higher than women – for both farmers and non-farmers.
- 13.01% of female farmers have seen an increase in their income over the last two seasons compared to 16.92% of male farmers

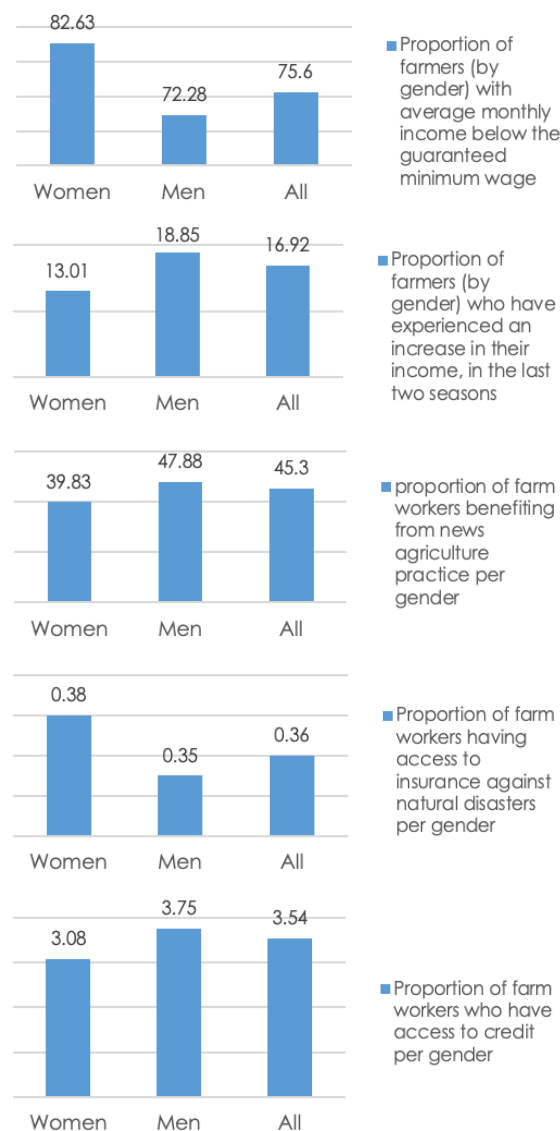
The study also reveals that amongst women aged 20-24, almost 3% were married before the age of 15. Furthermore only 23.34% of women have the right to make decisions in agreement with their spouses regarding their sexual and reproductive lives.



**Figure 1: Distribution of rural population and income by agricultural and non-agricultural activity**



**Figure 2: Agriculture investments indicators**



Source of basic data for both figures:  
CBMS Census in selected sites in Togo, 2018



## Conclusions and policy implications

The findings from this study highlight the need for policies that improve infrastructure in farming and increase public investment and encourage private investment in the industry. Additionally, **farmers need to have more access to credit** and there needs to be increased public investment in education, health and providing access to clean water for farmers. Policies also need to be in place to **promote equality and equalize opportunities for disadvantaged or excluded groups, such as women.**

Policies and programs that could contribute to these aims include:

- Strengthen rural households' access mechanisms to agricultural credit, commercial credit and other inputs to increase their income and reduce poverty.
- Invest in infrastructure and improve the technical capacity of farmers to meet international standards so they can export their produce and increase their income.
- Put in place institutional innovations in the field of agricultural insurance (e.g. insurance against drought risk or natural disasters) and encourage farmers to subscribe to them to reduce the risks for borrowers and lenders and unlock agricultural finance.
- Create favorable conditions and incentives in rural areas to provide rural people with better access to savings and credit facilities.
- Increase public investments and encourage private investment in education, health, drinking water and irrigation infrastructure.
- Educate and inform the agricultural industry about the contribution of women to food production and food security efforts, and facilitate the participation of women in further training in new agricultural technologies.
- Inform communities, especially parents, about the issues surrounding early marriage.



Photo: Jeff Attaway