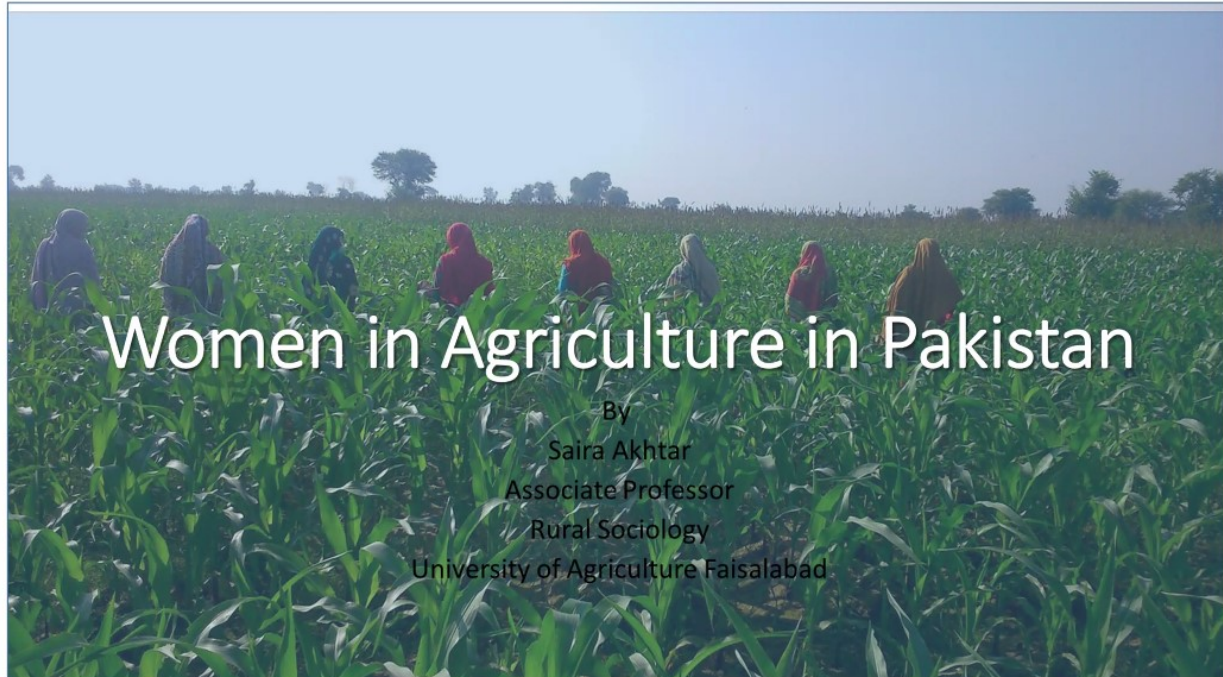


ICDD Talk: Women in Agriculture in Pakistan



17 November 2021 – The International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD) hosted a public talk, featuring Dr. Saira Akhtar, a rural sociologist with many years of experience in development work and research with international and national organizations. She is currently working as an Associate Professor at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan.

[The role of women in agriculture in Pakistan](#)

Pakistan is an agrarian country, and agriculture is the basic pillar of the country's economy. Dr. Akhtar emphasized that women play a very important role in this crucial sector, in terms of both labor force participation and the tasks they perform. It is estimated that 67 percent of Pakistani women work in this sector and women generate 66 percent of the GDP in agriculture.

Dr. Akhtar presented that women are involved in various activities related to subsistence farming and livestock. They are involved in many tasks, such as backyard poultry (e.g. egg selection, hatching arrangements), forest work (e.g. gathering fuel wood, medical plants) and fishery (e.g. fish salting and drying, fishing net making). In general, there are three types of work that women have to do: paid, unpaid, and care work.

Challenges faced by women in agriculture

Despite their important contribution, women suffer from a decent work deficit, emphasized Dr. Akhtar. They have longer working hours and discriminated wages, as wages differ based on gender. Women are deprived of owning land and productive resources. They also have limited participation in decision-making, and there are no legal protections or provisions for labor rights in the agricultural sector. They are less informed and not aware about their rights. Dr. Akhtar also explained that there is still a perception that “women are not farmers”, which excludes women from agricultural research and related activities. Due to social taboos and patriarchal dominance, their work evokes much resistance in the community.

Policy and sustainability

Dr. Akhtar shared that the government has been reluctant to recognize the role and contribution of women in the economy. Recently, however, Pakistan took an important step toward ending abuse and discrimination against women agricultural workers. In particular, the Sindh cabinet approved the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act 2019 and the Resolution to Punjab Government demanding equal wages for female agricultural workers.

Dr. Akhtar emphasized that gender-aware policies are crucial to realize the situation, role and contribution of women in society, which in turn can contribute to sustainability. At the same time, capacity building and skills development for women, assessment of cultural norms, and policy reform are needed to support women in economic, social and status upgrading, as well as general empowerment.

“There can be no Sustainability and food security without social justice, gender equality and addressing the legal, social, and policy barriers women face,” Dr. Akhtar concluded.

Read and discover more:

[Research on Women’s Empowerment for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods](#)

[Publication on Women in Agriculture by Dr. Saira Akhtar](#)