



Empowering Women in the Rural Labor Force with a focus on Agricultural Employment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)



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Introduction



- In MENA, agriculture is central to national economies and women play central roles in the production of goods
- Gender relationships are fundamental to understand work organization, resource management and decision-making
- Injustice: Women are the main players in food security lack control over resources and access to basic human rights
- Discrimination, inequity of opportunities and challenges
- Potential challenge: work towards gender equality and women's empowerment

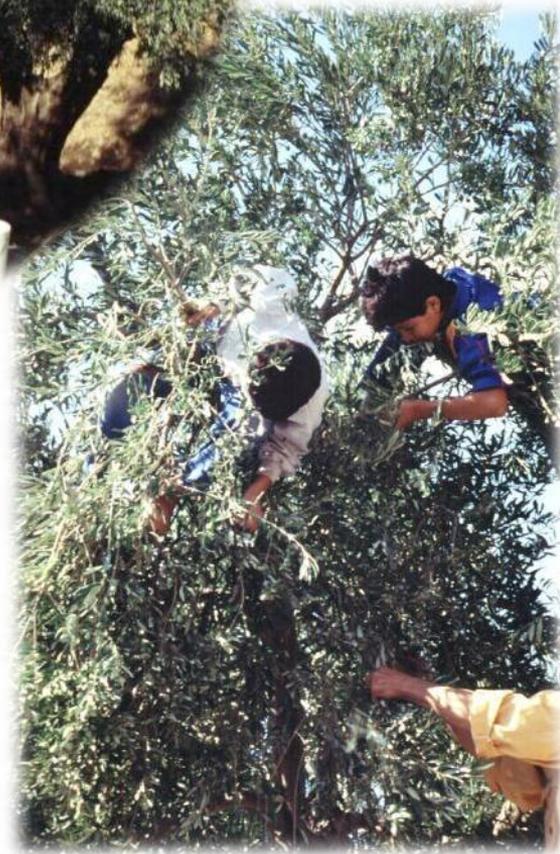
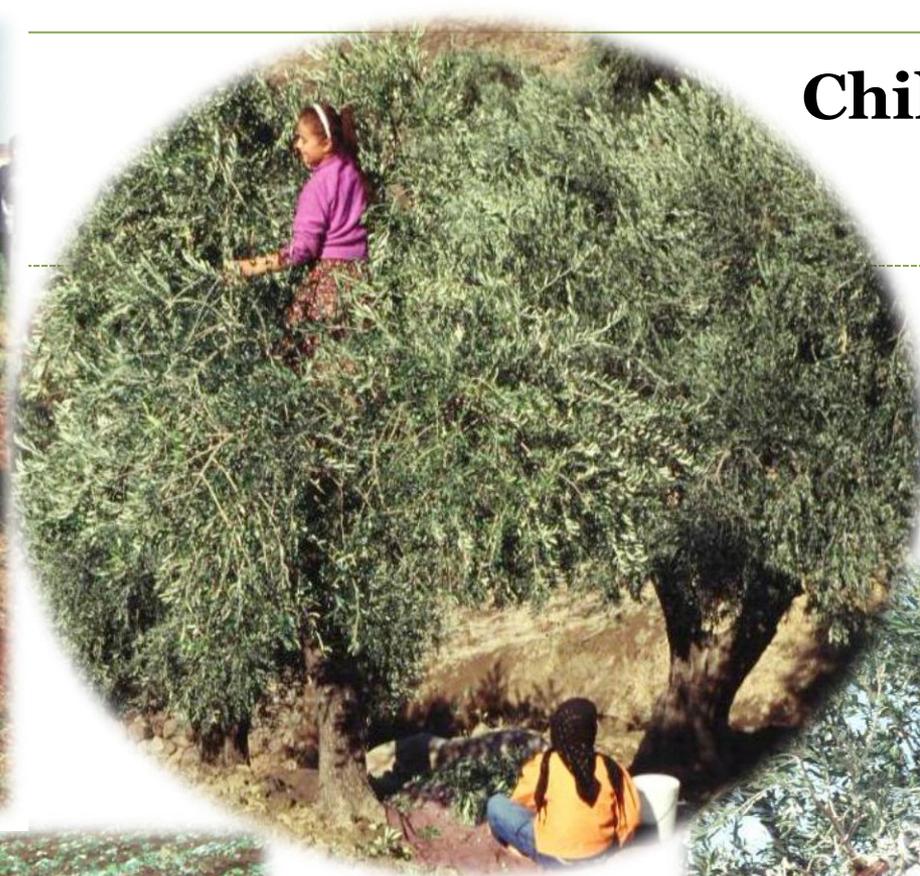
Left: Yemen



Right: Syria



Child labor



Main challenges



- **Heterogeneity among Arab and other MENA economies**
- **Social norms and traditional barriers**
 - Traditional roles of women as mothers, children care takers
 - Lack of access to resources (education, productive resources, etc.)
- **Demographic pressures /change**
- **Food crisis**
 - Market access / food security
- **Employment of youth**
- **Women concerns are addressed on isolation of the larger integrated national policy economic reforms**

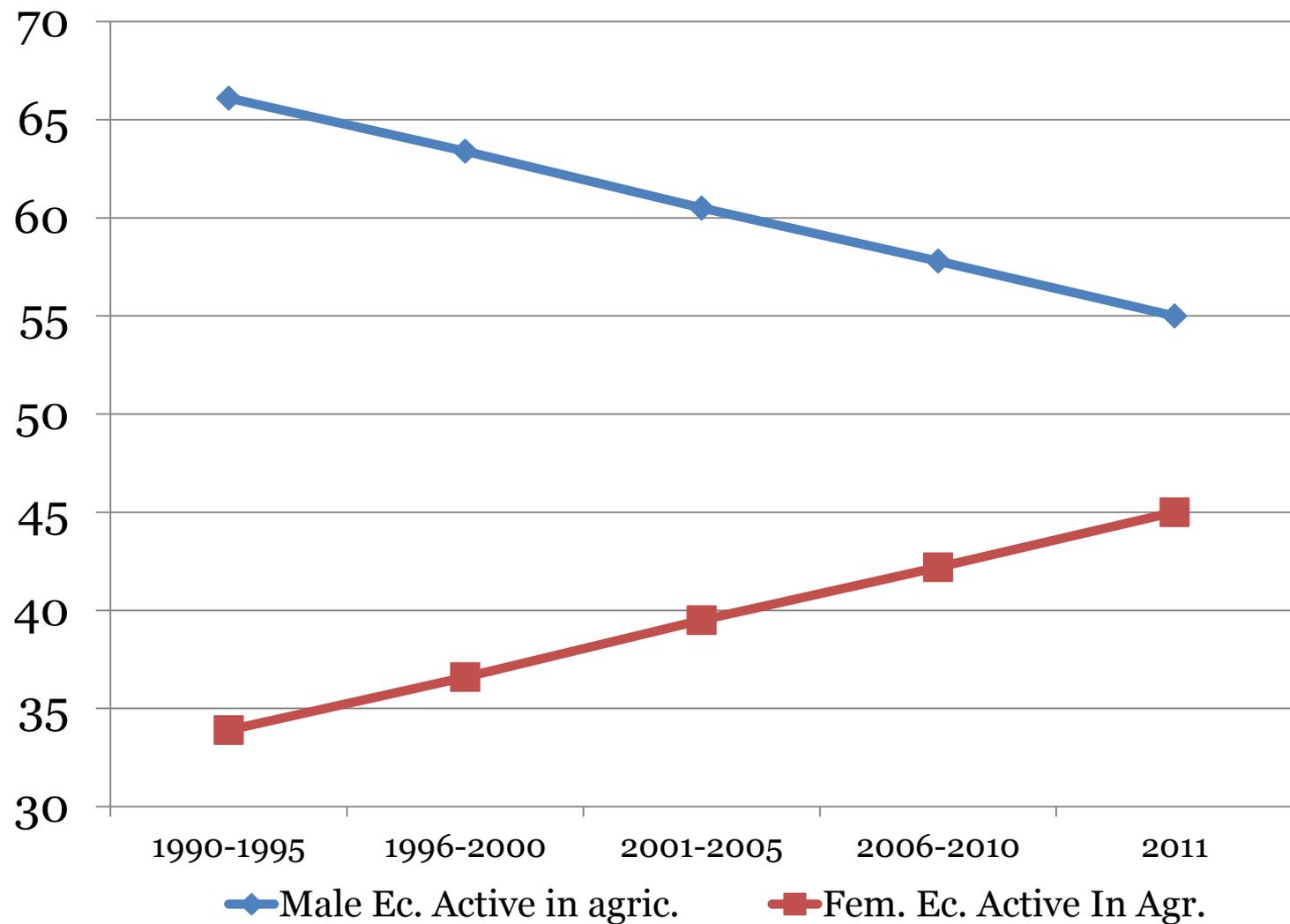


Women's Agricultural Activities



- **Women's economic activities in rural are almost all informal,**
- **Not fully captured and recognized by the States**
- **Ambiguous definitions -not adequately reflected in regulations**
- **Not properly represented in formal statistics, especially those that are seasonal, temporary or performed at home**
- **Result: ignored in many studies that use statistical data to analyze trends in national economies**
- **Surveys at the micro-level that combine qualitative as well as quantitative tools of investigations are the most useful in capturing these complex sets of activities and their characteristics**

Trends of agricultural labor by sex in the MENA region



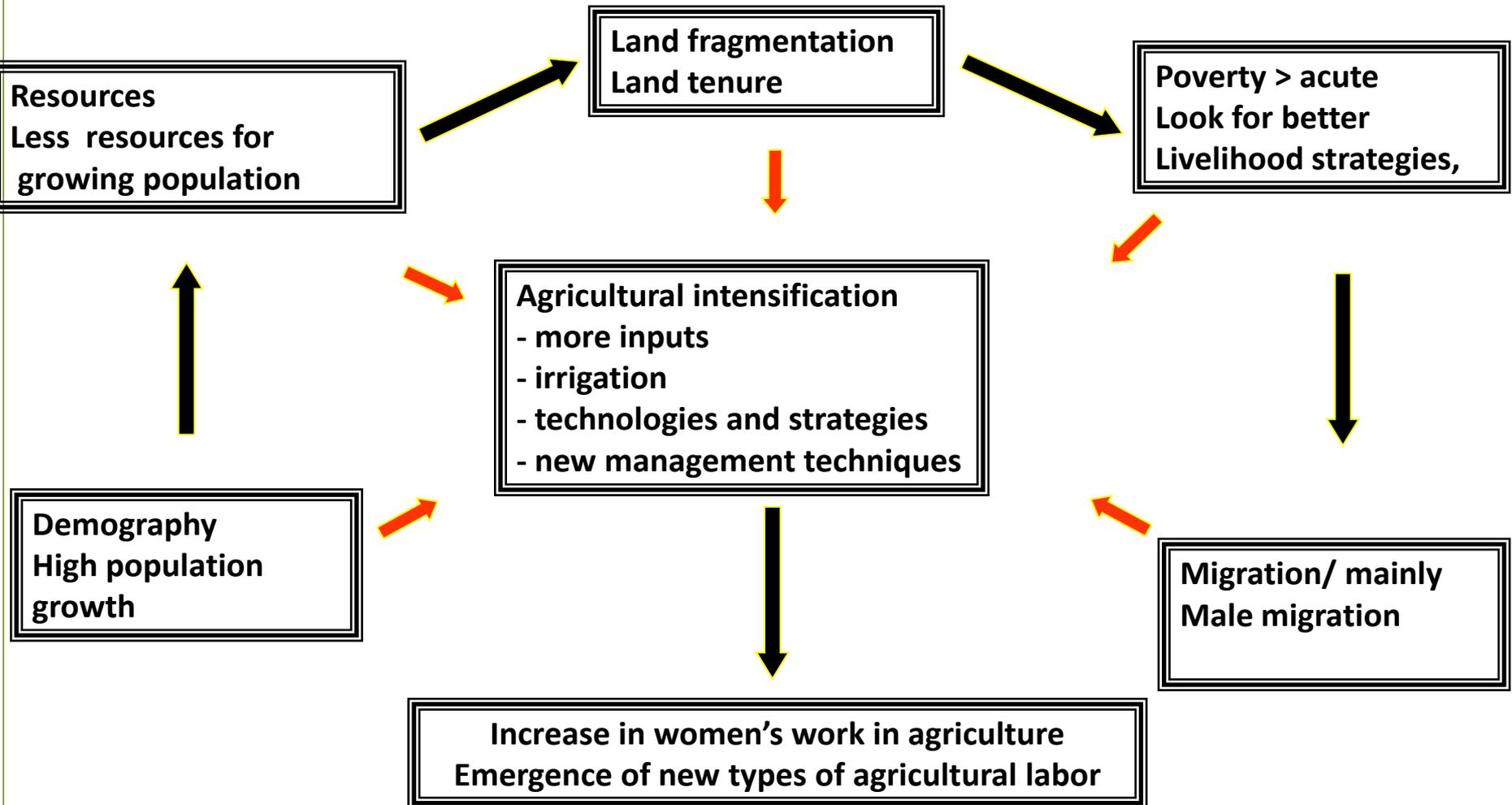
Agricultural Work Includes



- **Paid and unpaid work**
 - **Family paid and unpaid work**
 - ✦ **Crop production**
 - ✦ **Livestock unpaid for HH. and paid for fattening**
 - ✦ **Post-harvest activities / dairy and wool processing**
- **Exchange work between farms without payment**
- **Wage work off-farm in crop production**
 - ✦ **In other villages**
 - ✦ **In other provinces**
 - ✦ **Abroad as agricultural migrants**
- **Wage work on-farm in livestock production (fattening)**



Why Women's Labor Increased?



Characteristics of women's labor areas of discrimination



- **Women's work conditions are precarious**
 - Unpaid work
 - Low wages or/ paid in kind/ denied the choice to spend earned money as they wish
 - Payments are made to the head of the HH (Syria, Tunisia)
 - Seasonal contracting/ temporary and/or seasonal basis /
 - Unstable source of income
 - Unsafe conditions / transport and health issues
 - Manual work for 8 hours off-farm in agriculture, and 6-7 hours for domestic activities
- **Women have less access to resources**
 - Information / education/ capacity building
 - Physical assets
 - Financial assets



Questions



- **How do we ensure women's empowerment and gender equality for the rural labor force through adequate and equitable agricultural employment?**
- **How does the participation of women in agricultural production and processing better address economic growth and poverty reduction?**

Main Features of Agric. Labor in MENA



- **Feminization of agricultural labor**
- **Migration from agriculture/ Impact of migration on children's education**
- **Women's wage labor in agri. and gender roles**
- **Agricultural mechanization**
- **Control over resources**

Gender Issues Limiting Women's Empowerment in Agriculture



- **Precarious education's quality in rural areas**
- **Work conditions, occupational health and safety for casual and home-based agricultural workers**
- **Segregation in operations and tasks and differences in remuneration**
- **Control over income and other resources**
- **Child labor in agriculture**
- **Gendered spaces**

Segregation /Discrimination over ♀ and ♂ Incomes and Activities

- **Egypt:** wages of ♀ and children are automatically $\frac{1}{2}$ of those of ♂ for the same activities
- **Jordan/** ♀ 50-75% of what ♂ get
- **Morocco** ♀ 70-75% of what ♂ get
- **Tunisia::** ♀ get $\frac{2}{3}$ of ♂ get
- **Turkey:** 45-70%
- **Syria:** segregation is on the type of activities done by ♂ and ♀
 - Manual low paid performed by ♀
 - Mechanized high paid and manual high paid operations performed by ♂
 - In-kind payment &/ or to head of HH
- **Lebanon:** 50 %
- **Iran:** 40-50%
- **Yemen:** $\frac{2}{3}$ of ♂

Wages not constant: depend largely on seasons, type of work, length of working day, demand and supply etc...

Factors Driving Progress towards Empowerment



- **Change in attitudes**
 - **Personal**
 - **Others' attitudes**
- **Education at the forefront towards empowerment**
- **Equity in access to all types of resources**
- **Institutional support from gov. agencies and NGOs (Iran for capacity building of rural women and girls)**

Obstacles and Challenges



- **Customs and traditions**
- **Unawareness of local policy makers**
- **Inadequate methods used to collect and measure the extent of women's work in agriculture**
- **Inequity in access to all types of resources**
- **Absence of institutional support**

Good Practices Key Lessons Learned



Promoting equity through representation and participation

- **Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan**
 - **Trained women trainers on hygienic milk handling, milk quality control and milk processing with provision of necessary equipment to women beneficiaries**
 - **Traveling workshop for women**
- **Syria: Enhancing livelihoods of poor livestock keepers through increasing use of fodder: building women's capacity in fodder innovation**
 - **Field days**
 - **Training on milk processing**
 - **Awassi sheep fattening trials exposed women to learning new scientific methods in lamb fattening that have the potential of reducing the loss in feed resources and increasing the gain and outcomes**

Proposed Options for Women's Empowerment



- **Ensure that agricultural labor concerns are included in the MENA countries governmental agendas**
- **Encourage/ enforce the inclusion of measurement of women's empowerment and equality in all research projects and development initiatives**
 - **Projects community level without a specific target for women, and their work is in reality impacting women's knowledge, income, capacities etcetera in many ways**
 - **Capacity building was conducted in many projects for dairy processing, and successful stories are told about the impact of that capacity building on women. However, it was hard to trace that impact from available reports**
- **Continuous awareness and capacity building about rights at work, employment conditions, safety, ailments etc.**

Options Cont'



- **Establishing primary schools in remote rural areas to ensure girls' education**
- **Develop specific gender-specific strategies that can be used by researchers, development agencies and local NGOs to ensure potential reach of rural women (gender disaggregated data)**
 - **Adequate representation in statistics: paid, unpaid, home-based**
 - **Enhance extension women agents' personal and financial capacities**

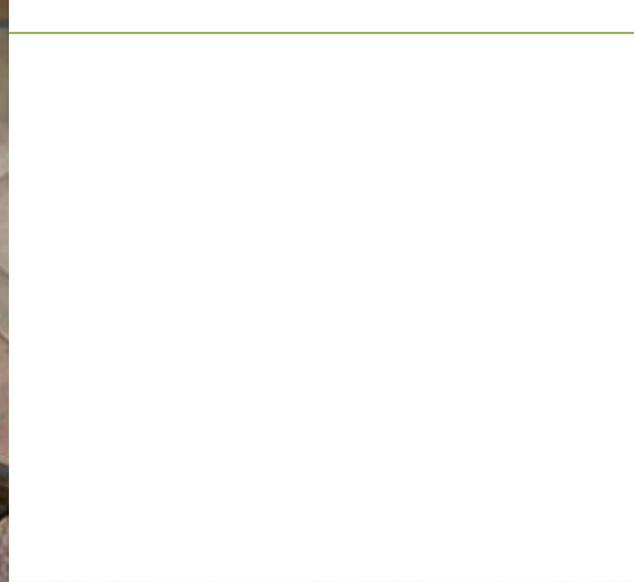
Options Cont'



- **Farming systems and agro-ecological conditions' requirements, and opportunities**
- **Technology adoption and impact studies disaggregated**
- **Adequate assessment/ evaluation of research and development initiative approaches**
- **Support for market access**
- **Explore health issues of home-based and other agr. labor**



**Ailments
related to wool
processing**



Thank you
Thank you

