



Women, Work and Food Systems India Dialogue

Introduction

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a member based organization of over 1.9 million poor self-employed women workers from the informal economy. With 2/3rd of its member base comprising of rural women workers and agriculture being one of their primary occupation, SEWA has been working relentless for over 4 decades to resolve the burning question of "Why does the farmer remain hungry?"

The members of SEWA in the rural areas include small and marginal farmers as well as landless agricultural laborers with little or no land and share croppers. The reality of these rural workers is that they are the poorest of the poor. The employment opportunities available in rural areas is never constant due to severe competition, market trends and changing economic policies. In such situations, rural workers often have to pursue more than one trade or resort to migration. Their occupation varies depending on what is more conducive at what point of time. In such scenario, the dignity of such workers is often compromised and they end up in the vicious down-fall of drudgery and poverty.

Although India has witnessed a vital boost in agricultural productivity over the last several decades, the smallholder farmers have not benefited from it and have been pushed further into poverty due to their lack of bargaining power, distress sale of their small, marketable produce, vulnerability to the exploitative middlemen, damage to their crops by pests and natural calamities and losses due to lack of storage facilities. On the other hand, the landless women laborers, despite being a part of food production, processing, marketing and distribution system, barely eke out a living as they lack visibility due to the informal structure of their operations. The lack of visibility has resulted in disentitlement to benefits as well as lack of access to agricultural extension services; thereby further reducing their overall income from agriculture.

All of this, augmented by the increasingly frequent climate and market shocks has made agriculture unprofitable, unsustainable and unviable, leading to the smallholder farmers and landless laborers remaining rooted in poverty and their families going hungry.

To radically transform the food system and integrate the small women marginal farmers and landless laborers into various roles across the entire food value chain, SEWA, through its agri-social enterprises has been providing game-changing solutions that achieve the triple goals of building gender equality, sustainability and healthy food systems.



The Dialogue

The UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) through its various Action Tracks has been working towards bringing forward a series of concrete action plans to support the transformation of the world's food system. Several independent, state and regional dialogues have brought in interesting and innovative game-changing solutions.

However, while the Food Systems Summit workstreams and regional and state dialogues have focused on the issues of gender, food systems and gender transformative approaches with multi-stakeholders, the voices of small and marginal rural women farmers and landless labourers has not been effectively captured, nor have they been significantly represented in the emerging game changing solutions. Although, they play a significant role in the food systems, their participation in the process is blur.

Therefore, in order to make the Summit truly inclusive, it is necessary that along with the other multi-stakeholders, the voices of the poor rural women farmers, agricultural labourers and sharecroppers is heard in the preparatory dialogues leading to the Summit.

With this objective in mind, SEWA is convening a ***“National Dialogue on Women, Work and Food Systems: Voices from Grassroots”*** on **19th June, 2021** from **3:00 PM to 5:30 PM**, to offer its member farmers and landless laborers across India a platform to bring forth their issues, challenges and solutions to enhance their visibility, identity and livelihood in the food system.

It will bring together the women farmers and farmer associations with the appropriate policy makers, private sector organisations, scientists and individual consumers, to discuss and deliberate the existing issues and challenges along with the possible innovative solutions and best-practices to smoothen their integration into the food systems.

Given your experience and expertise on the subject, we would like to invite you to participate in the dialogue and share your valuable inputs and insights on the subject. To join us for the dialogue, kindly register through the link as given below:

<https://forms.gle/KtKf4hCrcZnLzddQ6>

We look forward to welcoming you to the dialogue.