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GENDER & CLIMATE ANALYSIS REPORT

# Women as Champions of Climate Action in Southeast Asia

Perspectives from the Philippines  
through the ASEAN Green Recovery through Equity and  
Empowerment (AGREE) Project



*February 2023*

# ASEAN Green Recovery through Equity and Empowerment (AGREE) Project

The Cambodia Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (CPSA), the Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (PPSA), and the Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture in Viet Nam (PSAV) have undertaken a multi-country project entitled “ASEAN Green Recovery through Equity and Empowerment (AGREE)”. This gender and climate-responsive value chain analysis examined three value chains: maize in the Philippines, rice in Viet Nam, and fruit and vegetables in Cambodia.

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Canada











**PPSA**

Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture

**Gendered Barriers  
and Parallel Realities:  
Gender and Climate Action  
Research on Corn Value  
Chain in Bukidnon and  
Maguindanao, Philippines**

# Summary

The Philippines has a total land area of 30 million hectares with 14.1 million hectares or 47 percent of the country considered as agricultural land used for production of rice and corn – the two major crops of the country. Agriculture is one of the main drivers of the Philippine economy contributing 8.5 percent to the Philippine GDP and employing more than one third or approximately 24.5 percent of the population (PSA, 2022).

It is against this background that the ASEAN Green Recovery through Equity and Empowerment (AGREE) is being implemented in the Philippines. This research project has two main objectives - to understand opportunities and barriers, and generate recommendations for private and public sector actors to ensure that their efforts to transition to a low-carbon economy in ASEAN's agriculture sector are gender-inclusive and promote livelihoods and green job opportunities for women. Towards this end, the research investigates the conditions necessary to promote equal opportunities for women and men to engage in and benefit from agriculture value chain practices that contribute to a low-carbon economy. Findings from the research will inform a pilot testing of solutions with private sector partners and recommendations for policymakers.

The project kicked-off with a virtual consultation workshop convened by the Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (PPSA) for the selection of the value chain of focus for AGREE. The workshop served as a focus group discussion where participants, who have strong experiences in working with women farmers, and with climate-smart agricultural practices, explained actual government programs, business practices, and initiatives related to their respective value chains of involvement. Following this and field research activities, the project pursued a study on the role played by and the participation of women farmers in the corn value chain. The sites covered are Bukidnon and Maguindanao with a total of 170 respondents in household interviews, focus group discussions, and key information interviews<sup>1</sup>. Of this number, there were 80 farmer respondents recorded in the household interviews.

The research found that women play a real significant role in corn farming, evidenced by their presence in most of the value chain activities, specifically in bringing quality yield attributed to women's diligent upkeep of the farms using climate friendly practices. More than half of the women respondents are taking on a number of production activities such as harvesting, pest control, spraying, pruning and clearing, land maintenance, and transplanting; while also doing most of the reproductive tasks that make production possible. Men do more physically heavy tasks such as land preparation (plowing) and operation of farm equipment. Women mostly do the weeding, which takes time to do and can also be physically taxing. Weeding is an invisible chore that women are expected to perform, and as a result, it's frequently undervalued. This undervaluation has led to the overreliance on herbicides for corn production, with men primarily employed in the fields. However, if women's crucial role in weeding is recognized and supported, they can become vital agents of climate action in corn production.

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<sup>1</sup> Key informants are from local government functionaries and local trader groups, social enterprises, community-based women's groups.

Based on the field research, the issues affecting women corn farmers pertain to low income, crop failure, effects of hazards including pests and diseases, lack of government financing and crop protection, and lack of and high prices of farm inputs.

The situation experienced by farmers is surrounded by systemic challenges including some key strategic concerns such as little to no access to information and local planning opportunities, and a lack of access to an enabling environment that could increase the agency of the farmers. Policies are in place but there is a gap in implementation.

On the other hand, climate action is still focused on adaptation, e.g., use of genetically upgraded or modified varieties of seeds in corn farming. These varieties have higher yield but also demand a higher quantity of inputs such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and glyphosates. While there are good initiatives by the government in place, these programs remain far from benefiting farmers on the ground, especially women farmers. Mitigation-related practices can be pursued but takes a higher level of investment, resources, and absorptive capacity.

Furthermore, the lack of government operationalization of gender-transformative climate action, the

invisibility of private sector efforts to support smallholder production, and the problem associated with price control by traders make corn production difficult and economically unstable on the side of the small farmers, who, when gathered together, make a big contribution to the entire corn value chain.

Gender-inclusive approaches also seem to be missing at the operational level. This is true for the micro, meso, and macro practices and innovations in climate action among communities, social enterprises, and businesses.

Women farmers are missing in the agricultural data used by the local government functionaries, as evidenced by the lack of data on the percentage of farming households, and the inexistence of sex-disaggregated data on agricultural households. There are currently no government programs aimed at supporting women's livelihoods, nor are there any formal green jobs available in the covered areas.

The results of the study call for further engagement and incentivization of women corn farmers in climate action. Green jobs would be one of the ways to involve women in meaningful climate action. An example is the involvement of women in organic fertilizers and zero GHG renewable-natural energy production and marketing.

For green jobs to be sustainable, government and private-sector actors should come in with initial financing that are equitable to address the issues of lack of access to assets, such as tools, equipment, and land as well as rights to own these. Knowledge, skills, and

technology from government programs on climate change needs to be transferred not only to farmers but also to stakeholders, especially the duty bearers.

Other recommendations include the following key suggested solutions:

► **Massive information and communication for social and behavior change**

promoting women's contributions in climate mitigation

► **Scale up existing local climate innovation practices**

such as those done by local community women social enterprises by helping them become climate mitigation leaders that can soon lead and teach profitable climate mitigation farming practices and distribution/marketing to others like them

► **Maximize existing government programs and create customized community programs on climate actions**

for promoting and scaling women's empowerment and gender transformation in agricultural value chains, e.g., policy or program on organic or natural farming method

► **Implement real and equitable transfer of knowledge, skills development, and technology**

that integrates the development of gender, climate, and crisis lens of farmers

► **Design various forms of investment that incentivizes climate-smart initiatives at the local level**

by providing financing, crop protection, farm input support, provision of cheaper farm input options, facilities, access to market, and price control

► **Generate green jobs at the local level that conditions equitable access to assets and resources**

to keep women farmers available to sustain and/or upscale natural farming methods







smallholder  
farmers  
are at the heart  
of everything  
we do.

## About PPSA

The Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (PPSA) is a multi-stakeholder partnership platform initiated by Grow Asia, a regional platform for inclusive and sustainable agriculture development in Southeast Asia catalyzed by the World Economic Forum and the ASEAN Secretariat. Grow Asia's goal is to reach smallholder farmers in ASEAN through its Country Partnerships like the PPSA to build regional and country partnerships and broker market-driven solutions for more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems in Southeast Asia.

PPSA was formally launched by Grow Asia together with the Philippine Department of Agriculture and through the collective efforts of various stakeholders. PPSA, with the Department of Agriculture and EastWest Seed as its Co-Chairs, has brought together more than 120 organizations, reaching more than 120,000 smallholders through commodity Working Groups (WGs) focused on Coconut, Coffee, Corn, Vegetables, and Fisheries as well as cross-cutting or thematic working groups on Agri-financing, Digital Agriculture, and the Learning Alliance. Its aim is to harness the collective strength of agricultural value chain players towards transforming food systems to become climate positive and inclusive through market-driven solutions.

Since its beginnings in 2015, PPSA has been driving partnerships that work on value chain studies, knowledge sharing, and market linkage. The latter being the most identified value it brings not only to the core members, but to an extended network of market players, from multinational companies, cooperatives, farmer associations, groups, and individual farmers. The monetary value realized by companies, and farmers alike resulting from the





marking linkage initiatives facilitated marks the index of the greater benefit it gives to the lives, families, communities, and localities of the farmer producers, while also contributing to the larger spectrum of value chain development, and stable market for food security in the country.

As PPSA moves forward in positioning itself as an enabler of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable and inclusive food systems that empower and transform smallholder farmers and fishers to be self-reliant and resilient, we seek to harness the collective strength of agricultural value chain players towards transforming food systems to become climate positive and inclusive through market-driven solutions. We do this through our three work streams on:

- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** where we build a synergy of committed partners towards increased adoption of inclusive value chain models and sustainable innovations for agriculture;
- **Knowledge and learning** where we organize and facilitate knowledge management programs to build/enhance the capacities of partners, including smallholders, in support of scaling inclusive value chain models, and promoting and facilitating increased assistance to smallholder farmers and fishers; and
- **Policy environment for agri-investments** where we facilitate action-oriented dialogues with policymakers and public/private stakeholders to enhance policies and plans towards increased and responsible investments for agriculture.

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