We Can Grow It: Reporting on Women in Agriculture in India, Belize and the U.S.

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Abstract
Women produce more than half of the world’s food, according to the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization. This aligns with the Chinese proverb—“Women Hold up Half the Sky.” As the role of women in agriculture increases in the developed and developing world, female economic activity in agriculture serves as a beacon for poverty reduction, increased food security, and environmental sustainability. In the United States, there has been a 30-percent increase in the number of female-run farms in the U.S. since 2002 and women, now the largest “minority” group in agriculture in the U.S., operate approximately 300,000 farms throughout the country. In most of the developing world, the typical farmer is already a woman, often working with simple tools, barefoot, and with a child in-tow. The FAO stated that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 percent to 30 percent, which could lead to 100 million to 150 million fewer people living in hunger. United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1: “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” and Goal 3: “Promote gender equality and empower women”—are mutually reinforcing. When women grow food, nations grow stronger. By focusing on three different countries—India, Belize, and the United States, I will illustrate the data from the UN, FAO and USDA, introducing the reader to women farmers in each country who emulate challenge and triumph in producing food and making a living. In India, farmer suicides are leaving women in debt and without skills to pull themselves out. In Central America, women are being encouraged to farm by government sponsored programs such as the Belize’s Ministry of Agriculture “Woman of the Year” competition. In the U.S., women are farming more and doing it unconventionally and sustainably. Journalism offers the power to give voice to women farmers worldwide. As environmental reporting becomes a more predominant reporting niche, understanding the complexities of food system and its...
India’s agricultural sector is also characterized by insufficient productivity, due to several factors such as the miniaturization of agricultural players, limited use of mechanized farming techniques, a lack of adequate equipment and infrastructure and the harmful consequences of the “Green Revolution” of the 1970s. Highly miniaturized and insufficiently mechanized local production. Agriculture: For India, a strategic sector that requires a new development paradigm. These are set to grow in number, given that food security is a strategic, national defense issue for India, which must, above all, ensure that its 1.1 billion inhabitants are fed. Women’s work Women in agriculture Women in rural labour markets Key messages. Documenting the gender gap in agriculture Land Livestock Farm labour Education Information and extension Financial services Technology Key messages. India’s Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) 11. Women in a sustainable rural livelihoods programme in Uganda 12. Food emergencies 13. As a result, it is often assumed that interventions in areas such as technology, infrastructure and market access have the same impacts on men and women, when in fact they may not. At the same time, building a gender perspective into agricultural policies and projects has been made to seem more difficult and complex than it need be. India is a global agricultural powerhouse. It is the world’s largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and has the world’s largest cattle herd (buffaloes), as well as the largest area under wheat, rice and cotton. It is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep & goat meat, fruit, vegetables and tea. The country has some 195 m ha under cultivation of which some 63 percent are rainfed (roughly 125m ha) while 37 percent are irrigated (70m ha). Three agriculture sector challenges will be important to India’s overall development and the improved welfare of its rural poor: 1. Raising agricultural productivity per unit of land: Raising productivity per unit of land will need to be the main engine of agricultural growth as virtually all cultivable land is farmed.