Gender, Empowerment and Coffee in Mexico and Central America: A Policy Analysis

Lisa M. Fry
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Latin American Studies Commons, and the Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/216

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.
GENDER, EMPOWERMENT AND COFFEE IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA
A POLICY ANALYSIS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Dean and Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Lisa M. Fry
June 2010
Advisor: Dr. Sarah Hamilton
Abstract

Coffee is an important commodity for Central American countries. Like other agricultural production, coffee production in the region is undergoing a “feminization” in which women become the primary producers. However, female agricultural producers face constraints that their male counterparts do not. This study analyzes policies to determine if they promote or continue the inhibition of empowerment of female coffee producers. The results of the study indicate that policies relating to Central American coffee production are promoting women’s empowerment, but implementation remains weak. Policy recommendations are included.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1  
Method ............................................................................................................................... 5  

Literature Review .............................................................................................................. 6  
  Empowerment ................................................................................................................. 6  
  Gender in Latin America ............................................................................................... 11  
  Gender and Coffee ......................................................................................................... 14  

Policy Analysis .................................................................................................................. 21  
  International .................................................................................................................. 21  
    International Coffee Organization ............................................................................... 21  
    Inter- American Development Bank ......................................................................... 27  
  Alternative Trade ........................................................................................................... 31  
    Fair Trade .................................................................................................................... 31  
    Organic ....................................................................................................................... 36  
  National .......................................................................................................................... 41  
    Mexico ......................................................................................................................... 42  
    Guatemala ................................................................................................................... 48  
    Honduras ...................................................................................................................... 54  
    El Salvador .................................................................................................................. 60  
    Nicaragua .................................................................................................................... 64  
    Costa Rica ................................................................................................................... 67  

Policy Recommendations .............................................................................................. 70  

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 72  

References ........................................................................................................................ 73
INTRODUCTION

Coffee is “the second largest traded commodity after oil.”¹ Many people in
developed countries cannot imagine going through a day without at least one cup of this
delicious caffeinated beverage. However, there is more to that daily coffee than meets
the tongue. What developed world consumers may not know is that seventy percent of
the world’s coffee producers are small-scale family farmers.² Most of these farmers are
unorganized members of weak cooperatives; they lack direct access to markets and
instead are dependent on “coyotes,” or middle men.³ Seven Central American countries
account for 15.7% of the world’s coffee production as well as the highest quality coffees
in the world (Figure 1).⁴ Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua depend on coffee exports
as a significant source of foreign capital.⁵ Unfortunately, coffee farmers usually receive
only about two percent of the price of a café beverage and only about six percent of the
price of a package of ground coffee at a supermarket.⁶ Since coffee is a growing but

¹ Douglas L. Murray and Laura T. Raynolds. "Globalization and Its Antinomies: Negotiating a Fair Trade
Movement." In Fair Trade: The Challenges of Transforming Globalization, ed. Laura T. Raynolds,

² Seth Petchers and Shayna Harris. "The Roots of the Coffee Crisis." In Confronting the Coffee Crisis: Fair Trade, Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystems in Mexico and Central America, ed. Christopher M. Bacon,
V. Ernesto Méndez, Stephen R. Gliessman, David Goodman and Johnathan A. Fox, 43-66. (Cambridge:
The MIT Press, 2008), 50.

Christopher M. Bacon, V. Ernesto Méndez, Stephen R. Gliessman, David Goodman and Jonathan A. Fox,

Organization, 2009), 7.


⁶ Petchers and Harris, “Roots of Crisis,” 48.
turbulent market that provides such an important source of income to so many people, there are many policies in place to assist producers with quality and access to markets.

Women are involved in coffee production in three ways. The first, and most common is labor on family farms with little or no remuneration. The second way that women are involved in coffee production is as a substitute or stand-in for male producers. Coffee production, like all Central American agriculture, is undergoing a “feminization” as traditionally male producers migrate to cities or abroad, leaving their wives and other female relatives to continue production on the family land although the man remains the titled landowner. Finally, the increase in female headed households throughout Central America has led many women to become the sole family producer. However, female producers face obstacles that their male counterparts do not. Women are generally denied important resources necessary for agricultural production. They also experience the “double” workday of productive and reproductive work. Policy is one tool that can

![Figure 1: Regional Distribution of Coffee Production](source: Data from International Coffee Organization. Annual Review, 7.)
be applied at the macro level to empower female coffee producers by removing institutional constraints and creating strategic long-term solutions that include both men and women in their processes. However, there are no formal data detailing exactly how many women are involved in coffee production or what tasks they undertake. As Table 1 shows, there is a wide variation in estimates women’s participation in the various elements of coffee production and trade. Women primarily work in the fields and during the harvest and sorting processes, with little activity in trade, which is a traditionally male realm.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function in the value chain</th>
<th>Variation (low–high)</th>
<th>&quot;Typical&quot; participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>10–90</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest</td>
<td>20–80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-country trading</td>
<td>5–50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorting</td>
<td>20–95</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export</td>
<td>0–40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (certification, laboratories etc.)</td>
<td>5–35</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The “feminization” of agriculture in Central America is indicative of the social and political changes that have swept the region in recent decades. Gender relationships have long been characterized by patriarchy as a continuation of cultural norms espoused by Spanish colonialism and the Catholic Church. Women throughout the region have
challenged their stereotypical reproductive role by moving into the workforce in large numbers. Feminist Latin America scholars and development analysts usually point to women’s employment as a tool to increase their bargaining position within the household and increased focus on children’s well-being. However, change has not been as quick or widespread as optimistic researchers have claimed.

Empowerment is here defined as an increase of each of Kabeer’s three interrelated dimensions: resources, agency and achievements. Resources are defined as access to and control over material, human and social goods. Agency is involvement in decision-making processes involving oneself and one’s resources. Achievements are positive outcomes created by resources and agency.

The conclusions drawn in this paper are surprising. My research indicates that overall, policies relating to coffee production in Central America provide more opportunities than constraints – contrary to my hypothesis. Implementation of many of these policies has been weak, and there is much more work that needs to be done to assess the position of women in the coffee sector and determine what strategic needs must be addressed to truly create change.

---


8 McClenaghan Women, Work, 21


Method

In this analysis, policy at three levels, international, alternative trade and national, are explored to determine how they contribute to the expansion of women’s resources, agency and achievements or if they instead continue the pattern of disempowerment of women producers. Empowerment is defined above as the increased access to resources, agency and achievement. Resources involved in coffee production include land, credit, income, technology, education and market access. Agency is the ability to make decisions about resources, legally or socially, such as through a position of leadership. Finally, achievement includes legal and social recognition of rights and the attainment of a sustainable livelihood. However, it is difficult to implement policies that are counter to societal norms, which is what many empowerment initiatives in Central America have attempted. Thus, the outcomes of these policies have been explored to determine if they have indeed contributed to changes in the position of women in the coffee sector.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment

Empowerment is difficult to define. It is a concept that depends on context. While most scholars agree that empowerment is a process, there is no consensus as to what that process entails. Deere and León note that some authors feel that empowerment leads to “the radical alteration of the processes and structures which reproduce women’s subordinate position as a gender.”\(^{11}\) Agarwal presents a detailed definition that can be applied many situations; for her, empowerment is

\[
\text{“a process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged (‘powerless’) individuals or groups to challenge and change (in their favor) existing power relationships that place them in subordinate economic, social, and political positions.”}\(^{12}\)

Both Chant and Kabeer identify interrelated three dimensions through which empowerment occurs: resources, agency, and achievements. Kabeer feels that empowerment is the ability to make choices within each of these dimensions.\(^{13}\) Chant notes that empowerment occurs on many levels, from the individual to the international.\(^{14}\)

Empowerment cannot occur solely within one aspect of life. Economic empowerment, one form of control over resources, is not enough to achieve gender


\(^{13}\) Kabeer, Resources, Agency, 435.

\(^{14}\) Chant, Gender, Generation, 34.
Empowerment must also occur in political and social arenas or full equality will never be achieved. “Lopsided” empowerment can lead to negative ramifications for the empowered group; for example, in some Mexican communities, women as breadwinners has led to a higher incidence of domestic violence because they are not also empowered politically or socially.16

Empowerment is also difficult to measure. The measurement tools must be sensitive to the perceptions of all stakeholders, from illiterate rural women to female presidents, as well as cultural considerations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has created an index that is a fairly comprehensive measure of women’s empowerment, the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).17 The GEM measures empowerment across the three dimensions. It is comprised of an income indicator, representing resources and livelihood achievement, and the number of women in political and business leadership positions, representing agency and achievement. Although it has been widely criticized because some scholars feel that it is biased towards elite women, the GEM is currently the best measure of women’s empowerment available. While women’s political and entrepreneurial participation may not directly measure the empowerment of all women, they do reflect the cultural and societal trends towards the position of women. Additionally, women in positions of power are well-placed to create


policies that promote women’s issues. The GEM index is measured between 0 and 1. As reported in the Human Development Report 2009, Costa Rica’s GEM value is 0.685, El Salvador has a GEM value of 0.539, Honduras’s GEM value is 0.589, Mexico’s is 0.629, and Nicaragua has a GEM of 0.542. There are no data available for Guatemala. Women in Central America enjoy a modicum of empowerment, if the data used for the index is accurate. However, given the elite bias of the GEM, it is likely that poor women, such as coffee producers, are not being empowered by increased income or political or business positions. Instead, lower-class women must find other ways to increase their access to resources and make their voices heard so that they can achieve a better quality of life for themselves.

Women’s social movements contribute to the empowerment of individual women. Collective action increases self-confidence as well as an ability and willingness to challenge unequal gender relationships. In Latin America, these movements are particularly weak, and have not developed much since democracy was achieved in the 1980s. Women’s activism and political participation have been limited by diversity among women – not all women politicians are interested in women’s issues per se but instead may focus more on the issues of indigenous groups or other issues. Additionally, women’s groups in Latin America have struggled with the state for

---

19 Agarwal, Field, 42.
20 Chant and Craske, Gender, 21.
recognition of their needs, as well as corruption and repression from the state.\textsuperscript{21} Most countries have a “women’s office” or “ministry of women” to address gender issues, but these offices tend to have little power in the male-dominated political systems of Central America.\textsuperscript{22} While collective action can lead to empowerment, it is only one of many ways to empower women and other oppressed groups, although it is the most visible means.\textsuperscript{23} Women are also not a homogeneous group when it comes to demanding gender equality and resource rights, such as lands rights. What rural and urban women, or even women of different generations, require from a policy designed to empower them may be very different.\textsuperscript{24} For example, urban women advocated for and received individual land titles in Costa Rica, while titles awarded to rural women created social tensions and negative repercussions.\textsuperscript{25} Real gender change needs linkages between rural and urban women’s movements that work with state actors.\textsuperscript{26} With such coordination, the underlying needs of all women, not just a select segment, can be taken into account along with any potential negative consequences. Coordination between varied groups of women can design creative solutions that will change society.

The female-headed household is another factor that impacts the empowerment of women. In cases where women have left abusive relationships, such independence can

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Chant and Craske, \textit{Gender}, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Deere and León, \textit{Empowering Women}, 199.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Agarwal, \textit{Field}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Chant, \textit{Gender, Generation}, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Deere and León, \textit{Empowering Women}, 199.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Deere and León, \textit{Empowering Women}, 224.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
be empowering. On the other hand, an abandoned woman can lose even the small access to resources that she received from the man in her life. Female-headed households are also methodologically difficult to enumerate,\(^{27}\) which can result in special benefits designed to mitigate the challenges faced by female household heads to be denied to some who may need them. For example, any adult male in the home may be considered the head of household regardless of marital or family relationship to the woman. This includes visiting males such as temporary lovers. Daughters with children living in their paternal home may also go uncounted as household heads.\(^ {28}\) Not only are female household heads then denied resources from the state, but they lack the agency to make decisions for the household because they are not considered to be the decision-maker.

Land rights for women are also distinctly associated with their empowerment, particularly female household heads. Land ownership is associated with increased access to other resources such as credit, technical assistance and greater market information, all of which promote economic autonomy.\(^ {29}\) It has also been shown to increase the bargaining power of women within a household by improving the fall-back position; in case of divorce, separation or abandonment a woman with land can still support her family through farming, selling or renting her land.


\(^{29}\) Agarwal, *Field*, 34.
Gender in Latin America

Gender is a well-researched aspect of Latin American cultures and society, particularly since gender relations in the region have been constantly changing in recent decades. Economic and political change has translated into a change in opportunities for women that can empower them in the home and in society. Women have moved into the workforce in large numbers. Men and women migrate from rural to urban areas, or abroad, for short and long term work opportunities. As mentioned above, there has been a significant increase in female household headship and “feminization” of agricultural production.

Female participation in the labor force is generally associated with greater economic autonomy for women, increased negotiating power between men and women, and increased resistance to patriarchal authority. However, in Latin America, this participation may not have the same impact as in other parts of the world:

“…while women’s increasing presence within the labor force constitutes a challenge to traditional gender ideology that places women at the center of the domestic sphere, the extent to which this represents a watermark of more fundamental change in power and gender relations is much less certain than previous research has indicated.”

For example, a husband or father may still control a woman’s income. Some scholars argue that men feel that their masculinity is being challenged, particularly when a woman is the household breadwinner. This is particularly relevant given the tradition of machismo throughout Central America.

Employment is not the only trend promoting women’s empowerment outside the home. The decrease in fertility across the region, along with increased education of women is leading to a weakening of the patriarchal household.\textsuperscript{33} A male bias in political institutions presents a challenge to women seeking to become empowered through political participation.\textsuperscript{34} However, given that Nicaragua had a female president and Costa Rica recently elected a woman as president, political achievement is entirely possible.

The increasing number of female-headed households throughout the world has received much development attention; Latin America is no exception. This phenomenon is associated with the “feminization” of agriculture in the region as well. As men migrate from rural areas to seek work in urban areas, neighboring countries, or the United States, women are often left alone with their children but with no rights to the land they work or the home they live in. “In the rural areas, wherever male outmigration has been strong, women who remain had to increase their workload and assume important decision making roles and full responsibility for carrying out both agricultural and household duties.”\textsuperscript{35} The female-headed household faces challenges not encountered by households with a male head. This discrimination is partly as a result of the ideal of the family propagated by society, but can also result from women’s lack of education about their

\textsuperscript{33} Chant and Craske, \textit{Gender}, 2.

\textsuperscript{34} Chant and Craske, \textit{Gender}, 22.

rights, particularly rights to land.\textsuperscript{36} Even if women are aware of their rights, they may lack resources and access to courts to fight for them.\textsuperscript{37}

Women’s ownership of a key resource, land, is another aspect of gender relations in Latin America that is changing. Decision-making about what is produced and what production techniques are used in agriculture can only be made by the person who owns and controls the land. The Central American countries have instituted a series of land policies that began with agricultural reform for redistribution and now represent neo-liberal counter-reform. Because of the traditionally patriarchal system, gender discrimination has prevailed in regard to land access. Men are favored in land allocation and titling through cultural, social and political practices. Land rights laws are often framed as “gender-neutral” but do not equally benefit both men and women. Some titling programs only put the name of the household head on the title – assumed to be male. While joint titles to couples do benefit women by providing access to land, in Nicaragua, for example, the wording of the law for joint titling passed in 1993 favored pairs of men, such as father and son, rather than male and female couples. The wording was changed in 1997, and the percentage of male pairs awarded joint titles decreased significantly.\textsuperscript{38}

A major obstacle to women being titled land is that women are not viewed as agriculturists throughout Central America: “Irrespective of the amount of labor that rural women dedicate to agriculture – whether as unpaid family workers or as wage workers –

\textsuperscript{36} Tinker, “Empowering Women,” 18.


\textsuperscript{38} Deere and Leôn, \textit{Empowering Women}, 206.
agriculture in Latin America has been socially constructed as a male occupation. As a result, women’s work in agriculture is largely invisible.”

Thus, even when laws specifically mention both men and women as possible beneficiaries of land allocation, women are not granted land at a high rate. When land is allocated to a man, it is considered “family” land, assumed to benefit all members of the household. This is not always the case. When land is allocated to women, however, it is much more likely to benefit all members of the household as a result of the security land ownership provides and the income earned from it. This is particularly true for households where male family members have migrated, sometimes for many years, and do not regularly provide for the family’s needs.

**Gender and Coffee**

The role of women in Central American agriculture is the focus of several recent studies. However, gender roles in coffee production have been explored specifically by only a few scholars; most studies identify the production unit as males or the family unit. The recent coffee crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000s was extensively studied. However, the impact on women and gender relations does not appear in the compilation of studies by Bacon et al regarding the crisis’s impact on communities and production styles. This is a serious omission. Women are one of three coffee producing groups in Central America that are marginalized in access to resources, a voice in coffee organizations and market access. The other two groups, indigenous peoples and isolated mountain communities – often one and the same – are both explored by Bacon et al.

---

However, households are used as research units, with no exploration of the gendered aspects of coffee communities or the specific constraints that face female members of these societies.

Collective land titling to cooperative groups has a distinct gendered dimension that disadvantages women. Men compose the majority of cooperative members because membership is generally only given to one member of a family, the household head. Even when women are members, they do not enjoy the same benefits from membership and they are rarely a part of the leadership. One major reason for this disparity is that women are still not seen as agriculturists both by male cooperative members and by local officials. This undermines their ability to gain access to land or have their name on the collective title.

Women are also not seen as equal contributors to the cooperative’s work. Although women may be producers, they also have domestic duties that reduce the time they have for agricultural work. Male members thus discount female members as less productive and therefore not deserving of equal membership benefits. Female members of some cooperatives argue that the reproductive work that they do is equally important to the running of the cooperative. However, Brunt notes that in the Jalapa region of Nicaragua, many women “chose” to leave cooperatives, particularly unmarried mothers, because their childcare and other duties resulted in resentment from male members. Leaving the cooperative further disadvantaged these women because many Nicaraguan


cooperatives were later dismantled, divided, and the parcels were allocated to the former members. Women who had previously left the cooperative told Brunt that they regretted leaving their cooperative before the division: “If I would have known that they were going to parcel the land, I never would have left the cooperative. I would have seen it through.” Women who join Guatemalan cooperatives usually do not receive the same state-provided credit, technical assistance and support as male members, leading to a high drop-out rate among women that prejudices land officials against including them in cooperative titles.

Where women are brought in to coffee production analysis as producers or cooperative members, the results are interesting and distinctly gendered. Vásquez García and Overfield both deconstruct the coffee-producing household to determine the exact benefits of the harvest that each member receives based on gender. They determine that although wives and daughters provide a large amount of labor in coffee production, particularly the harvest, they do not receive proportional benefits, such as cash or food. In fact, women have very little ownership of coffee resources or products, as shown by Table 2.

---

43 Deere and León, Empowering Women, 80.
Women’s domestic duties can prevent them from becoming cooperative leaders even if they are interested, but the primary reason for the dearth of women in leadership positions is the traditional patriarchal culture that still pervades Central America. Some husbands do not even let their wives participate in projects designed to for women such as commercial weaving or cooperative food stores that are frequently funded by international organizations. Leadership positions such as managerial staff and membership on the board of directors, powerful decision-making positions, can disadvantage women. They require basic literacy, fluency in Spanish and knowledge of accounting and administration that women may not have through lack of education.45

However, the feminization of agriculture as a result of male migration is providing new opportunities to women. While they still must engage in domestic work, some older women with adult children have become inspectors of organic labeling standards because there are not enough men to fill these positions. The inspector position is a skilled position that can improve a woman’s standing in the community or region because it gives her authority.46

Lyon, alone and with colleagues, specifically explores the empowerment of women as a result of Fair Trade and organic production standards.47 She finds that Fair Trade cooperatives systematically disempower women, even if they are members. Women are not members of the leadership of the cooperative that Lyon studied, and they are discouraged from speaking in General Assembly meetings.48 Those who wish to be leaders of the cooperative are constrained by reproductive and domestic duties and lower levels of education than men.49 Men can prevent their wives from participating in activities specifically designed for cooperative wives such as weaving groups.50 However, with Mutersbaugh and Aranda Bezaury, Lyon discovers that the changing agricultural production factors, along with combined Fair Trade and organic production, can actually empower women in the coffee sector. Since organic production standards require the land owner to be present at regular meetings, men who migrate for long


48 Lyon, “Equal to Them.”

49 Lyon, “Equal to Them.”

50 Lyon et al, “Gender equity.”
periods of time have been known to sign their land title over to their wives so that they
 can continue organic production.\textsuperscript{51} This gives women effective control over the land and allows them recognition as producers.

Brunt explores the negative aspects of women’s inclusion in coffee cooperatives without grassroots support. She discovered that during the 1980s, when the Nicaraguan government was intensively involved in the day-to-day management of coffee cooperatives, women made up 27\% of all members.\textsuperscript{52} “…[T]here was relatively little opposition to accept women as members of the cooperative and to recognize some of their special rights…as long as the state assumed the costs of their policy…” \textsuperscript{53}However, when the Sandinista government lost power in 1990, governmental involvement abruptly ended. Men who had tolerated women members began to oppose their inclusion and “encourage” them to leave. By 1994, women composed only 7\% of cooperative members.\textsuperscript{54} It was at this time that cooperatives were parceled among members. Women who had “chosen” to leave cooperatives as a result of the discrimination they faced were denied land.\textsuperscript{55} Those who remained “often received land of a lesser quality.”\textsuperscript{56} Brunt’s study illustrates the importance of including all stakeholders in fomenting gender equality

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{51} Lyon et al, “Gender equity.”
\textsuperscript{52} Brunt, “Losing Ground,” 273.
\textsuperscript{53} Brunt, “Losing Ground,” 281.
\textsuperscript{54} Brunt, “Losing Ground,” 274.
\textsuperscript{55} Brunt, “Losing Ground,” 284.
\textsuperscript{56} Brunt, “Losing Ground,” 284.
\end{flushright}
in coffee production so that both genders have access to the resources and agency they need to achieve a sustainable livelihood.
POLICY ANALYSIS

International

International Coffee Organization

The International Coffee Organization (ICO) fosters cooperation between producing and consuming countries to promote the international coffee market and the sustainable development of producer countries. All six case-study countries are members.\(^\text{57}\) The organization has an extensive mission. There are a number of objectives that the ICO seeks to fulfill that are directly relevant to the empowerment of female coffee producers in terms of increased resources. These objectives are: “initiating coffee development projects to add value and improve marketing,” promoting the improvement of coffee quality” and “ensuring transparency in the coffee market by providing…information on the world coffee sector…”\(^\text{58}\) Each objective increases the knowledge and income resources available to producers. Given that “demand for coffee continues to be buoyant,” as Executive Director Néstor Osorio puts it, these resources, as well as the other purposes of the ICO provide the means for producers to increase their quality of life.\(^\text{59}\)

Membership in the ICO provides many benefits to countries that directly impact coffee producers. For example, the ICO supports and finds funding for projects to improve the quality of producer-country coffee, manage pests associated with coffee production and improve productivity and the standard of living, particularly of small and

\(^{57}\) International Coffee Organization, Annual Review.

\(^{58}\) International Coffee Organization, Annual Review, 1.

\(^{59}\) International Coffee Organization, Annual Review, 4.
medium producers. Projects must support the ICO’s mission and abide by a number of principles to ensure that they are making an impact in the most important coffee issues. The project principles ensure that producers will increase their access to resources, particularly technology and increased knowledge of the best coffee agroecosystem to maximize quality and profit. Projects must also “take into account gender and environmental issues and pay due respect to the role of the private sector and civil society.”

Through these projects, female producers will increase their agency and the achievement of high-quality coffee for export. The attention to environmental issues is also an important aspect of empowerment, as it allows producers to become more aware of how they can keep their most valuable resource – their land – productive for many years.

Another important function of the ICO is to promote coffee consumption and market development. This function has a strong direct impact on producers. The two main aspects of the ICO’s market work are to expand consuming markets into producing countries, in particular and to require member countries to remove obstacles to trade and consumption such as tariffs, quotas, government monopolies and subsidies. These are to be progressively reduced until free coffee trade is achieved. This policy clearly benefits producers by increasing their access to markets, increasing the percentage of the international price they receive and promoting increased consumption leading to market expansion. These resources will allow producers to achieve a better quality of life,


through an increased income, but also to improve the quality of – and therefore demand for - their coffee and even move to an environmentally sustainable production agroecosystem that will keep the value of their land high.

The ICO also develops the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), with the most recent update in 2007.\textsuperscript{62} The ICA is a policy document that creates norms for all member countries to follow regarding the treatment of producers, market access and cooperation. The most recent incarnation of the ICA is intended to:

- strengthen the ICO’s role as a forum for intergovernmental consultations,
- facilitate international trade through increased transparency and access to relevant information, and
- promote a sustainable coffee economy for the benefit of all stakeholders and particularly of small-scale farmers in coffee producing countries.\textsuperscript{63}

All of the case-study countries are signatories to the agreement, but Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras have yet to ratify it. Without ratification and implementation of the ICA, the policies that are intended to support producers will not be implemented in those countries, reducing their empowerment potential. The empowerment benefits for producers overall are clear from the ICA’s mission statement. The gender implications are not clear. It seems that producers of both sexes are included in the phrases “small-scale coffee farmers” and “stakeholders.” This language could be clearer to denote that both genders are involved in coffee production.

The ICA is important to examine from a gender standpoint because it forms the core of coffee production and trade standards for each member country. There are a few


women on the governing committees of the ICO, which increases the chances for gender issues to be represented by the organization – provided those women are interested in gender equality. However, the gender imbalance in the ICO’s governance indicates a weak prioritization of gender issues in coffee overall. It also means that women’s specific issues with coffee production and trade are unlikely to be addressed in the organization’s projects or training, despite the project principle discussed above. This is unfortunate. Not taking into account household gender imbalances could result in the disempowerment of female small and medium scale producers. They may not have access to the benefits of pest management or technology projects because the project staff may assume that they are not farmers. Likewise, women producers may have limited or no access to information about prices, projects and quality that the ICO seeks to promote.

The ICA does not discuss gender as an obstacle to either production or trade of coffee. While it recognizes “the contribution of a sustainable coffee sector to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular with respect of poverty eradication,” the document does not discuss the role of female producers in poverty eradication strategies, particularly in relation to the “feminizations” of agriculture and poverty that prevail in coffee-producing countries. \(^{64}\) As long as this international body ignores gender equality as a priority for coffee production resources, information, and training, producer countries will continue to put gender on the back burner with potentially damaging

\(^{64}\) *International Coffee Agreement*, 1.
effects on female producers who do not have the same access to these important inputs as male producers.

The statistical information that the ICA requires that member countries collect include world production, prices, exports, imports, re-exports, as well as technical information on cultivation and processing. Data on producers, such as the number of small-scale versus large-scale farms and gender and age disaggregated information. Since the ICO is responsible for creating projects to benefit producer countries, this sort of oversight means that projects intended to benefit producers may not, in fact, have an impact on all categories of producers. The current ICA does, however, expand the data categories to include not only price and import and export data, but information on production, consumption and technical information on cultivation and processing. Other data include the area under coffee production, the number of coffee trees and information on niche markets such as fair trade and organic. This data allows for the ICO “to carry out studies and socio-economic analysis to assist the coffee community in its decision-making.” As mentioned above, however, this data is not as sensitive to the nuances involved in coffee production, particularly regarding gender, and thus will skew any decisions made.

65 International Coffee Agreement, 25.
66 International Coffee Agreement, 25.
67 International Coffee Agreement, 25.
At the 2010 World Coffee Conference in Guatemala, the International Women’s Coffee Alliance (IWCA) presented itself and its successes in increasing gender equality. The IWCA’s mission is to: “Empower women in the international coffee community to achieve meaningful and sustainable lives; and to encourage and recognize the participation of women in all aspects of the coffee industry.”

This organization recognizes the importance of coffee production for MDG 3, promoting gender equality and empowering women, which the ICA does not include in its promotion of the MDGs. The IWCA is empowering women through a variety of projects designed to increase access to resources, agency and promote achievement. One project in Nicaragua, designed to benefit female heads of household, built a facility and trained women to produce and commercialize ecological products for coffee farmers. Not only did this project provide women with a resource – the production facility – but it gave them agency through business training and allowed them to achieve a better quality of life.

The ICWA is still a fairly young organization, but it has a lot of potential to truly empower women coffee producers and other women involved in the coffee commodity chain.

The inclusion of the IWCA as a member NGO in the ICO indicates that attitudes towards gender as one of many aspects of coffee production to be addressed by projects may be changing. It can be hoped that the inclusion of a feminist organization will shift focus towards women’s issues, starting with data collection and projects oriented towards

---


71 Taylor, “We Are the Voice.”
gender inequalities in access to technical resources and information provided by the ICO to member countries and producers. A focus on gender at the production level can also be promoted by the ICO at the consumption level by marketing female-produced coffee brands, such as Café Feminino, to consumers as another way to empower women and create development opportunities.

**Inter-American Development Bank**

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has an extensive gender policy for its project planning and implementation process that addresses all aspects of women’s empowerment, particularly agency. “It recognizes that development is a process that must fully involve both men and women,” something that has been missing from many development policies. The policy also notes that there are “attitudinal, legal, institutional and socioeconomic barriers to women at all levels…” Among the Bank’s objectives, increasing women’s access to resources, reducing constraints and improving institutions that include women in the development process are all related to Kabeer’s empowerment dimensions. The policy emphasizes such activities as employment, education, credit, technical training, and research on the participation of women in programs. Employment, education, and technical training are all important resources that can also increase women’s bargaining and decision-making power because they will have more knowledge about their specific situation as well as income and skills. Research on the participation of women in development programs is important to ensure that women’s

---

72 *Operating Policy*, 1

73 *Operating Policy*, 1. Emphasis theirs.
agency is being fomented and that the needs of both genders are being addressed. The policy is clearly designed to maximize the empowerment of women throughout the Americas to achieve gender equality and take full advantage of the impact of development.

As mentioned above, the IDB policy recognizes the limitations to women’s empowerment are legal, institutional, and socioeconomic. The document calls for a particular focus on the economic role of women, particularly female household heads, rather than just domestic and reproductive roles as is usually the case with development programs.  

The Bank requires that all project plans be evaluated for the integration of gender and to address any constraints to women’s participation – including “location of training centers, convenience of the hours of courses and the relevance of curricula and teaching materials and use of appropriate methods to transfer technology.” These are the constraints identified by Lyon as reasons that women frequently do not gain community leadership or management positions. That the IDB requires these constraints to be addressed prior to agreeing to fund a project is significant to gender equity promotion in Latin America. Addressing the needs of women will increase their participation in projects, thus giving them increased access to knowledge that is increased by giving them the power to make decisions about how to best use the resources they have or ways to gain more resources. Including women in education and training will

---

74 Operating Policy, 2.
75 Operating Policy, 5.
76 Lyon. “Equal to Them.”
also give them the ability to achieve equal production and market access as men, and thus not be encouraged to leave cooperatives as explained above by Brunt.

Another resource constraint identified by the IDB policy is access to credit, again barred by legal procedures as well as the application process, high costs and lack of collateral.\(^ {77}\) The policy plans to overcome these constraints in a number of ways so that women can have increased access to this important resource. Without funding, coffee production is impossible. The Bank, therefore, pledges to support programs and organizations that train employees of credit institutions, gear financial services toward female borrowers, strengthen women’s savings cooperatives, and educate women about credit programs. It also looks for measures that remove or reduce legal and social barriers to credit for women.\(^ {78}\) Women producers are greatly empowered by all of these resources that improve access to finance. Credit can also increase a woman’s agency by increasing her bargaining position within her household. It can make her feel accomplished because she is trusted to repay the loan and also because she qualifies to receive credit. Unfortunately, the IDB policy does not address the issue of fathers, husbands or other male relatives taking control of loans made to women, destroying any empowerment achieved – presumably this is considered to be a socioeconomic factor.

Incorporating women as equal partners in development projects also can have the effect of showing men that women are equally competent and able to be leaders or even just recognized as farmers, thereby increasing their agency and achievements. To ensure that both genders participate in and benefit from IDB projects, the policy lays out specific

\(^{77}\) Operating Policy, 6.

\(^{78}\) Operating Policy, 6.
steps for programming, project analysis and evaluation. In terms of programming, the policy requires that consideration be given to addressing women’s roles in a project and that the socioeconomic report include key issues related to women’s involvement. During the project analysis phase, the IDB seeks to link the roles of both men and women within the sector addressed by the project. Gathering disaggregated data on gender roles is an important part of the analysis. With this data, issues that have potentially negative impact on women can be changed, while positive impact activities can be further integrated. The final step identified by the IDB policy is “ex-post” evaluation, to “identify factors that contributed to or detracted from the participation of women in the project and the achievement of overall project goals, hence providing valuable lessons for improving the effectiveness of future operations.”

Overall, these detailed project guidelines, standards and the steps to implement them create a strong basis to promote all three dimensions of empowerment. However, the third-party evaluations of the Women in Development plan do not focus on the direct impact on women. Instead, the evaluations merely discuss how much money is invested in each project and what the project’s intentions are. Table 3 shows the rural projects, including agriculture and land titling projects, created by the bank and the amount invested in each project.

79 Operating Policy, 8.
80 Operating Policy, 9.
81 Operating Policy, 10.
Alternative Trade

Fair Trade

Coffee was the first Fair Trade certified product, and still accounts for most Fair Trade labeled sales; it also represents about 1-2% of global coffee trade – in 1995/96 it was 1.7% of all coffee produced. Murray and Raynolds call Fair Trade “the new

82 Christopher M. Bacon. "Confronting the Coffee Crisis: Can Fair Trade, Organic, and Specialty Coffees Reduce the Vulnerability of Small-Scale Farmers in Northern Nicaragua?" In Confronting the Coffee
globalization…reshaping patterns of international trade and the very process of corporate expansion into the global economy that have historically undermined ecological and social conditions around the world.”

In addition to improving livelihoods and well-being of producers through higher prices and long-term trading relationships, they emphasize the importance of expanding opportunities for disadvantaged producers such as women and indigenous peoples. Membership in a Fair Trade cooperative is an important resource for female producers, even if they do not experience all of the benefits.

There are a number of international networks of Fair Trade labeling. Two of the largest organizations are discussed here to determine how Fair Trade standards and policies promote the empowerment of female coffee producers. The Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) is based in Bonn, Germany and includes such giants as Transfair USA and Max Havlaar. The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), formerly the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT), is based in The Netherlands. Both organizations promote the goals of the Fair Trade movement designed to empower small-scale farmers in market access and sustainable prices. Their standards differ somewhat, but the differences do not mean that one network prioritizes gender

---


83 Murray and Raynolds, Globalization, 4.

84 Murray and Raynolds, Globalization, 4
equality more than the other. Instead, both see gender issues as part of the larger issues of discrimination faced by certain groups of coffee producers.\textsuperscript{85}

Fair Trade labeling standards have a number of gender problems. The primary problem is that while promoting the role of women is a goal of Fair Trade, it is not a priority. For both FLO and WFTO, gender is a part of the broader standard of “Non-discrimination,” which also includes race, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, and political affiliation, to name just a few.\textsuperscript{86} The WTFO also lumps non-discrimination into Standard Six with freedom of association.

However, the WTFO does support gender equity in agency, as shown by the details of the non-discrimination standard:

The organization provides opportunities for women and men to develop their skills and actively promotes applications from women for job vacancies and for leadership positions in the organization. The organization takes into account the special health and safety needs of pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers. Women fully participate in decisions conserving the use of benefits accruing from the production process.\textsuperscript{87}

Thus, while the organization does not prioritize gender equity as an independent standard apart from other forms of discrimination, the WTFO understands that without direct standards of including women as members and participants in Fair Trade organizations, they will not achieve full equality with male producers.


\textsuperscript{86} Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, “Generic Standards,” 9; World Fair Trade Organization, \textit{10 Standards}.

\textsuperscript{87} World Fair Trade Organization, \textit{10 Standards}. 
What is notable about this policy is that it highly promotes women’s agency within producer organizations and addresses some of the constraints to full participation.

However, both organizations have other extensive standards that can have a positive impact on women who do achieve Fair Trade cooperative membership, even if they are marginalized by the decision-making body. The best-known benefit of Fair Trade is the premium paid to producers on top of the market price for goods. The premium is, according to the FLO, intended for “investment in the social, economic and environmentally-sustainable development of the organization and its members and through them, their families, workers and the surrounding community.” This multiplier effect benefits everyone involved in the community by providing a resource that conventional-market producers do not have. If it is used to build a school, a well, or other structures, it provides more resources that directly benefit women’s access to knowledge and a decrease in reproductive work time. In turn, this gives them agency both within their household and in the wider community to stand up for their rights to be members of producer organizations and leadership bodies because they are qualified through education and they have the time to invest in leadership.

Labor conditions are another standard that the FLO and WFTO espouse that has a positive impact on female producers. The minimum standards for both organizations are the International Labor Organization’s conventions. Both also

---

recognize that family labor is a common practice among small farmers. The FLO indicates that “workers” include any family members that contribute labor.\textsuperscript{89} The WFTO’s working conditions standard also insists that family labor conditions and hours comply with ILO conventions and other laws. These standards promote the empowerment of women because their double work day can be reduced by implementing them. Additionally, ensuring that child labor is not used in coffee or other agricultural production encourages families to educate girls, which in turn provides empowerment for a new generation.

The democracy, participation and transparency standard required of FLO member cooperatives and the transparency, accountability, and participatory decision making processes required by the WFTO both have the potential to increase the agency of female producers. As the WFTO says: “The organization…is accountable to all its stakeholders and…ensures that relevant information is provided to all trading partners.”\textsuperscript{90} The FLO goes further, with cooperative democratic structures required to meet minimum standards of “direct or delegated voting rights for all members” in a General Assembly.\textsuperscript{91} The obvious problem with both organizations’ standards is that they do not ensure full and direct participation of all members, particularly given the traditional exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership positions. The wording of the FLO minimum standard in particular – calling for delegated voting


\textsuperscript{90} World Fair Trade Organization, \textit{10 Standards}.

\textsuperscript{91} Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, “Generic Standards,” 8.
rights for some members rather than requiring that all members have a direct vote – sets up an opportunity to deny women’s agency even if they are members of the cooperative. The progress requirements set forth by the FLO standards document do not include provisions for ensuring that members of both genders participate in the General Assembly and in the administration training and education provided to members to create a better level of control.

**Organic**

“Organic coffee is produced with methods that aim at promoting a viable and sustainable agro-ecosystem.”

Certified organic represents standards of land stewardship, and is production-defined rather than trade–defined, as with Fair Trade.

The first organic coffee was exported by Mexican farmers. Organic coffee is grown without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides, but instead uses preventative weed and pest management. It focuses on soil conservation and prohibits the use of genetically engineered coffee. A high level of biodiversity is encouraged, but not mandatory. While certified organic production is more labor intensive, it does not necessarily guarantee that small producers or plantations workers receive a fair share of the profits. In the last decade, organic consumption in the West has moved from a “hippie” activity to a “yuppie” activity. Coffee is no exception. Organically-produced coffee supposedly has higher quality and greater yields than coffee grown in full-sun monocrop fields. It is also

---


94 Bacon, *Confronting Coffee Crisis*, 159.
touted as environmentally-friendly, which capitalizes on the current fad attempting to slow global warming through “green living.” Thus, organically-produced coffee receives a premium price in the international market. It is questionable whether this premium price makes up for the increased labor necessary to meet the stringent standards.

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) has detailed and rigorous standards for organic coffee production. IFOAM defines organic agriculture as

a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.\textsuperscript{95}

One of IFOAM’s Principles of Organic Agriculture is the Principle of Fairness, which promotes equality among persons involved in production and trade while reducing poverty and increasing food supplies.\textsuperscript{96} The principle also seeks to “account for real environmental and social costs” in its commodity chain. This policy, though it does not explicitly mention gender as an area of focus, has positive implications for the role of female coffee producers. To further fairness among producers, IFOAM has partnered with the WFTO.

The framework for IFOAM certification is outlined in the Basic Standards. While the Basic Standards are not certification requirements in and of themselves, they provide a platform for the specific certification criteria used for


regional and specific standards and as a reference for other organization’s standards. There are twenty-one Basic Standards that apply to coffee farming. The numbers of standards that farmers must meet, in addition to any local or regional specific requirements, create a large workload to become certified organic. Much of this work requires that the farmer be present on the land year-round, and, as discussed above, this is an opportunity for women as men migrate away from rural areas.

Many of the basic standards relate to land management. These include ecosystem management, soil and water conservation and common or public land management. For ecosystem management, one of the requirements is that “Operators…take measures to maintain and improve landscapes and enhance biodiversity quality.”\(^{97}\) Complying with this policy is time consuming and labor intensive, as discussed previously, which increases the time farmers spend doing productive work. For women, this means that the time for domestic and reproductive duties will be reduced without a corresponding reduction in their requirements. Thus, the “double” workday will be even longer than it is with conventional farming practices. Other requirements for land management are equally time consuming and complex, such as the requirement that production, processing and handling of crops will recycle or regenerate nutrients and organic matter in the soil.\(^{98}\)


Another challenge of organic production is the process of conversion, during which the crops are not yet able to be certified organic. The farmer is putting in extra work, but not receiving the premium price that organic receives on the market. This period lasts at least 12 months, a full year during which inputs will cost more than prices received. To mitigate the financial constraints that may prohibit farmers from converting to organic production, simultaneous organic and conventional production is allowed, though materials and products must be stored separately. For all producers, male and female, the conversion process can temporarily reduce access to resources such as money. Female coffee producers may face an additional challenge if they are unable to secure credit to finance the conversion period and the extra production materials required. However, the benefits of becoming certified organic in many cases outweigh the constraints. As mentioned above, organic products receive a higher premium price on the market. Coffee certainly does; Equal Exchange pays an extra twenty cents per pound for organic coffee over conventionally grown coffee. Additionally, land on which crops are produced organically has better resale value than land on which products are grown conventionally.

However, while organic production policies can increase access to resources, it does not address the agency of producers or the specific constraints that women producers face. Thus, IFOAM has created a set of social justice requirements among its Basic Standards. Child labor is prohibited unless it does not interfere with schooling.

---

health or safety. Producers are required to have a social justice policy that provides employees and contractors with equal treatment. However, these requirements again do not discuss gender inequalities in production and the other demands on women farmer’s time and other resources besides the increased input requirements and the increased labor required.

In addition to all the increased physical labor involved in organic production, there is a lot of paperwork associated with ensuring that inputs are all organically sourced as well. Producers must therefore be literate and have basic math skills. Women, as previously discussed, frequently do not have these skills due to a lack of education. The double workday also provides a constraint, even to literate women, because they may not have the time for one more task.

IFOAM has become more sensitive to the gender issues involved in organic production and has created a gender training manual to address the imbalances that arise from organic production policies. The manual “describes the main gender issues for small-scale farmers in organic agriculture in tropical regions.” Interestingly, it instructs that the poorest community members, from a variety of household structures, be invited to participate in the training. The manual emphasizes the importance of including both men and women in gender training to maximize the benefits.


101 Inge van Druten Vos. *IFOAM Training Module on Gender in Organic Agriculture*. (Bennekom, The Netherlands: Agro Eco), i.

102 van Druten Vos, *IFOAM Training*, 3.
National

“The contemporary Latin American state has done much to ensure that gender is foregrounded in new legislation and state duties,” argue Chant and Craske. ¹⁰³ Governmental policies are one means of empowering disadvantaged groups, if properly constructed and implemented. If vaguely worded and poorly executed, policies can instead reinforce systematic discrimination. This has been illustrated by Agarwal for South Asia and continued for Latin America by Deere and León. Both of these definitive studies conclude that if policy does not take gender into account there are negative consequences not only for women, but also for society.¹⁰⁴ The gendered aspects of producing coffee are impacted by civil rights and land rights that dictate who owns and has access to the resources required, who has the agency to control those resources, and how positive livelihood outcomes can be achieved.

Gendered policies in Central America begin in the constitutions of each country. Each of the case study countries lays out land and property rights in their constitutions, indicating that property rights to land are a priority but also making it difficult for them to be changed to include greater gender equality in access to resources, if necessary. However, most of these laws allow for any person to gain the right to land. Whether in practice land access and distribution is gender equitable is a different issue related to cultural attitudes of land officials and community members.

¹⁰³ Chant and Craske, Gender, 30.
¹⁰⁴ Deere and León, Empowering Women; Agarwal, Fields.
One major shortcoming in almost all of the land policies is directly related to the use of the Spanish language. Spanish favors the masculine when describing people and the feminine is only implied as a part of that – for example, the word *campesino*. Policies that explicitly make the distinction between *campesinos* and *campesinas*, *ejidataridos* and *ejidatarias* will be much stronger in making clear that it is both men and women who may benefit, and that they can benefit equally. Another issue with language and wording is that the wording of joint titling policies may be unclear that they are intended to benefit male and female pairs rather than a pair of males as a result of the masculine emphasis of Spanish.

**Mexico**

Constraints and opportunities for gender equality in resources exist at many levels of Mexican policy. Around 80 percent of agricultural producers in the country own less than five hectares of land.\(^{105}\) Mexico has the most extensive constitutional land policy in Central America in the form of Article 27, which states that “los mexicanos por nacimiento o por naturalización y las sociedades mexicanas tienen derecho para adquirir el dominio de las tierras...”\(^{106}\) As discussed above, the Spanish language includes females in the masculine plural, so all male and female Mexicans have this right to land. Article 27 also privatizes the land distribution process, allows for the privatization of *ejidos*, and


\(^{106}\) “Mexicans by birth or naturalization and Mexican societies have the right to acquire land...” Political Database of the Americas Georgetown University: Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service: Center for Latin American Studies, 2006, accessed September 29 2009; Available from www.pdba.georgetown.edu.
changes the land inheritance law. Initially, some feared that the usual practice of land passing to a deceased ejidatario’s widow would end in favor of male heirs, but these fears have proven unfounded. Instead, the practice of making the widow the heir has continued as men reward their wives for being good mothers. Other opportunities for women to receive ejido land and membership have arisen as a result of male migration. Unused land can be allocated to women for crop or livestock cultivation or other non-agricultural activities to prevent it from being taken by the state. Usually, the ejido members prefer to keep the land from being allocated to someone from outside the community, even if it means having female members.

The constitution also allows for the dissolution and redistribution of large plantations. The maximum size for an individual’s landholding, if destined for coffee production, is three hundred hectares. Creating smaller parcels should mean that there are more parcels for distribution, and thus women have a better chance of being allocated land. Artículo 27 includes security of tenure through a cadastral system. It intends to “garantizar la seguridad jurídica en la tenencia de la tierra ejidal, comunal y de la pequeña propiedad, y apoyara la asesoría legal de los campesinos.” Both male and

107 Deere and León, *Empowering Women*, 151-152.
111 *Political Database*.
112 “to guarantee the jurisidctional security in ejidal, communal and small-holding land tenure, and help farmers with legal advice.” *Political Database.*
female landholders are empowered by this constitutional objective because they will not fear a legal loss of this important resource. Particularly important is that the state pledges to provide legal assistance, something to which few rural agriculturalists have access. As a result of constitutional encouragement, there are more than one million female landholders in Mexico.\textsuperscript{113}

Access to resources, particularly for women, is also provided for by the Secretaria de Agricultura, Ganaderia, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentacion (SAGARPA)’s five-year development plan that began in 2007.\textsuperscript{114} SAGARPA’s plan has five objectives to create a more competitive rural economy and increase employment in rural areas.\textsuperscript{115} This bold plan creates opportunities for greater empowerment of women producers through access to resources through the first four objectives and increased agency through the fifth objective. The first objective is to “Elevar el nivel de desarrollo humano y patrimonial de los mexicanos que viven en las zonas rurales y costeras.”\textsuperscript{116} This objective increases access to physical and intellectual resources. The second objective seeks to supply the internal national market with quality, healthy food from Mexico’s farms and oceans. This will increase both the market resources of producers and their agency to reach a larger market. The plan’s third objective calls for an increase of Mexico’s presence in global markets, including value-added and bioenergy products.

\textsuperscript{113} Food and Agriculture Organization, \textit{Gender and Land}.

\textsuperscript{114} “Programa Sectoral,” 1.

\textsuperscript{115} “Programa Sectoral.” 20.

\textsuperscript{116} “To elevate the level of human development and wealth of Mexicans living in rural and costal zones.” “Programa Sectoral,” 20.
While it does not directly impact producers, this objective will indirectly increase their access to international markets. Objective Four plans to “Revertir el deterioro de los ecosistemas, a través de acciones para preservar el agua, el suelo y la biodiversidad.”

In the long run, protecting ecosystems will increase rural producer’s access to natural resources, such as arable land and clean water. The fifth rural development objective is for the development to occur harmoniously throughout rural areas through concerted actions, acceptance from all rural actors, and to promote legal certainty in the rural environment. This objective will increase the agency of producers by involving them as stakeholders in the plan and other development projects.

The gendered implications of the program are exposed in the exact project strategies intended to allow each objective to be met. Some of the strategies specifically mention women and young people as priority groups for empowerment dimensions. For example, strategy 1.4 calls for particular attention to rural women’s increased access to resources “para tratar de eliminar las disparidades a que se enfrentan, en relación con el acceso a los programas y servicios y la participación en los procesos de adopción de decisiones.”

Programs and services are two resources that women frequently are denied either because they are not considered producers or because their reproductive duties prevent them from participating. By making women a priority group for programs and services, their access to human capital and technological resources will increase.

---

117 “To reverse the deterioration of ecosystems through actions for preserving water, soil and biodiversity.” “Programa Sectoral,” 20.

118 “Programa Sectoral,” 20.

119 “to try to eliminate the disparities they [women] face in relation to access to programs, services, and participation in the adoption of decisions.” “Programa Sectoral,” 24.
Strategy 1.4 also calls for the design and implementation of development data results disaggregated by gender and age, which is an important step in determining the true situation of women farmers so that strategies for their empowerment can be refined to have a greater impact.\textsuperscript{120} Strategy 3.2 has a similar emphasis on ensuring that women and young people are prioritized in productivity assistance, which is another resource necessary for empowering producers.\textsuperscript{121}

Resources are also promoted throughout other objectives. Several strategies for Objective Two call for an increased use of technology to create better-quality products.\textsuperscript{122} Strategy 2.2, for example, seeks to use new technologies to control and eradicate plant diseases. The use of information and communication technologies for rural development is Strategy 2.3. Both of these strategies require technology resources to be available to all producers. Strategy 3.1 also seeks to use technology to create advantages for producers. The plan’s emphasis on providing technological aid and training to producers is a key component to increasing access to resources, and thereby fostering empowerment.

Objective Five of the program intends to promote the agency of producers and other stakeholders in rural production. It hopes to “generar espacios de propuestas, análisis, debate concertación, consensuy acuerdos con los diferentes actores del sector” including Congress, agents, estate organizations, and state and municipal government, as

\textsuperscript{120} “Programa Sectoral,” 24.
\textsuperscript{121} “Programa Sectoral,” 31.
\textsuperscript{122} “Programa Sectoral,” 28.
well as producers. The objective hopes to use these levels of stakeholders to reduce redundancy in laws, norms and regulations that result in a loss of time and inhibit productivity. Objective Five also includes SAGARPA’s overall commitment to women’s empowerment, as summarized by Strategy 5.4. This strategy calls for action to be taken to “Eliminar cualquier discriminación por motivos de género y garantizar igualdad de oportunidades para los hombres y mujeres.” Unfortunately, specific actions for eliminating gender-based discrimination are not detailed by the plan. Without a concrete plan of action, reducing the discrimination that women face in terms of resources, agency and achievement in agriculture will be difficult given the natural bias of officials in favor of male producers.

The Ley General de Sociedades Cooperativas is another Mexican policy that impacts the gendered outcomes of empowerment of coffee producers. The law has very detailed principles for the organization of cooperatives that can increase members’ access to resources and agency to make decisions and have access to national and international markets. Specifically, the constitution of cooperative associations must include equality of agency for women and men. Women cannot be punished for not attending meetings or general assemblies because of their domestic duties. The law goes on to

123 “to generate spaces of proposals, analysis, harmonious debate, consensus and agreement with different secular actors.” “Programa Sectoral,” 43-44.

124 “Programa Sectoral,” 45.

125 “To eliminate gender-motivated discrimination and to guarantee equal opportunities for men and women.” “Programa Sectoral,” 45.

126 "Ley General De Sociedades Cooperativas." ed. Congreso de la Unión: (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 1994).

127 “Ley General de Sociedades Cooperativas.”
recommend that women not be denied membership in cooperatives, particularly those who are responsible for a family.\textsuperscript{128} It is heartening to see that the Mexican government supports female-headed households as members of production cooperatives. However, it is much more likely that women, if they do achieve membership in a Mexican coffee cooperative, will be token members and have no real decision-making power about their land, products, or the workings of the cooperative.\textsuperscript{129}

Guatemala

Guatemala has had a turbulent modern history that has greatly impacted agricultural producers, particularly women. However, its policies support agriculture, including governmental involvement in providing resources and distributing products. Women producers in the coffee sector have become a group of interest in recent years, but decades-old laws on coffee and cooperatives still have significant potential to positively or negatively impact women’s empowerment. The mentions of gender equality in the Peace Accords of the early 1990s and the creation of the Secretaria Presidencial de la Mujer (Presidential Secretary of the Woman, SPM) are a step in the right policy direction for Guatemala’s women in access to resources, agency and achievements. The SPM is intended to “reconocieron la situación específica de discriminación de las mujeres y se comprometieron a suerarla asegurando su participación en la toma de decisiones sobre las estrategias, planes y programas de

\textsuperscript{128} “Ley General de Sociedades Cooperativas.”

\textsuperscript{129} Loraine Ronchi. "The Impact of Fair Trade on Producers and Their Organizations: A Case Study with Coocafe in Costa Rica." In \textit{PRUS Working Paper No. 11}. (Falmer, Brighton: Poverty Research Unit at Sussex, University of Sussex, 2002); Lyon “Equal to Them.”
The office provides significant agency to women, but primarily elite women who are involved in politics. However, the SPM’s responsibilities include incorporating rural women into development, education and poverty reduction programs, so women in agriculture do receive some resource and agency benefits from the office’s existence.

Article 39 of the Guatemalan constitution states: “Se garantiza la propiedad privada como un derecho inherente a la persona humana.” The constitution also protects communal farming property and family wealth. This is different from land-reform articles in other constitutions that seek to redistribute large landholdings, notably Mexico as discussed above. This disadvantages small producers and landless rural residents by denying them the most important resource for their livelihood. However, Article 39 continues by declaring that the state will create conditions that facilitate the use and enjoyment of goods produced so that individual and national progress can be made to benefit all citizens. Presumably, this means that the state intends to be involved in improving national and international market access for all producers and that it will use the proceeds from exporting to increase resources available to producers.

The Peace Accords are extensive, but two agreements in particular have an impact on the empowerment of Guatemalan women. The first is the “Acuerdo para el desarrollo…” The office provides significant agency to women, but primarily elite women who are involved in politics. However, the SPM’s responsibilities include incorporating rural women into development, education and poverty reduction programs, so women in agriculture do receive some resource and agency benefits from the office’s existence.

Article 39 of the Guatemalan constitution states: “Se garantiza la propiedad privada como un derecho inherente a la persona humana.” The constitution also protects communal farming property and family wealth. This is different from land-reform articles in other constitutions that seek to redistribute large landholdings, notably Mexico as discussed above. This disadvantages small producers and landless rural residents by denying them the most important resource for their livelihood. However, Article 39 continues by declaring that the state will create conditions that facilitate the use and enjoyment of goods produced so that individual and national progress can be made to benefit all citizens. Presumably, this means that the state intends to be involved in improving national and international market access for all producers and that it will use the proceeds from exporting to increase resources available to producers.

The Peace Accords are extensive, but two agreements in particular have an impact on the empowerment of Guatemalan women. The first is the “Acuerdo para el

---

130 “Recognize the specific discriminatory situation of women and commit to ensuring their participation in decision-making about strategies, plans and programs of development…” “Iniciativa Que Dispone Reformar La Ley Del Organismo Ejecutivo.” ed. Organismo Ejecutivo: (Congreso de la Republica Guatemala, 2002).

131 “Private property is guaranteed as an inherent right of the human person.” Political Database.

132 Political Database.
reasentamiento de las poblaciones desarraigadas por el enfrentamiento armado.”¹³³ This particular accord was intended to not only resettle persons displaced by the civil war, but to promote sustainable development and combat poverty. Access to land, preferably at the refugees’ point of origin, as a resource for combating poverty among those resettled is the primary goal. The accord calls for a “particular énfasis en la protección de las familias encabezadas por mujeres así como las viudas y de los huérfanos, que han sido más afectados.”¹³⁴ Thus, women were more likely to receive land as they returned home. As of 2003, there 63,627 women proprietors in Guatemala.¹³⁵

The General Cooperative Law of Guatemala was created to regulate the shares of resources and agency among members. Unlike the Mexican law, the Guatemalan law does not make any provisions for the challenges that female members face, such as the inability to attend meetings because of domestic duties. The law also differs from that of Mexico in that it does not make specific recommendation for the inclusion of female members. Membership in a cooperative is a valuable resource, but one that is difficult for women to achieve without special attention. For those women who are members of Guatemalan cooperatives, there are a number of resource and agency benefits that are laid out by the law. To form, cooperatives must meet stringent standards, including not making a profit that does not benefit members, allowing each member a vote, and


¹³⁴ “particular emphasis one the protection of female-headed households such as those of widows and orphans, which are most affected.” El Gobierno de la República de Guatemala and La Unidad Revolucionaria Naiconal Guatemalteca, “Acuerdo.”

¹³⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization, Gender and Land.
encourage cooperative education. Cooperatives are encouraged to establish social services with the profits earned through the sale of products. The state also provides resources to cooperatives that also benefit members, such as credit and technical assistance.

“Considerando que el cultivo y exportación del café constituye un renglón importante en la economía nacional…” Thus begins the Guatemalan Law of Coffee, which seeks to provide resources and agency to coffee producers so that they can achieve the sale of high-quality coffee on the international market and earn a sustainable livelihood. The law created the Association National de Café (National Association of Coffee, ANACAFE). Among ANACAFE’s obligations is to advise the President on coffee policy and execute those policies. It also contains the governing body for all coffee producers in the country. The organization thus provides national-level agency – every coffee producer is a member of the association and is able to vote for members of the board of directors. ANACAFE also provides international market access because it is the only authority authorized to provide export permits. All producers are required to register with ANACAFE, which means that they automatically have access to the resources and agency that are the benefits of membership.

Guatemala certainly recognizes the contribution of female producers to the country’s coffee sector. The Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación

---

137 “Considering that the cultivation and exportation of coffee constitutes an important item in the national economy…” "Ley Del Café." ed. Ministerio de Agricultura, Ministerio de Economía and Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 225: (Republica de Guatemala: Recopilación de Leyes, 1969).
(Ministry of Agriculture, Cattle and Food, MAGA) has prioritized coffee production throughout the country. As a part of this initiative, Mujeres en Café Guatemala (Women in Coffee Guatemala, MCG) was created from ANACAFE to support and empower female producers and farm owners. Currently, there are approximately 3,000 farms registered with ANACAFE as owned by women, but only 7% of those women run their own farms. Only 90 women are currently registered with MCG, but the organization has only existed since 2006. The organization also includes women at all stages of the coffee production process, including roasters, exporters, and cuppers. MCG’s goals are bold. Its mission is:

To empower women leaders in the Guatemalan coffee industry by granting them the necessary tools to become competitive at the national and international level, aiming to provide them, their children and their communities with a sustainable livelihood.

Essentially, MCG provides resources to women producers. However, it also provides agency to members by providing leadership training and a space for female producers to find solidarity in the specific challenges they face in a male-dominated sector. Figure 2 shows the distribution of women coffee producers in Guatemala as well as the distribution of land and education, two key resources, amongst MCG members. Interestingly, as can be seen from the third chart, 47% of MCG members have a university education. This implies that MCG’s services

---


139 Calvo, *Women in Coffee*.

are not reaching those women who need them most – the poor, uneducated producers.

Figure 2: Women Coffee Producers in Guatemala

Guatemala’s encouragement of women involved in the coffee commodity chain is commendable, and according to Calvo, the MCG’s president, a significant impact on women’s empowerment is already clear. Thus far, MCG has held leadership workshops and an annual training program that has grown each year. They also have sponsored the first women members of ANACAFE’s board of directors – including Calvo herself.

141 Calvo, Women in Coffee.
Another success story is that of the Ruiz sisters, all of whom are in positions that have never been held by women in their estate: field manager, mill manager, and administrative and eco-tourism manager. Encouraging women to take leadership and management positions in coffee production is an important step towards viewing women as the equals of the men who have traditionally held such positions, but also empowers the women to become decision-makers at home and in the community by supporting their agency.

Honduras

Honduras is one of four Latin American countries in which the husband still legally represents the household under the default marital regime according to the Civil Code. Obviously, this policy sets up a gender inequity in access to household resources, particularly land, and in inter-household agency. It also creates uncertainty for women who may seek to leave a relationship or who become widowed, because they have no right to the marital property. However, 54 percent of couples are in consensual unions rather than married. In recent years, Honduras has created a number of policies that are designed to increase gender equality through empowering women in all three empowerment dimensions. Gender in agriculture and development has become a governmental priority, which will lead to many positive outcomes for all Honduran women, including coffee producers.

---

142 Calvo, *Women in Coffee*


144 Food and Agriculture Organization, *Gender and Land Rights*. 

54
Honduras has an unusual take on land rights in its constitution. It calls for national expropriation of land by the government “con fines de reforma agrarian o de ensanche y mejoramiento de poblaciones o cualquier otro propósito de interés nacional que determine la ley…” Reimbursement, which the law makes mandatory to accept, is provided for those whose property is expropriated. However, rural property is excluded from expropriation because it could be detrimental to economic production. This is a positive factor for all rural producers, but particularly women, who would be more likely to have their property confiscated under the assumption that they are not farmers. The reallocation of land appropriated for agrarian reform also means that women have a greater chance to be awarded land based on the idea that there is more land available for producers.

In 1991, Honduras’s Agrarian Reform Law was rewritten to allow both men and women over the age of sixteen to benefit from reform, regardless of household head status. Unfortunately, the 1992 Agricultural Modernization Law calls for joint titles only by request, and requires that potential land beneficiaries work in agriculture full-time. While the reform law increases women’s access to land, the later law clearly sets up gender discrimination. Luckily, the Law of Equal Opportunities for Women’s Article 73 sets up mandatory joint titling for married couples and consensual unions.

145 “with the purpose of agrarian reform or the widening and betterment of towns or any other national interest purpose as determined by the law…” Political Database.

146 Political Database.

147 "Ley De Igualdad De Oportunidades Para La Mujer." 5: (La Gaceta, 2000).
The Law of Equal Opportunities for Women is a well-laid out plan to empower women by increasing their access to resources, power structures and livelihoods.\textsuperscript{148} It follows the creation of the Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (National Institution for Women, INAM), and lays out a plan of action for INAM to pursue. Article 2 summarizes the priorities: “las áreas de familia, salud, educación, cultura, medios de comunicación, medio ambiente, trabajo, seguridad social, crédito, tierra, vivienda y participación en la toma de decisiones dentro de las estructuras de poder.”\textsuperscript{149} What is truly groundbreaking about Honduras’ policy is that it recognizes the multiple roles of women as well as the multiple constraints to their empowerment. The policy vows that the state guarantees the equality between men and women. It also instructs civil society organizations to include a gender dimensions in their work and for more organizations that work with and for women to be created.

Women’s access to resources in particular is detailed by the equality law. For example, the state takes responsibility, along with civil society, to educate women about environmental protection and natural resource conservation. It also pledges to make technology available to women producers to assist with environmental protection. The law promises to combat illiteracy of women, regardless of ethnicity, and encourages men and women in positions of power to do the same. The greatest contribution to the access of resources that particularly impacts coffee producing women is the law’s chapter on equal access to land tenure, credit and livelihood. Article 71 of the Equality of

\textsuperscript{148} “Ley de Igualdad,” 1.

\textsuperscript{149} “the areas of family, health, education, culture, modes of communication, environment, work, social security, credit, land, livelihood and participation in decision-making around power structures.” “Ley de Igualdad,” 1.
Opportunities for Women Law details the state’s commitment to increasing women’s access to financial resources: “estimulando el diseño y aplicación de proyectos innovadores que promuevan el acceso de la mujer a los servicios y medios de financiamiento.”\textsuperscript{150} The law also gives preference to female household heads in obtaining loans, especially for agricultural production. These women are also entitled to enjoy the benefits of agrarian reform equally with men. Also, as mentioned above, joint titling is mandatory for couples, which is divided upon divorce or separation, giving women increased ability to own land.

Finally, the Equality of Opportunity for Women Law seeks to increase women’s agency at all levels of governance. To ensure that women have effective, equal participation, civil society organizations, including cooperatives, are required to encourage women to participate in organizational decision-making and their incorporation into governing bodies. The law provides for a fine of five thousand lempiras for the first act of discrimination against women by authorities. The role of civil society is to ensure that women’s empowerment is promoted by programs and government organizations. This policy is the most extensive in Central America for ensuring women’s agency with a solid plan of action. Overall, the Equal Opportunity for Women Law is a detailed plan to empower Honduran women in multiple aspects of their lives.

Another law that impacts Honduran female coffee producer’s empowerment is the Law for Sustainable Rural Development. This law prioritizes development, particularly

\textsuperscript{150} “stimulating the design and application of innovative projects that promote the access of women to the services and financial mediums.” “Ley de Igualdad,” 5.
by increasing employment and the provision of basic services. It seeks to coordinate state policies and civil society actions with the needs of rural development to combat poverty and environmental degradation. The law creates the Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural Sostenible (National Program of Sustainable Rural Development, PRONADERS) to focus rural development coordination to improve human, social, environmental and productive development with community participation. The creation of PRONADERS presents the opportunity to empower rural women by encouraging their participation in creating and carrying out projects, in line with the goals of the Equality of Opportunities for Women Law. It encourages women to achieve community development and a better quality of life. However, the law does not make gendered provisions for this participation, so it is unclear if both genders will benefit in practice.

Honduras recognizes the importance of coffee production to the nation’s economy: “Para muchas familias rurales, el cultivo del café representa la mejor alternativa económica y la diferencia entre vivir en condiciones de extrema pobreza o vivir con un modesto nivel de vida.”

According to the Agricultural Census, there are 122,000 small and medium producers, of whom 72% produce coffee. The country’s commitment to rural development through coffee sector support is demonstrated by extensive policies and studies, as well as at the creation in 2000 of the Instituto Hondureño del Café (Honduran Institute of Coffee, IHCAFE) to advise policy creation and disseminate information among producers and buyers. During the 1990s, the state passed

---

151 “For many rural families, coffee cultivation represents the best economic alternative and the difference between living in extreme poverty or living at a modest level.” Instituto Hondureño del Café. "Condiciones Socioeconómicas Productores De Café Honduras," 1.

152 Instituto Hondureño del Café, “Condiciones Socioeconómicas,” 2.
laws to financially assist coffee producers, both in 1992 as a result of low coffee prices and following the coffee market crash and Hurricane Mitch in 1999. As with Guatemala, IHCAFE is a national body supporting coffee producers. Unlike Guatemala, however, there is not a national organization for female coffee producers and other women involved in the coffee sector. Recent coffee policies have focused on revising existing laws to provide funding to coffee producers and organizations and to refine coffee sector goals, most recently in 2008 with Directive 143-2008.

Membership in IHCAFE confers multiple resource, agency and achievement benefits. There are four unions associated with IHCAFE, including APROCAFE. The mission of APROCAFE is “fortalecer la estructura organizativa para impulsar procesos de desarrollo integral con equidad de genero y en armonia con el ambiente.” Of the four unions, APROCAFE is the only one that prioritizes gender equality in its mission, vision and activities. The union’s policy to allow both men and women to receive the financial, educational and technical benefits from membership certainly increases access to resources for female producers. It also allows them to achieve a viable livelihood through the access to international markets provided by IHCAFE.

153 "Ley De Apoyo a La Cafecultura Nacional." 1-2: (La Gaceta, 1992); "Ley De Apoyo Economico Al Productor De Cafe." 7-8: (La Gaceta, 1999).

Overall, Honduras has strong policies that favor gender equality and the empowerment of female coffee producers. Given that coffee exports are an important source of foreign capital for the country, this is unsurprising. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that male and female producers have the same opportunities so that the coffee sector can continue to grow and produce high-quality coffee – starting with requiring joint legal household representation and land titling.

El Salvador

El Salvador’s constitution recognizes, encourages and guarantees individual and communal property rights, but does not allow the ownership of more than 245 hectares for an individual. If one person owns more than the maximum amount of land, it can be transferred to others, such as small farmers or communal groups. Gender is not mentioned in the constitutional land articles as a restriction on land ownership or as a category for special treatment, but the language of the article, which refers only to “los propietarios,” suggests that land rights are intended for males only. Land that is owned by cooperatives, communes and beneficiaries of the agrarian reform are subject to special rules regarding its transfer of ownership, division or lease.\textsuperscript{155} Thus, the constitution sets up a complex, gender-biased land ownership regime that limits access to this key resource. Only 65% of female-headed households have access to an individual land parcel, compared to 82% of male-headed households.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{155} Political Database.

\textsuperscript{156} Gender and Land Rights.
The Special Law for Farming and Livestock Associations requires that individual cooperative members and land holders register with the Department of Farming and Livestock Associations. The Department’s mandate is to promote, organize and award land. Cooperative registration confers benefits such as access to credit and legal land tenure. This policy, which works in concert with the Agrarian Reform Law and the Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, MAG), seeks to provide additional protections to producers who are members of cooperatives, as many are. Thus, membership in a coffee cooperative, which is a valuable resource and source of agency in and of itself, becomes even more valuable.

Interestingly, El Salvador has an organic production policy designed to create a market for organic Salvadoran products and gain a higher price for producers. The law creates a set of standards and an accreditation board for certification within MAG. The policy defines the various types of agriculture, from conventional to organic. Unfortunately, many resources are required to initiate organic production – seeds and vegetative materials are probably the least expensive. A producer seeking to begin organic production is also required to register with the certification organization. These resources are difficult to access without initial funding, literacy, or the ability to go to the certification organization’s office to register. Women generally lack all of these prerequisites.

The policy that provides the most significant gender equality and empowerment of female producers is MAG’s Institutional Policy of Gender Equality and Strategy for Its Implementation. This broad-based program, carried out between 2005 and 2009, aimed
to increase the empowerment of female agricultural producers by overcoming institutional barriers and legal, structural and cultural barriers. The policy recognizes that the participation of both men and women in development is important for true gender equality in the rural production sectors. There are five specific objectives in the policy based on strategic areas. The first is to achieve gender sensitive policies, programs, projects, procedures and ministry interventions, paying attention to the different impacts on rural men and women. One means of doing this is to have structures and technical personnel who specialize in gender in key positions in various ministries and institutional structures. Another way that the policy seeks to include women is by creating institutional affirmative action in favor of women. This objective will increase the agency of female producers through policy and institutional transformation, but also focus on the impact on men if women are empowered by policy changes.

The second objective of MAG’s gender policy ties into the first. It plans to contribute to the construction of a gender-sensitive institutional culture inside the ministry and in other organizations that deal with agricultural production. This objective plans to promote the modification of values, attitudes and personal discriminatory practices against women inside the ministry and in society. It also looks to incorporate a gender focus on MAG’s internal policies with equal salaries and transparent procedures.


158 “Documento de Política,” 8.

159 “Documento de Política,” 9.
based on qualifications.\textsuperscript{160} Again, this objective increases women’s agency – this time at the highest policy-making levels. However, this institutional level agency may not trickle down to the producer level and benefit rural coffee producing women. This is where specific objectives three and four come in. They seek to promote the investigation and analysis of agriculture and livestock materials and rural development to contribute to gendered knowledge and gender disaggregated statistics.\textsuperscript{161} This research is important so that the gender differentiation in technology and other productive resources amongst agricultural producers can be clarified and targeted by specific policies and projects to reduce inequality in access to resources.

The final objective of the Institutional Policy of Gender Equality and Strategy for Its Implementation is to generate institutional conditions that favor equal access to Ministry services for women as well as new productive and business opportunities. These opportunities will empower women through both resources in the form of access to markets and agency through business dealings. As a result, female producers will achieve a better quality of life as well as the self-confidence and ability to produce and sell their products in a wider market. The entire policy plans to “Promover los cambios necesarios que garanticen en el MAG condiciones organizacionales y operativas favorables a la equidad de género…” in the hope that it will encourage gender equality throughout the rural production sectors.\textsuperscript{162} This policy is unique because it not only lays

\textsuperscript{160} “Documento de Política,” 10.

\textsuperscript{161} “Documento de Política,” 11-12.

\textsuperscript{162} “Promote those necessary changes that guarantee in MAG organizational conditions and favorable operations to gender equality…” “Documento de Política,” 17.
out its objectives to empower women in both the ministry and at the grassroots level, but it also lays out specific actions that will be taken to achieve those goals. Having a plan of action ensures that the policy will actually be implemented, rather than just set out to please outsiders. Additionally, institutional change can certainly have a strong impact on societal change, although it may be a long process. Unfortunately, there is not yet data available about the implementation of this policy.

Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan constitution’s Article 108 guarantees the land property of “todos los propietarios que la trabajen productiva y eficientemente.”\textsuperscript{163} This phrasing is ambiguous and could be interpreted in several ways – including removing land from or denying land to women on the basis that they are not productive or efficient in agricultural production. However, the next constitutional article does support female producers as members of cooperatives without discrimination. The constitution also provides special protections for pregnant women workers. Article 74 states that women cannot be fired because they are pregnant or after the birth of a child, and must continue to receive the same salary and benefits while pregnant.\textsuperscript{164} These protections are particularly important for female heads of household and women who are breadwinners. Other land polices also support female producers. Laws from both 1995 and 1997 support joint titling between married couples and consensual unions, which provides women with access to land, if not full control.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{163} “all proprieters that work [the land] productively and efficiently.” \textit{Political Database}.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Political Database}.

\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Gender and Land Rights}.  

64
After the civil war, Nicaragua’s land policies had several objectives: the resettlement of Contra and Sandinista military members; restitution of expropriated land; privatization of state-owned farms; and land titling to cooperative members and those with lifetime usufruct rights. However, even before the war, agrarian reform policies integrated women as beneficiaries and encouraged equal participation of women in land reform programs. It is unclear if women actually benefited from land reform or were able to keep their land after the war. What is known, as discussed above, is that the number of female members of cooperatives sharply dropped after the Sandinista government left power in the early 1990s.

Recent policies have sought to promote gender equality in development, access to productive resources, and the incorporation of women into all levels of decision-making. To this end, the Nicaraguan Institute for Women (INIM) was created to “Promover la igualdad de derechos y obligaciones entre las mujeres y los hombres en el ejercicio pleno de su ciudadanía para la mejoría de sus condiciones de vida.” In 1998, INIM created a Program for Rural Women to decrease the gender gaps in the countryside and ensure that development benefited both genders equally.

The most recent policy created is the National Program of Gender Equality (PNEG), passed in 2006. Another important policy that increases women’s access to

166 Deere and León, Empowering Women, 160.
167 Gender and Land Rights.
168 Brunt, “Loosing Ground.”
land is the 1998 policy by the Rural Titling Office (OTR) that declares that a gender perspective will be incorporated in all of its programs, future policies, projects, strategies and plans of action.\textsuperscript{170} This recent focus on women as equal beneficiaries of rural development projects and policies is most likely a response to the growing “feminization” of agriculture in Nicaragua. Whatever the reason, these policies promote women’s empowerment in all three dimensions, particularly in increased access to resources. For example, in 2001, 16% of land proprietors were women.\textsuperscript{171}

Nicaragua’s Ministerio Agropecuario y Forestal (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, MAGFOR) has created an Institutional Gender Diagnostic policy with a detailed strategy for the incorporation of gender into the ministry, similar to El Salvador’s Institutional Policy of Gender Equality and Strategy for Its Implementation. MAGFOR’s policy has four specific objectives. While these objectives do not directly impact the empowerment of female producers, institutional change is the first step in creating societal changes and promoting projects and policies that do directly support women. The first objective is to know and contextualize MAGFOR’s initialization and development actions to include a gender focus. The second objective seeks to develop an institutional analysis of Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats (FODA) that allows the detection of opportunities to incorporate gender equality within the ministry. Third, MAGFOR’s policy expects to formulate a strategic work proposal that allows the development of an immediate plan of action. The final goal of the policy is to make

\textsuperscript{170} Gender and Land Rights.

\textsuperscript{171} Food and Agriculture Organization, Gender and Land.
recommendations around a management point of view for the position and work of MAGFOR’s Gender Committee. Each of these objectives, if realized, will increase the agency of women throughout Nicaragua’s agricultural sector by giving them representation at the national level. However, it will take many years for a concrete gender policy to be developed and implemented within the ministry, and more years for the incorporation of women within the ministry to be reflected in the policies that affect producers, if they ever do. However, it is admirable that MAGFOR is taking that first step to see women as equally productive members of society as men.

Costa Rica

The land property article of Costa Rica’s constitution is fairly progressive when compared to the above case studies, but it is not fully aware of the constraints to female landowners: “Los contraltos de aparcería rural serán regulados con el fin de asegurar la explotación racional de la tierra y las distribución equitativa de sus productos entre propietarios y aparceros.”

As with Nicaragua above, this policy can be interpreted in a way that excludes women from land ownership on the basis that they are not farmers.

The Law of Cooperative Associations is extensive and provides for the empowerment of collective agricultural groups through economic, social, cultural and democratic development. While gender is not explicitly addressed, the law has implications for female producers who are members of a cooperative. Cooperatives must

---


173 “Rural partnership contracts will be regulated with the objective of securing reasonable farming practices and the equal distribution of products between property owners and sharecroppers.” *Political Database*. 

67
be democratic, which provides agency for all members. Members of cooperatives are encouraged to promote improved livelihoods. The third article lays out the principles and norms that cooperatives must follow. The article’s fifth principle requires “Neutralidad racial, religiosa y política e igualdad de derechos y obligaciones de todos los asociados.”

Gender is, obviously, not one of the discriminatory categories addressed, although technically “los asociados” includes both men and women. The seventh principle calls for increasing the education and well-being of members and their families, which can be taken to include women and female children.

Costa Rica’s Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (National Institute of Women, INAMU) is intended to promote gender equality in national policy, protect the rights of women and create a favorable atmosphere for women’s social, political, economic and cultural participation. It has clearly been effective thus far. There are 268,986 female landowners in Costa Rica. The country also has the highest GEM value of the case study countries. Costa Rica is known for the power of its women’s movement. The recent election of a female president may lead to further empowerment of women throughout the country.

---

174 “Racial, religious and political neutrality and equal rights and obligations for all members.” “Ley De Asociaciones Cooperativas Y De Creación Del Infocoop (Instituto De Fomento Cooperativo).” (1982).


176 Food and Agriculture Organization, Gender and Land.
Figure 3: Gender distribution of coffee producers in Costa Rica

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender inequalities in agricultural production and the tools to overcome them must be added to policies at all three levels. At the international level, the creation of international norms and projects designed to promote gender equality need to be prioritized. However, effective policies cannot be created without reliable data that exposes the extent and nature of women’s role in coffee and other agricultural production. Policies must be changed and enforced to truly emancipate women from the male-dominated society and agricultural sectors of Central America.

The ICO is the international leadership organization for coffee, yet its policies and programs do not address the constraints that women producers face. The organization needs to develop a section of the ICA that specifically addresses the macro- and micro-level constraints faced by women in coffee production and trade. Data collection required by the ICA must include data about women in coffee. The ICO’s partnership with the IWCA is an asset for women’s empowerment that must not be wasted.

The IDB’s policy for including women in development project is through and addresses strategic needs. Its implementation has been poor, however, which is clear from a cursory exploration of the status of women throughout Latin America. The policy, first, needs to be updated to account for the societal changes resulting from the “feminization” of agriculture and the rise of female-headed households. Second, the updated policy must include better criteria for program effectiveness than the amount of money invested. Instead, evaluations should discuss how many women are impacted, what strategic needs were addressed, and if the project is sustainable.
Both types of alternative trade discussed above have made great strides toward gender equality. However, it is not prioritized the way that many other goals of the movements are, such as democracy. Organic production standards in particular do not mention gender, although their labor standards mention child labor and worker exploitation. IFOAM’s gender training project will go a long way towards raising awareness, but the organization needs to add requirements to its policy for promoting women’s access to the extensive resources necessary for organic certification. Meanwhile, Fair Trade standard networks need to implement stronger mechanisms to ensure that women are truly equally involved in the work and decision-making processes of their cooperatives.

Guatemala has the strongest gender language throughout its policies, but Mexico’s policies, particularly that of SAGARPA, have more detailed implementation plans. This makes it more likely that Mexican women will experience greater empowerment as a result of policy. The Central American countries discussed above all struggle with the socioeconomic changes brought on by women’s gradual empowerment over past decades. They are beginning to prioritize gender equality in policy, but implementation has been uneven. The creation of national women’s organizations has helped to promote equality, but only time will tell how effective these advisory bodies truly are. In the meantime, national policies need to become more specific in their inclusion of specific tools to address strategic needs and elevate women’s status.
CONCLUSION

Women’s empowerment in Central America is increasing as a result of international, alternative trade and national policies. The strategic needs of women agricultural producers are generally addressed by these policies because they provide long-term empowerment though education and training programs, increased decision-making power and the achievement of a livelihood. However, traditional Latin American views of women’s and men’s roles in coffee farming and trade are still reinforced by many national and international policies that are supposedly gender neutral. Since these policies do not explicitly refer to both men and women, officials implementing them continue their male bias in providing resources and services. As a result, the implementation of many potentially empowering policies has been weak. Opportunities have been lost, but they can still be regained with a concerted gender focus among policymakers, project creators and organizations that work with coffee producers. Unfortunately, the dearth of research and statistics on women agricultural producers in general has made gender planning and policy-making initiatives difficult. Without reliable data about the roles and extent of women’s participation in coffee production and trade, effective policies based on their needs cannot be developed. Thus, an important segment of rural Central America will be left out of development and empowerment initiatives, eventually resulting in greater gender and economic inequality throughout the region.
REFERENCES


"Ley De Igualdad De Oportunidades Para La Mujer." 1-6: La Gaceta, 2000.


Instituto Hondureño del Café. "Condiciones Socioeconómicas Productores De Café Honduras."


