



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/first-its-kind-research-addresses-gender-inequalities--soybean-production>

First-of-Its-Kind Research Addresses Gender Inequalities in Soybean Production



Catholic Relief Services

Researchers from the Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab discuss soybean farming with villagers in Ghana. The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research, led by the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, is assessing issues of gender equity and the role of women within sustainable soybean systems. One of the goals of the Soybean Innovation Lab is to understand gender inequalities in the agriculture sector to help transition rural women, their families and communities toward improved food security, health and economic development.

This research, the first of its kind, addresses the challenges facing smallholder soybean farmers, specifically how and if they can sustainably participate in commercial value chains. It is also among the first to identify the role of women in the soybean value chain, which is vital because soybean is primarily a commercial, non-native, labor-intensive crop.

Soybean Innovation Lab researchers Drs. Kathleen Ragsdale and Lindsey Peterson of Mississippi State University are using the [Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#) (WEAI) to study the effect of gender on soybean adoption in Ghana and Mozambique. Launched in 2012, the WEAI is a survey-based index designed to measure women's empowerment and inclusion levels in the agricultural sector.

The researchers adapted the WEAI to include two soy-focused survey modules, designed to capture farmers' past experiences with soybean production; seed access; varieties planted; use of phosphorous fertilizer and pesticide; planting methods; and use of and access to inoculum, which promotes nitrogen fixation, critical for high soybean yields.

Half of 2,000 individuals in Ghana and Mozambique receiving a "soybean success kit" participated in the survey in 2014 and 2015, conducted in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services in Ghana and the Mozambique Institute of Agricultural Research in Mozambique. The kit contained five pounds of soybean seed, fertilizer, inoculum and extension materials as part of the Soybean Innovation Lab's socio-economic research. Kits were distributed in Mozambique in 2014 and will be distributed in March 2015 in Ghana.

The results of the data from the baseline WEAI survey are currently being analyzed by Soybean Innovation Lab researchers at Mississippi State University and will inform policymakers and the private sector about supportive policies and practices for inclusion of smallholders and women in soybean production and marketing. The WEAI survey results will also further inform research program developers and investigators on important issues of gender equity and access, and provide guidance regarding how policy actions can increase women's empowerment in soybean production.

This research addresses questions of crop substitution, market integration, decision-making and income control through a gender-based perspective. It will contribute to the Soybean Innovation Lab's program, which probes issues of asset ownership and allocation to soybean, labor allocation, decision-making and soybean income control along gender lines.