

Women in Agribusiness: The Impact of Gender-Diverse Teams on Value Chain Performance in Emerging Economies

Eniobamo Olajumoke B.¹; Ikuejewa, Igbekele I.²

^{1,2} Lead City University, Ibadan

Publication Date: 2025/09/08

Abstract: In the context of emerging economies, agribusinesses are increasingly recognized not only as engines of economic growth but also as potential platforms for advancing gender equity. Despite this, women remain underrepresented in decision-making roles and technical positions within agribusiness value chains. This paper conceptually explores the impact of gender-diverse teams on agribusiness value chain performance, emphasizing the role of inclusive participation in enhancing coordination, innovation, and economic outcomes across the chain. Drawing on insights from Gender and Development (GAD) theory and Value Chain Theory, the paper posits that gender-diverse teams contribute to improved responsiveness, greater trust among chain actors, and more inclusive distribution of resources and benefits.

Through an integrative review of literature from agricultural economics, development studies, and organizational behavior, this study synthesizes evidence to propose a conceptual framework linking gender diversity within agribusiness teams to critical performance indicators such as efficiency, coordination, and market adaptability. The paper further identifies institutional and cultural barriers that hinder gender inclusion and proposes strategic recommendations for policymakers, agribusiness firms, and development agencies.

By highlighting the overlooked value of gender-diverse team structures in agricultural systems, this paper contributes to the discourse on sustainable and inclusive agribusiness development in low- and middle-income countries, and offers a roadmap for rethinking gender roles as a core component of value chain performance.

Keywords: Gender Diversity, Agribusiness, Value Chain Performance, Emerging Economies, Women in Agriculture, Inclusive Development, Gender and Development (GAD) Theory, Value Chain Theory, Team Composition, Sustainable Agribusiness.

How to Cite: Eniobamo Olajumoke B.; Ikuejewa, Igbekele I. (2025) Women in Agribusiness: The Impact of Gender-Diverse Teams on Value Chain Performance in Emerging Economies. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(8), 2592-2601. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25aug419>

I. INTRODUCTION

Agribusiness stands as a cornerstone of economic development in emerging economies, driving job creation, food security, and rural transformation. As global attention increasingly shifts toward sustainable and inclusive models of growth, the role of gender in agricultural systems has become a focal point of policy debates, academic inquiry, and development practice. While women constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural workforce accounting for up to 43 percent globally, and even higher in some regions they are still systematically underrepresented in leadership, decision-making, and technical roles within agribusiness value chains. This persistent gap not only undermines gender equality but also constrains the potential for innovation, productivity, and long-term competitiveness in the sector.

Recent studies in organizational behavior and development economics suggest that gender-diverse teams offer a range of benefits, including more robust decision-making processes, broader perspectives on consumer needs, and improved team cohesion. However, empirical attention to how such diversity influences agribusiness outcomes particularly in emerging economies remains limited. Where women are present in the value chain, their roles are often concentrated in low-wage, informal, or labor-intensive segments, while higher-value nodes such as processing, marketing, and management remain male-dominated. This exclusion is frequently reinforced by social norms, unequal access to resources, and institutional barriers.

The present paper addresses this gap by exploring, from a conceptual standpoint, the potential impact of gender-diverse teams on the performance of agribusiness value chains in emerging economies. It does so by drawing on two

complementary theoretical lenses: the Gender and Development (GAD) theory, which advocates for the integration of gender considerations in all dimensions of development; and Value Chain Theory, which provides a framework for analyzing the sequence of activities through which value is created and captured in agribusiness systems. By integrating these perspectives, the paper builds a conceptual framework that links gender inclusion in team composition to key indicators of value chain performance, such as efficiency, coordination, innovation, and market adaptability.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both scholarship and practice. On the academic front, it provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how gender-inclusive team structures may contribute to more responsive and competitive agribusinesses. On the policy and practitioner side, it highlights actionable pathways for enhancing gender integration in agribusinesses, not just as a matter of social justice but also as a strategic imperative for value chain optimization.

Importantly, this paper maintains a broad global lens, engaging with examples from diverse regions such as Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, where women play crucial but often invisible roles in agriculture. The choice of a global perspective reflects the shared structural challenges that women face across emerging economies, while also allowing for the identification of context-specific strategies and interventions that have shown promise in enabling gender diversity and improving agribusiness outcomes.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the existing literature on gender roles in agribusiness, the structure of value chains, and the role of diverse teams in organizational performance. Section 3 outlines the theoretical foundations of the study, focusing on Gender and Development theory and Value Chain theory. Section 4 presents the conceptual framework and elaborates on the hypothesized linkages between gender-diverse teams and value chain performance indicators. Section 5 discusses implications for policy and practice, and Section 6 concludes with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

In sum, this paper seeks to elevate the conversation on gender and agribusiness by reframing women not merely as beneficiaries or laborers within agricultural systems, but as strategic actors whose participation in diverse teams can unlock new pathways for value creation, resilience, and sustainable development in emerging economies.

II. GENDER ROLES IN AGRIBUSINESS

Agriculture remains the dominant source of employment for women in many emerging economies, yet their participation is often characterized by unequal access to productive resources, exclusion from decision-making roles, and limited representation in agribusiness leadership. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women make up nearly half of the agricultural labor force in

developing countries, with the figure rising to over 60 percent in some Sub-Saharan African and South Asian contexts. Despite their prominent presence, women are disproportionately concentrated in low-value segments of agribusiness value chains such as subsistence farming, food processing, and informal retail, while men dominate more lucrative nodes including commercial production, agribusiness management, and export-oriented trade.

This gendered division of labor reflects deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, structural inequalities, and institutional barriers. Land ownership laws, for example, in many emerging economies either restrict women's legal right to inherit or own land, or are poorly implemented, limiting their ability to access credit, insurance, and extension services. Without secure land tenure or collateral, women struggle to scale agribusiness operations or enter higher-value markets. Similarly, gender gaps in education, digital literacy, and access to information technologies limit women's ability to participate in agri-innovation, supply chain management, or agritech entrepreneurship.

Studies have shown that when women are given access to resources equivalent to men, they can achieve comparable or even superior agricultural productivity. However, the persistent invisibility of women's labor in agribusiness often leads to policy and institutional neglect, further entrenching inequalities. For example, data from Southeast Asia and Latin America reveal that women play critical roles in post-harvest handling, quality control, and value addition yet, these contributions are often informal, unpaid, and unrecognized in formal agricultural planning.

Moreover, the feminization of agriculture where men migrate to urban areas for wage labor, leaving women to manage farms has not necessarily translated into greater empowerment or formal recognition for women in agribusiness. Instead, women often face a "double burden" of managing production responsibilities alongside unpaid domestic labor. This dynamic not only affects their well-being but also impedes their full engagement in agribusiness development initiatives.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that inclusive agribusiness models particularly those that actively promote gender parity can yield significant benefits. For instance, inclusive contract farming schemes, gender-sensitive cooperatives, and women-led agribusiness networks have demonstrated success in improving household incomes, food security, and community resilience. In Kenya, for example, women's participation in dairy cooperatives has enhanced not only productivity but also social cohesion and financial inclusion. In India, women-led producer companies have gained ground in value-added processing and direct market access, challenging traditional power asymmetries in the food system.

Nevertheless, many of these successes remain fragmented and under-scaled. Most interventions remain pilot projects or donor-driven initiatives without long-term institutional support. Moreover, the literature largely focuses

on women as individual actors or beneficiaries of development projects, rather than as integral members of diverse teams shaping agribusiness outcomes at organizational or systemic levels.

This limited framing overlooks the potential of gender-diverse teams to influence agribusiness performance in a more holistic manner moving beyond individual empowerment to the collective advantages that emerge when women are fully integrated into decision-making structures across the value chain. It is this broader conceptual shift from participation to representation and influence that this paper seeks to explore more fully.

➤ *Value Chain Structures and Performance Metrics*

The concept of a value chain refers to the full range of activities required to bring a product from conception through production, transformation, marketing, and delivery to final consumers. In the context of agribusiness, value chains include all actors and processes involved in the production and exchange of agricultural goods from input suppliers and farmers to processors, transporters, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers. These chains are increasingly viewed not merely as linear production sequences but as dynamic systems where coordination, efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness determine competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

In emerging economies, agribusiness value chains often exhibit considerable fragmentation, weak linkages between actors, and inefficiencies arising from inadequate infrastructure, information asymmetries, and institutional voids. These structural constraints affect not only productivity but also the equitable distribution of value among chain participants. Smallholder farmers, especially women, are particularly disadvantaged in these systems due to limited access to markets, technology, and financing mechanisms.

To assess the performance of agribusiness value chains, scholars and practitioners rely on a variety of quantitative and qualitative metrics. Among the most commonly used indicators are:

- **Value Chain Efficiency:** Measured by the ratio of inputs to outputs, including time, cost, and resource optimization across different chain stages.
- **Coordination:** The degree to which chain actors are interconnected and able to align their roles, timing, and expectations effectively.
- **Market Responsiveness:** The capacity of the value chain to adapt quickly to consumer demands, policy shifts, and environmental shocks.
- **Inclusiveness and Equity:** The extent to which value creation and capture are equitably distributed among chain actors, particularly marginalized groups like women or youth.
- **Innovation and Learning Capacity:** The ability of value chain actors to adopt new technologies, practices, and

market strategies that enhance competitiveness and resilience.

Traditionally, efforts to enhance value chain performance in emerging economies have focused on technical solutions such as improved inputs, post-harvest technologies, or logistics infrastructure. While these interventions are essential, they often overlook the social and organizational dimensions of value chain management, especially the role of human capital, leadership, and team dynamics.

Recent studies have begun to highlight the importance of governance structures within value chains how decisions are made, who has power, and how risks and rewards are shared. Value chains governed by large agribusinesses or exporters may impose quality standards and timelines that are difficult for small producers to meet, while producer-led or cooperative governance models tend to offer more flexibility and inclusiveness. In either case, the composition and diversity of leadership teams whether within firms, cooperatives, or coordinating bodies can have a significant influence on how effectively the chain functions.

Moreover, global value chain (GVC) literature emphasizes the significance of upgrading enabling local producers to move into higher-value functions such as processing, branding, or exporting. Gender inclusion is rarely addressed in these discussions, despite evidence suggesting that diverse and inclusive teams are better positioned to drive innovation and organizational learning, both of which are key to functional upgrading.

In light of these developments, a new area of inquiry is emerging: the intersection between value chain performance and team composition, particularly in terms of gender diversity. Although the literature on this intersection remains nascent, there is growing interest in understanding how internal organizational dynamics such as diverse perspectives, inclusive decision-making, and equitable leadership affect external chain outcomes. It is within this evolving discourse that the present paper seeks to position itself, bridging the gap between organizational behavior studies and agricultural value chain analysis in emerging economies.

➤ *Gender-Diverse Teams and Organizational Performance*

Organizational research across a range of sectors has increasingly underscored the positive impact of diversity particularly gender diversity on team performance, innovation capacity, and decision-making quality. Gender-diverse teams are generally understood to be those in which both men and women are substantively represented and engaged across roles and leadership structures. In business literature, such teams are associated with broader problem-solving perspectives, improved conflict resolution, and more comprehensive responses to customer and stakeholder needs. However, despite the compelling evidence from corporate and public sector organizations, the integration of gender-diverse team principles into agribusiness development, particularly in emerging economies, remains limited.

The business case for gender diversity rests on both ethical and economic arguments. Ethically, gender inclusion aligns with global commitments such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Economically, diverse teams are believed to create value through a wider range of ideas, enhanced trust among group members, and better representation of the needs of heterogeneous markets. For example, a study by McKinsey & Company (2020) found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability compared to their peers.

Translating this logic to the agribusiness context, gender-diverse teams within farming cooperatives, agribusiness firms, and value chain networks are theorized to contribute to:

- Greater innovation in product development due to multiple perspectives on consumer preferences;
- Improved communication and coordination within teams and across value chain actors;
- Increased adaptability to changing market demands or supply chain disruptions;
- More equitable and inclusive governance, especially in cooperatives or producer organizations.

Despite these theoretical benefits, empirical studies on gender diversity in agribusiness teams are scarce. Much of the existing literature on gender and agriculture continues to focus on individual-level constraints faced by women such as land access, credit, or extension services without interrogating how the composition of leadership and decision-making bodies within agribusiness structures affects performance.

Where studies do exist, they often illustrate context-specific successes. In Uganda, for instance, mixed-gender farmer groups involved in cooperative cocoa processing were found to have better quality control outcomes and stronger buyer relationships than male-only groups. In Indonesia, palm oil cooperatives with gender-balanced leadership reported higher participation in sustainability certification programs. Similarly, research from Latin America shows that women's leadership in agro-enterprises can lead to greater reinvestment in community development and improved working conditions for employees.

However, these promising findings are not without complexity. Simply having women present on a team does not automatically ensure better outcomes. Several factors mediate the relationship between gender diversity and performance, including:

- Organizational culture and inclusivity: Are women's voices genuinely valued, or are they tokenized?
- Power dynamics and decision-making authority: Do women have real influence over strategic choices?
- Support structures and capacity building: Are women in leadership roles provided with adequate training and resources?

In many emerging economy settings, patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes continue to undermine the effectiveness of gender-diverse teams. For example, women in agribusiness leadership roles may face resistance from male counterparts, or find their authority questioned by suppliers, customers, or community members. Without deliberate efforts to create enabling environments including policies that support gender equity, mentoring programs, and targeted investments in women-led initiatives diverse teams may not achieve their full potential.

In sum, while gender-diverse teams are increasingly recognized as an asset in organizational performance, the agribusiness sector in emerging economies has yet to fully leverage this potential. The present study seeks to build on this limited but growing body of evidence by situating the role of diverse teams within a broader value chain performance framework. It advocates for a shift in the gender-in-agriculture discourse from viewing women as marginalized individuals to recognizing them as strategic actors and co-leaders in the transformation of agrifood systems.

➤ *Gaps in the Literature and Rationale for the Study*

The review of literature across gender studies, agribusiness development, and value chain analysis reveals a fragmented understanding of how gender diversity within teams influences value chain performance, particularly in the context of emerging economies. While substantial research has documented the challenges faced by women in agriculture such as limited access to land, credit, and extension services much of this literature tends to conceptualize women as beneficiaries of development interventions rather than as active contributors within organizational and leadership structures that drive agribusiness value chains.

Additionally, the majority of gender-focused studies in agriculture remain micro-level in scope, often centered on household decision-making, productivity outcomes, or empowerment indices. Very few extend their analysis to meso- and macro-level structures, such as cooperatives, agribusiness firms, and inter-firm networks spaces where strategic decisions are made and where team dynamics have direct implications for performance, innovation, and sustainability.

In parallel, while the value chain literature provides robust frameworks for assessing efficiency, coordination, and market responsiveness, it seldom integrates gender as a structural or relational variable. Value chain assessments often rely on economic and logistical metrics, with little attention paid to the social composition of teams and leadership bodies that govern or influence these chains. As a result, organizational diversity, particularly in terms of gender, is under-theorized in mainstream agribusiness performance models.

Even in the organizational behavior literature, which presents strong evidence linking gender-diverse teams to improved decision-making and innovation, there is a lack of application of these insights to the agribusiness sector in low- and middle-income countries. Most existing studies focus on corporate environments in high-income economies, overlooking the cultural, institutional, and structural differences that shape team functioning and outcomes in agricultural systems of the Global South.

Furthermore, there is insufficient conceptual integration between Gender and Development (GAD) theory, which advocates for the structural transformation of gender relations in all sectors, and Value Chain theory, which focuses on optimizing economic flows and stakeholder coordination. While both frameworks offer valuable lenses, few studies combine them to explore how gender diversity within organizational teams might shape the performance of agribusiness value chains in emerging contexts.

This paper seeks to fill these gaps by offering a conceptual synthesis of these parallel streams of literature. It proposes a theoretical model that links gender-diverse team structures to core value chain performance indicators such as efficiency, coordination, market responsiveness, and innovation. By doing so, the study elevates the discourse from women's participation at the margins to women's representation at the core of agribusiness decision-making and governance structures.

The rationale for this study is threefold:

- To broaden the analytical lens of gender in agribusiness beyond access-based metrics and toward organizational and systemic dimensions;
- To highlight the underexplored role of team composition and internal diversity in shaping external value chain outcomes; and
- To propose a framework that can guide both empirical research and practical interventions aimed at improving agribusiness performance through inclusive leadership and collaborative decision-making.

In sum, this conceptual paper responds to the need for more integrated, multi-disciplinary perspectives on agribusiness development, and positions gender-diverse team structures as both a means and an end to achieving more

equitable, innovative, and high-performing value chains in emerging economies.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical lenses: Gender and Development (GAD) Theory and Value Chain Theory. Together, these frameworks provide a holistic lens for understanding how gender diversity within team structures influences agribusiness value chain performance in emerging economies. By integrating these perspectives, the paper offers a conceptual basis for analyzing the interrelationship between inclusive organizational practices and systemic outcomes across agrifood systems.

➤ *Gender and Development (GAD) Theory*

The Gender and Development (GAD) framework emerged in the 1980s as a response to the limitations of earlier approaches such as Women in Development (WID), which focused narrowly on integrating women into existing development models without challenging the structural inequalities embedded in those models. GAD theory shifts the analytical focus from women as isolated subjects to the broader social relations of gender—examining how power dynamics between men and women are constructed, maintained, and institutionalized across different sectors and levels of society.

Central to GAD theory is the recognition that development processes are not gender-neutral. Rather, they reflect and often reinforce existing social hierarchies. In the context of agribusiness, GAD calls for a critical examination of how value chains are structured to include or exclude women—not only in terms of access to resources, but also in terms of agency, representation, and influence within decision-making spaces.

The theory advocates for:

- Structural transformation of development institutions to become more gender-responsive;
- Active participation of women in planning, governance, and leadership roles; and
- Intersectional analysis that considers how gender interacts with class, ethnicity, and geography to shape outcomes.

Applying GAD theory to this study helps situate gender-diverse teams not merely as tools for improving performance, but as mechanisms for achieving broader goals of equity, justice, and systemic change within agribusiness.

➤ *Value Chain Theory*

Value Chain Theory provides the second analytical lens, focusing on how economic value is generated, transformed, and distributed along a sequence of activities that move a product from production to consumption. In agribusiness, this includes a wide range of actors such as farmers, input suppliers, processors, transporters, marketers, and retailers.

Value chain analysis traditionally emphasizes:

- Efficiency in the flow of goods and services,
- Coordination among actors,
- Upgrading opportunities (e.g., moving from low- to high-value activities),
- Market linkages, and
- Governance mechanisms that determine power relations and information flow along the chain.

While the theory has been widely used in development studies to improve smallholder integration, reduce transaction costs, and enhance competitiveness, it has generally neglected

human resource dimensions, including team composition, leadership diversity, and organizational culture. Most value chain models treat firms and organizations as black boxes, focusing on transactions and outputs rather than internal dynamics.

This paper expands the scope of Value Chain Theory by integrating insights from organizational behavior and gender studies, arguing that who makes decisions within value chain organizations (e.g., cooperatives, SMEs, or agri-tech firms) significantly influences how those organizations function and how value is created and shared.

➤ *Integrating GAD and Value Chain Theory*

Bringing these two frameworks together allows for a more nuanced understanding of how internal team diversity, especially gender diversity, shapes external value chain outcomes.

Table 1 Integrating GAD and Value Chain Theory

GAD Theory	Value Chain Theory	Combined Insight
Focuses on power, participation, and institutional change	Focuses on structure, efficiency, and performance	Connects team composition to systemic performance outcomes
Seeks equity and gender justice	Seeks competitiveness and upgrading	Frames inclusion as both ethical and strategic
Emphasizes agency and voice	Emphasizes roles and coordination	Links decision-making power to value distribution

The integration suggests that gender-diverse teams can enhance value chain performance through:

- Inclusive governance, leading to fairer value distribution;
- Broader knowledge bases, supporting innovation and responsiveness;
- Trust and social capital, improving coordination among actors;
- Gender-sensitive market strategies, expanding reach and relevance.

This theoretical fusion provides the foundation for the conceptual framework developed in the next section, which visualizes and explains the hypothesized relationships between team diversity and value chain performance.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is underpinned by the integration of Gender and Development (GAD) Theory and Value Chain Theory, both of which provide the intellectual scaffolding for understanding the linkage between gender-diverse teams and value chain performance in agribusiness systems across emerging economies.

Where GAD Theory emphasizes the need for structural inclusion of women in decision-making processes, Value Chain Theory focuses on optimizing the interactions between stakeholders and processes in the creation, transformation, and distribution of agricultural value. By combining these

theoretical orientations, the framework proposed in this paper shifts the analytical lens from individual empowerment to collective representation and organizational dynamics within agribusiness institutions and teams.

A. Key Constructs and Relationships

The conceptual model comprises two main categories of variables:

➤ *Independent Variable: Gender-Diverse Team Structures*

This refers to the composition and inclusivity of organizational teams across the value chain. It includes:

- Representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles
- Balance in gender composition at technical and strategic levels
- Organizational culture and practices that support inclusivity
- Gender-diverse teams are viewed not merely in numeric terms but in the quality of participation, influence, and collaboration they foster within agribusiness organizations.

➤ *Dependent Variable: Value Chain Performance*

This includes four key dimensions drawn from the value chain literature:

- Efficiency – Resource optimization, time and cost savings, and minimization of production waste

- Coordination – Functional alignment across actors, trust, and collaborative synergy
- Market Responsiveness – Capacity to adapt to consumer trends, policy changes, and climate variability

- Innovation and Learning – Openness to new ideas, inclusive knowledge exchange, and organizational adaptability

B. Hypothesized Linkages

The framework posits that gender-diverse teams positively influence each of these four value chain performance indicators in the following ways:

Table 2 Hypothesized Linkages

Gender-Diverse Team Element	Value Chain Impact
Inclusive leadership	Better coordination and decision-making
Diverse perspectives	Enhanced innovation and market responsiveness
Gender-sensitive planning	Improved efficiency and equitable distribution of value
Empowered representation	Strengthened accountability and organizational trust

These relationships are expected to be moderated by contextual factors such as:

- Organizational support structures (e.g., training, mentorship, inclusive HR policies)
- Socio-cultural norms (e.g., gender roles, perceptions of female leadership)

- Institutional and policy environments (e.g., land rights, gender quotas)

C. Conceptual Diagram

Below is the visual representation of the conceptual framework:

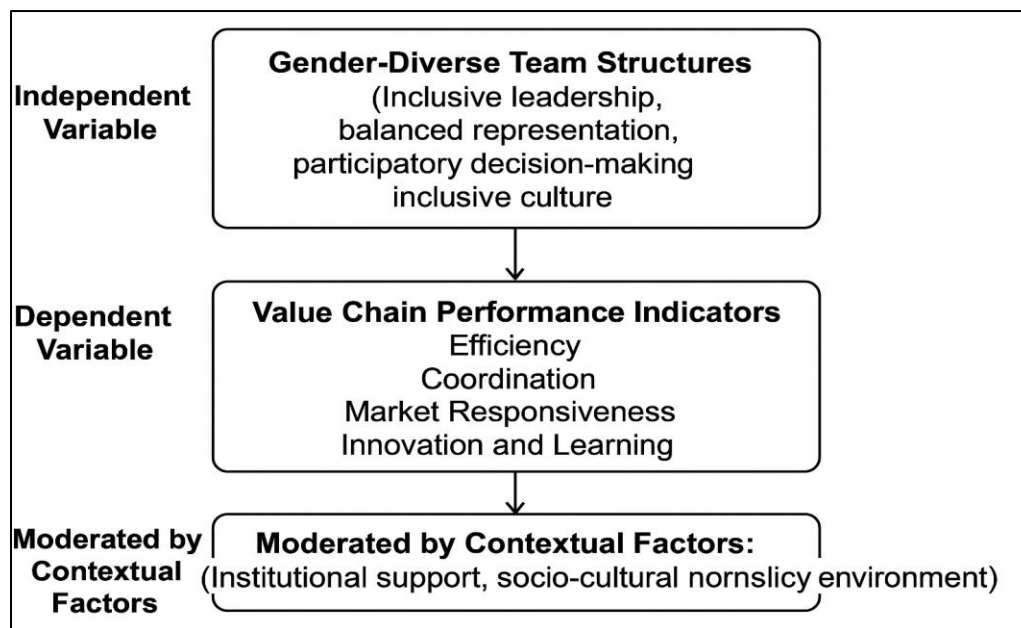


Fig 1 Conceptual Diagram

➤ Significance of the Framework

This framework makes three important contributions:

- It moves beyond individual-level analyses to explore how team-level dynamics affect systemic performance in agribusiness.
- It integrates organizational theory into agribusiness value chain discourse, an area that has been underexplored in development literature.
- It provides a practical guide for future empirical research, as well as for development practitioners seeking to

enhance value chain outcomes through inclusive organizational strategies.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The integration of gender-diverse team structures into agribusiness value chains has far-reaching implications for both policy formulation and practical intervention in emerging economies. While much attention has been placed on improving women's access to land, credit, and training, this paper argues for a more systemic and organization-centered approach one that recognizes inclusive team

dynamics as a strategic lever for improving value chain performance. Drawing from the conceptual framework, this section outlines key recommendations for policymakers, agribusiness leaders, and development practitioners.

A. Policy Implications

➤ *Institutionalization of Gender-Inclusive Leadership*

National agricultural policies and rural development frameworks should include explicit mandates for the inclusion of women in leadership roles across cooperatives, producer organizations, and agribusiness governance bodies. Gender quotas, leadership pipelines, and affirmative action programs can help correct historical underrepresentation and build capacity for future inclusion.

➤ *Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Assessments*

Governments and development agencies often conduct value chain analyses to identify bottlenecks and opportunities. These assessments should be revised to include organizational diversity metrics, such as the gender composition of teams in key value chain nodes. Doing so would generate a more nuanced understanding of where and how inclusion drives performance.

➤ *Supportive Legal and Policy Environments*

Legislation around equal opportunity employment, anti-discrimination, parental leave, and workplace harassment should be enforced and extended to agricultural enterprises. Moreover, policies that promote women's collective action such as legal recognition of women-led cooperatives can foster stronger team-based structures within agribusiness.

B. Practical Implications for Agribusiness Firms and Organizations

➤ *Redesign of Human Resource Policies*

Agribusiness firms and cooperatives should adopt internal policies that promote gender equity in hiring, promotion, training, and leadership. This includes ensuring that recruitment processes are inclusive, performance evaluations are free from bias, and leadership development programs are accessible to women.

➤ *Investment in Inclusive Organizational Culture*

Beyond policies, agribusiness leaders must invest in building cultures of trust, mutual respect, and collaboration. Initiatives such as gender-sensitivity training, inter-gender mentoring, and team-building exercises can enhance cohesion and reduce resistance to diversity.

➤ *Promotion of Women-Led Agribusiness Models*

Women-led agribusiness ventures offer both symbolic and practical value. They not only challenge prevailing stereotypes but also demonstrate the potential of inclusive leadership. Scaling up successful women-led models through technical support, funding, and visibility can catalyze broader shifts across the sector.

C. Recommendations for Development Agencies and NGOs

➤ *Shift from Participation to Representation*

Development programs should move beyond treating women as passive participants or beneficiaries, and instead promote them as strategic actors with decision-making authority. This means designing interventions that equip women to occupy and thrive in team-based, leadership, and governance roles.

➤ *Facilitation of Gender-Diverse Collaborations*

NGOs can act as neutral conveners to facilitate inclusive collaborations among agribusiness stakeholders. Mixed-gender working groups, innovation hubs, and knowledge-sharing platforms can provide space for experimentation with new models of teamwork and leadership.

➤ *Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Inclusion Outcomes*

Development programs often lack robust indicators to assess the quality of inclusion. M&E systems should be designed to track both quantitative outcomes (e.g., number of women in leadership) and qualitative shifts (e.g., changes in team dynamics, perception of women's contributions).

D. Risks and Considerations

While the benefits of gender-diverse teams are well-argued, there are important caveats to consider:

- Tokenism must be avoided. Merely including women on teams without empowering them to contribute meaningfully can reinforce exclusion.
- Cultural sensitivity is essential. Inclusion strategies must be tailored to local contexts to avoid backlash or unintended consequences.
- Sustainability of interventions must be prioritized. Programs that depend heavily on donor funding without institutional backing may fail once support ends.

In sum, embracing gender-diverse team structures in agribusiness is not just a matter of ethical inclusion—it is a strategic imperative for unlocking performance gains, innovation, and resilience across value chains. By adopting a multi-level, cross-sectoral approach to gender equity, stakeholders can contribute to the transformation of agrifood systems in ways that are both inclusive and economically viable.

VI. CONCLUSION

As agribusiness continues to evolve as a critical engine of growth in emerging economies, there is an urgent need to reframe gender not simply as a question of participation but as a strategic component of organizational performance and systemic transformation. This paper has conceptually examined the potential impact of gender-diverse team structures on agribusiness value chain performance, using a synthesis of Gender and Development (GAD) Theory and Value Chain Theory to frame the discussion.

The analysis reveals that while women form a significant part of the agricultural labor force, they are still underrepresented in leadership, governance, and technical decision-making roles across value chains. Traditional interventions have largely focused on micro-level empowerment strategies such as increasing women's access to land, credit, and training but these have not sufficiently addressed the meso-level organizational dynamics that shape how agribusinesses operate and how value is created and distributed.

This paper advocates for a paradigm shift toward understanding team composition and organizational inclusiveness as core drivers of value chain performance. It posits that gender-diverse teams can foster enhanced coordination, greater innovation, improved efficiency, and stronger market responsiveness key indicators of value chain success in volatile and competitive agricultural markets. The proposed conceptual framework offers a foundation for exploring these linkages more rigorously in future empirical studies.

Importantly, this paper also outlines policy and practice recommendations for governments, agribusiness firms, NGOs, and development agencies. From reforming HR policies and leadership pipelines to embedding gender metrics in value chain assessments, the path toward inclusive agribusiness development requires deliberate, multi-stakeholder engagement.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As a conceptual study, this paper opens up several avenues for future empirical investigation:

- Quantitative validation of the framework: Future research can test the relationships proposed here using cross-sectional or longitudinal data from agribusiness firms or cooperatives in different emerging economies.
- Comparative case studies: Comparative analysis of gender-diverse versus non-diverse teams in similar value chain contexts could offer deeper insights into team dynamics, performance metrics, and context-specific enablers or barriers.
- Intersectional analysis: Future studies can extend the model to include intersections of gender with other identity markers such as age, class, or ethnicity, especially in multicultural agribusiness settings.
- Impact of digital platforms and agritech on gender inclusion: As digital agriculture and agritech become more prominent, research is needed on how gender diversity plays out in tech-driven agribusiness ecosystems.
- Cultural mediation of team effectiveness: Given that social norms shape team interactions differently across regions, more nuanced, context-specific studies are needed to understand how gender-diverse teams function in varying cultural environments.

- Ultimately, advancing women's representation in agribusiness teams is not just a matter of social justice it is a catalyst for more adaptive, equitable, and resilient value chains. By placing women at the center of agribusiness decision-making and team leadership, emerging economies can unlock the full potential of inclusive agrifood systems.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of Food and Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*. Rome: FAO, 2011.
- [2]. Doss, Cheryl, and Ruth Meinzen-Dick. "Women's Land Rights in the Developing World: A Review of Evidence and Best Practices." *Agricultural Economics* 45, no. S1 (2014): 1–15.
- [3]. McKinsey & Company. *Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters*. New York: McKinsey & Company, 2020.
- [4]. Quisumbing, Agnes R., and Lauren Pandolfelli. "Promising Approaches to Address the Needs of Poor Female Farmers." *World Development* 38, no. 4 (2010): 581–592.
- [5]. Barrientos, Stephanie, Catherine Dolan, and Anne Tallontire. "Gendered Value Chain Analysis in Agribusiness." *International Labour Review* 150, no. 1–2 (2011): 69–88.
- [6]. Coles, Christopher, and Jonathan Mitchell. *Markets and Rural Poverty: Upgrading in Value Chains*. London: Earthscan, 2011.
- [7]. World Bank, FAO, and IFAD. *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009.
- [8]. Kabeer, Naila. "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal." *Gender & Development* 13, no. 1 (2005): 13–24.
- [9]. Mayoux, Linda, and Grania Mackie. *Making the Strongest Links: A Practical Guide to Mainstreaming Gender Analysis in Value Chain Development*. Geneva: ILO, 2007.
- [10]. Gereffi, Gary, John Humphrey, and Timothy Sturgeon. "The Governance of Global Value Chains." *Review of International Political Economy* 12, no. 1 (2005): 78–104.
- [11]. Farnworth, Cathy Rozel, and Melissa Hutchings. *Participation Pays Off: A Case Study of Gender-Responsive Value Chain Development in Indonesia*. Rome: IFAD, 2019.
- [12]. Dolan, Catherine, and Kristina Sorby. *Gender and Employment in High-Value Agriculture Industries*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003.
- [13]. Meinzen-Dick, Ruth, Nancy Johnson, Agnes Quisumbing, Jemimah Njuki, Julia Behrman, Deborah Rubin, and Amber Peterman. "Gender, Assets, and Agricultural Development Programs: A Conceptual Framework." *CAPRI Working Paper 99*, IFPRI, 2011.
- [14]. Kitinoja, Lisa. "Innovative Small-Scale Postharvest Technologies for Reducing Losses in Horticultural Crops." *Horticulturae* 2, no. 4 (2016): 13.

- [15]. Njuki, Jemimah, and John R. Parkins, eds. *Transforming Gender and Food Security in the Global South*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- [16]. Rubin, Deborah, and Cristina Manfre. "Promoting Gender-Equitable Agricultural Value Chains." USAID Briefing Paper, 2011.
- [17]. Elson, Diane. "Gender and the Global Economic Crisis in Developing Countries: A Framework for Analysis." *Gender & Development* 18, no. 2 (2010): 201–212.
- [18]. Owoo, Nkechi S., and Manfred Zeller. "Gendered Labor Productivity Gaps in African Agriculture: Does Farm Structure Matter?" *Agricultural Economics* 52, no. 3 (2021): 405–418. → Supports the discussion on structural gender disparities and productivity.
- [19]. Kassie, Menale, and Sindu Workneh. "Gender, Institutions, and Agricultural Innovation: Exploring Gendered Pathways to Inclusive Value Chains in Ethiopia." *Journal of Development Studies* 59, no. 2 (2023): 254–273. → Relevant to inclusive team strategies and innovation in value chains.
- [20]. Ado, Abdullahi, and Richard Supriadi. "Gender Diversity in Agribusiness Management: Evidence from Southeast Asia." *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development* 61, no. 1 (2022): 45–59. → Directly supports the theoretical link between team diversity and performance.
- [21]. Chagwiza, Clarissa, and Afeikhena Jerome. "The Role of Women in Value Chain Upgrading in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Review." *Development in Practice* 33, no. 5 (2023): 698–710. → Provides regional examples of gender roles in upgrading within agribusiness.
- [22]. FAO. *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems: Unlocking Potential for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2023. → The latest FAO flagship report; includes statistical evidence and policy suggestions.
- [23]. UN Women. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: Gender Snapshot 2022*. New York: United Nations, 2022. → Offers global data on gender gaps in economic sectors, including agriculture.
- [24]. Njuki, Jemimah, and Isolina Boto. "Feminist Perspectives on Agricultural Transformation: Where Are the Women?" *Outlook on Agriculture* 51, no. 4 (2022): 339–348. → Discusses critical gaps in gender mainstreaming at organizational levels.
- [25]. McKinsey Global Institute. *Diversity Matters Even More in a Post-Pandemic World*. New York: McKinsey & Company, 2021. → Updated research on the performance benefits of gender-diverse teams, applicable to agribusiness contexts.
- [26]. Wiggins, Steve, and Siobhan Kelly. "Transforming Agrifood Systems with Youth and Women at the Centre." *FAO Policy Brief Series*, March 2022. → Reinforces the paper's positioning of women as central actors in systemic change.
- [27]. Verma, Rajeev, and Sheeja Bindu. "Team Composition and Inclusive Leadership in Indian Agribusiness Startups." *International Journal of Agricultural Management* 13, no. 1 (2023): 31–45. → Case-based evidence for how gender-balanced teams foster innovation and efficiency.