



**FEED**<sup>THE</sup>**FUTURE**

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

**Partnering for Innovation**

# Untapped Markets: Reaching Women Smallholder Customers



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## **ABOUT FEED THE FUTURE PARTNERING FOR INNOVATION**

Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation is a USAID-funded program that helps the private sector to scale and market agricultural technologies for smallholder farmers through investing in technology commercialization and knowledge exchange. The program also facilitates partnerships between USAID Missions and the private sector and provides business acceleration tools and services.

### **DISCLAIMER**

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# How to use this guide

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This is an unofficial companion guide to *The Untapped Market for Agricultural Innovations in Emerging Economies: A practical workbook to help innovators reach women smallholder farmers*, produced by *Securing Water for Food: A Grand Challenge for Development* and supplemented by gender guidance resources developed by *Powering Agriculture: An Energy Grand Challenge for Development*.\*

This guide is for small- and medium-sized companies operating in smallholder farmer markets that are looking to better understand how to incorporate women – an often-overlooked market segment – into their operations as customers, suppliers, and employees. Each section of this guide provides a topic outline and is accompanied by a link to the relevant section of the full report.

\*Securing Water for Food: A Grand Challenge for Development is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the governments of Sweden and South Africa, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Powering Agriculture: An Energy Grand Challenge for Development is funded by USAID, the governments of Sweden and Germany, Duke Energy Corporation, and the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC.)

*Get an overview of the topic*

## Learn

- *How to build a customer profile*
- *How to evaluate your competitive position*

## In This Section

A basic questionnaire is provided to develop customer profiles of women smallholders

Survey women customers, or potential customers, to develop one or more profiles

Validate these profiles using secondary data such as reports, other studies, interviews

*Find topics covered in this section*

*Follow the link to the associated section of the full report*



**Click here to learn more**

## Introduction

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### Why target women consumers?

- Women play a major role in food production, preparation, and sales and are involved in household spending discussions and for and informal commercial activity.
- Women are at least half of the agricultural labor force.
- Optimal product design may differ for men and women.
- Women-owned enterprises are the fastest growing cohort of enterprises.

### Isn't selling to women consumers the same as selling to men?

- Marketing to women sometimes requires different strategies.
- Women may not purchase an item but could still strongly influence a purchase decision.
- Items that women buy, and where they buy, may differ from men.

## Summary of this guide

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### In this guide, you will find:

- Survey summaries of agtech companies and women smallholder farmers
- Tools to profile women customers to better tailor your market outreach
- Ways to evaluate your competitive position in the market
- Strategies for conducting market research
- Guidance on how to establish your product in the missing market
- Strategies to retain and grow the missing market
- How to determine whether the benefits of selling to the missing market are worth the cost

## What the numbers say

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### Women smallholder farmers...

- 85 percent want better technologies to reduce labor and improve production
- More than 60 percent say their husbands are the key decision maker
- More than 90 percent say agriculture is their primary income source
- 30 percent of women make their own choices on how they spend their income
- Water, pests, and soil are the top three challenges to women farmers

### Agriculture innovators working in emerging markets...

- Nearly 90 percent do not have a targeted sales strategy for women, while more than half acknowledge that women are up to half of their customer base.
- Perceived barriers include lack of income, access to finance, and opportunities to communicate with women
- Doorstep marketing, women's organizations, and in-field demos are the current strategies used by companies with targeted marketing to women



[Click here to learn more](#)

## Customer profiling to better target women

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### Learn

- *How to build a customer profile*
- *How to evaluate your competitive position*

### In This Section

Develop customer profiles of women smallholders

Survey women customers, or potential customers, to develop one or more profiles

Validate these profiles using secondary data such as reports, other studies, and interviews



[Click here to learn more](#)



**Bonus tool!** [Improve your marketing.](#)

## Where do you rank among the competition?

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### Learn

- *Is your product a differentiator or a cost leader in a niche market?*
- *What are your competitive advantages?*
- *Is your product positioned well in the market?*

### In This Section

How to determine how your product compares to others in the market and evaluate your competitive position



[Click here to learn more](#)

## How to reach your targeted market

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### Learn

- *What is a channel and how can you build one?*
- *How to generate market demand*

### In This Section

Finding key market influencers

Evaluate and choose channel partners to establish your product in a market

The role of community influencers, including men

Disseminating product information

What is your product's story?

How to increase product awareness

Cost considerations



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Introduction

Assessing the  
Market

Reaching the  
Market

Accessing  
Financing

Human  
Resources

Is It Worth It?

## Market acquisition: making the sale

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### Learn

- *How to use channels and market influencers to sell to early adopters*

### In This Section

What are the attributes of an early adopter?

Using demonstrations to make those first sales

Finding local sales agents for women-to-women sales

Product affordability: credit, rent/lease, layaway, group sales



[Click here to learn more](#)

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## Retaining and growing your market

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### Learn

- *How to ensure product performance and success*

### In This Section

After-sales support and training

Customer service

Customer feedback and measuring satisfaction, including designing and conducting customer surveys, and integrating iterative feedback

Success stories and promotion

Building relationships with customers and communities



[Click here to learn more](#)

## Access to financing

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### Learn

- *How to overcome challenges to women obtaining financing*

### In This Section

Why is it more difficult for women to get financing?  
Best practices for access to financial services for women  
Financing options



[Click here to learn more](#)



**Bonus resource!** [Learn more about smallholder financing.](#)

## Integrating gender into your human resources decisions

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### Learn

- *Why and how to recruit and retain women employees*

### In This Section

Return on investment of hiring women staff in product development, marketing, sales, and management

Workforce planning: what skills are required and how to include women in the process

Questions to ask when recruiting women

Training and empowerment

Measuring results



[Click here to learn more](#)



## What will it cost?

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You should ask yourself whether the cost of reaching women farmers can be earned back over time, and if so, how long. It is in this context that we recommend that you carry out a quick desk-based **cost-benefit analysis** on the approximate unit cost of acquisition of one woman customer while taking into consideration the total cost spent on marketing and sales. Check if the investment results in projected increased revenues and adoption of your innovation. While it may appear difficult or impossible to collect every cost and benefit, a company considering targeting a new market segment must do this to completely evaluate a serious change in its operations.

Keep in mind the following points while carrying out a cost-benefit analysis:

- Determine if the population in the selected geography can afford your product at current income levels. Check for annual household incomes in the region through secondary research.
- Focusing on underserved markets where the need for your innovation is validated provides a better cost-benefit ratio for early stage innovators. On the other hand, markets where you have to raise awareness and there is no previous evidence of agtech use may require greater investment of time and effort to spur adoption.

# Conclusion

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As we have seen in this guide, a common “missing market” of women as consumers and clients of agriculture goods and services, including farmers, entrepreneurs, household heads or members, and others involved in purchasing decisions may present a viable market opportunity for commercial companies offering technologies and value added services in smallholder farmer markets. When considering women as a market segment, it is important to walk through the steps outlined in this guide and the accompanying workbooks. Recognizing and tackling gender in technology design, marketing, and sales makes good social and business sense to expand sales to more customers and building brand or product loyalty for repeat sales.

This guide should help you understand how to build a framework for targeting the “missing market” and how to market your products and services to ensure uptake. It also includes what parallel messaging is needed for other market segments (men, youth, etc.) for building demand among women in smallholder settings.

## **The resources that accompany this guide are:**

*The Untapped Market for Agricultural Innovations in Emerging Economies: A practical workbook to help innovators reach women smallholder farmers. Published by Securing Water for Food. <http://securingwaterforfood.org/resources>*

*A Powering Agriculture Guide on Integrating Gender in Human Resource Processes. Published by Powering Agriculture. <https://poweringag.org/docs/guide-integrating-gender-human-resource-processes>*

*A Powering Agriculture Guide on Integrating Gender in the Financing of Clean Energy Solutions. Published by Powering Agriculture. <https://poweringag.org/docs/guide-integrating-gender-financing-clean-solutions>*