



GENDER Impact Platform

Assessing gender and gender-based violence responsiveness in Nigeria's agrifood policies: progress and blind spots

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Summary

Despite their vital role in Nigeria's agrifood systems, women farmers face disproportionate gender disparities and pervasive gender-based violence (GBV) that hinder their agency, productivity, and capacity for transformative change. Gender issues and GBV are now more than ever being increasingly prioritized in global and regional agrifood systems agendas, with initiatives such as the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Commit to Grow Equality and the Spotlight Initiative underscoring the necessity to address productivity, unpaid care work, and GBV within the sector. Practitioners continue to emphasize the urgency of integrating gender and GBV considerations into all facets of agrifood policy and practice to ensure gender-just, inclusive, and sustainable development. In Nigeria, despite the importance of agrifood systems for rural livelihoods and the high level of awareness on gender inequality, these issues have received limited policy attention, with GBV notably absent from agrifood systems policies. This study combines comprehensive reviews of policy documents to assess the extent to which gender disparities and GBV are addressed and implemented within Nigeria's agrifood system policies and practices. The review employed FAO's Gender in Agricultural Policies (GAPo) analysis tool and thematic content analysis to evaluate the findings. The results indicate that gender is increasingly acknowledged in policy language and some policies prioritize gender disparities, but substantial successes and missed opportunities are evident. Recognition and systematic integration of GBV into agrifood policies are largely absent, despite GBV's direct and indirect impacts on agrifood systems' actors, which undermines progress in Sustainable Development Goal 5. This policy brief highlights the strengths and emerging opportunities in the agrifood systems policy landscape, identifies significant gaps, and proposes actionable pathways to transform policies into gender-just outcomes within Nigeria's agrifood systems.

Key results

- 1. Conceptual clarity is lacking for gender in agrifood policies.** While these policies recognize gender disparities, the term gender is feminized and narrowly focused on smallholder women farmers. This focus excludes actors such as men, individuals with disabilities, marginalized populations, and women involved in large-scale agricultural production. This limited scope restricts opportunities to promote comprehensive gender equality throughout the sector.
- 2. Policy awareness and state-level implementation are insufficient.** Despite the increased recognition of women's challenges and progressive policy rhetoric, awareness and action at the state level remain low. The inadequate integration of GBV into policy frameworks undermines efforts towards a gender-just agrifood system.
- 3. Lack of a unified institutional approach impedes development of effective governance systems.** Persistent institutional fragmentation and inadequate coordination among gender, agriculture, and GBV actors in both public and private sectors hinder implementation of effective policies. This fragmentation leads to duplication of efforts and suboptimal information sharing at both national and subnational levels.
- 4. Dedicated budgets are lacking and implementation mechanisms are weak.** Most agrifood system policies lack gender-responsive budgeting and GBV targeting. Explicit allocation of resources for gender and GBV priorities is necessary for policy enforcement. Absence

of targeted distribution frameworks and robust budget tracking hinders transparent financial record keeping and realization of policy objectives.

5. **Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning frameworks for data management systems are inconsistent.** Lack of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data hinders development of effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks, restricting assessment of policy impacts on diverse actors within the agrifood system. A unified repository for gender data in policy does not exist.
6. **Cross-cutting gendered challenges are ignored.** Deeply entrenched cultural norms, frequent extreme climate events, protracted violent conflicts, and increasing GBV prevalence widen gender disparities. Absence of an adequately resourced intersectional emergency response framework amplifies these vulnerabilities.

Background

Nigeria's population is estimated at 200 million. Over 80% of the rural poor rely on agriculture, which accounts for 29.3% of GDP (NBS, 2021). One in three Nigerians is employed in agriculture, making it the largest employer of labor (ILO, 2024). Men account for 43.2% of the total population in agrifood systems while women account for 25.5% (ILO, 2024). Clear statistics do not exist on the share of the youth in agrifood systems. Gender disparities in access to productive resources such as land have exacerbated women's vulnerability to various forms of exploitation within agrifood systems, often compounded by insufficient support. Literature such as Njuki (2022), Forsythe (2023), and FAO (2023) points to the precarious nature of agrifood systems' activities and the GBV risk that gender roles expose women to. GBV within agrifood systems constitutes a systematic barrier to women's empowerment. The repeated but often ignored experiences, which are normalized in agrifood systems, have reinforced a systemic barrier to achieving the gender equality priority of the SDGs. GBV is a violation of human rights and this makes gender disparities and GBV elimination a top policy priority, especially in Nigerian agrifood systems, which are currently facing many other challenges due to climate change and violent conflict. This brief examines Nigeria's agricultural policies for their gender integration and consideration of GBV to identify their strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement. It suggests ensuring inclusivity, safety, and gender equity in agrifood systems through policies that not only recognize existing inequalities but also implement concrete measures to mitigate them.

Methods

We utilized the [Gender in Agricultural Policy Analysis \(GAPo\) tool](#) (Kaaria, 2016), which offers a framework for comprehensive assessment of prioritization of gender disparities in agrifood systems policy and GBV integration. The first step in the assessment involved conducting a general evaluation of 10 selected agrifood systems-relevant national policies and summarizing the results based on the GAPo scorecard as shown in Tables 1 and 2 (see also [GAPo assessment methodology](#) in Acosta et al., 2023). Next was a thematic content analysis of the policies to address the main policy questions on their gender integration and GBV considerations. These questions included: To what extent did national agrifood systems policies consider gender inequalities? Is GBV visibly recognized and integrated in Nigeria's agrifood systems policies? And what are the successes and missed opportunities for agrifood systems?

Table 1. Agrifood systems policies reviewed for gender integration and GBV consideration

National agrifood systems policies	Key policy objectives
National Agriculture Technology and Innovation Policy (2022–2027)	5
National Climate Change Policy (2021–2030)	13
National Agricultural Extension Policy (2023)	6
National Water Resources Policy (2016)	6
National Forestry Policy (2006)	6
National Seed Policy (2022/2023)	7
National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019)	8
National Aquaculture Strategy (2008)	6
National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019–2028)	7 pillars
National Seed Act (2019)	5

Results

The review identified the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) as the most gender-responsive agrifood systems policy, citing discriminatory practices as GBV issues (Table 2). It offers necessary, though insufficient, provisions to promote gender equality and protect actors in agrifood systems against GBV. However, its focus is mostly on women smallholder farmers. Policies such as the National Seed Act (2019), National Forest Policy (2006), and National Aquaculture Strategy (2008) are wholly gender and GBV blind, lacking any acknowledgement of gender disparities. While some policies demonstrate moderate gender awareness, the majority fail to integrate GBV considerations, revealing a critical gap in policy measures aimed at ensuring inclusivity and safety within Nigeria's agrifood systems.

Table 2. Gender integration GAPo score card for the selected agrifood systems policies

National agrifood systems policies	GAPo score
National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019)	5
National Agriculture Technology and Innovation Policy (2022–2027) National Climate Change Policy (2021–2030) National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019–2028)	3
National Agricultural Extension Policy (2023) National Seed Policy (2022/2023)	2
National Water Resources Policy (2016) National Forestry Policy (2006) National Aquaculture Strategy (2008) National Seed Act (2019)	1

Note:

GAPo score interpretation: 5 = Fully integrates gender equality in all aspects, 3 = recognizes inequalities but includes a few/generic measures, 2 = recognizes gender inequalities but lacks specific measures, and 1 = ignores gender inequalities or includes discriminatory measures

The policies direct varying degrees of attention to gender equality, GBV integration, and inclusivity across diverse dimensions. There is a clear relationship between the intent to be gender responsive and the practical implementation, as well as in regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the policies in gender responsiveness and GBV prioritization.

Gender disparities are a priority in the policies, but gender is feminized

Significant efforts, clarity, and consistency in recognition and targeting of gender disparities exist within the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) as a core objective. However, the focus and language exclusively prioritize the marginalized group of agrifood systems actors, particularly smallholder women farmers, with gender issues strongly perceived and defined as women's challenges. While other policies such as the National Agriculture Technology and Innovation Policy (2022–2027), National Climate Change Policy (2021–2030), and National Agricultural Extension Policy (2023) demonstrate a substantial level of gender integration in their objectives, they lack depth in strategic plans and implementation practices. Notably, the National Seed Policy (2022/2023) and the National Water Resources Policy (2016) largely ignore gender disparities in agrifood systems.

Increased gender-responsive participation in the national agrifood systems policy process is evident

The practice of promoting fair and gender-responsive participation in agrifood systems policy has reached an unprecedented level. This priority is bolder in the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019), less visible in the National Agriculture Technology and Innovation Policy (2022–2027), and absent in the other policies.

Budgets and resourcing are not gender responsive, and GBV initiatives are absent

Eighty percent of the policies lack a clear budget allocation for gender-responsive interventions, and GBV is not mentioned. This undermines implementation of gender equity programs and adequate support for GBV within agrifood systems. Only the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) and the National Agriculture Technology and Innovation Policy (2022–2027) include some references to support for gender integration and GBV response in policy; however, their resource allocation process and implementation framework are insufficient for effectiveness, highlighting a critical policy gap.

GBV awareness, prevention, and accountability remain a blind spot

Only the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) stood out by significantly acknowledging the presence of discriminatory practices in smallholder agrifood systems, such as economic disempowerment, exclusion from institutional decision-making processes, and restricted mobility. However, its approach is predominantly symbolic, indicating an absence of clearly defined operational pathways, financial commitments, responsible institutions for accountability, and a practical response mechanism. It also lacks strong alignment with national GBV legal frameworks, such as the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (2015), which undermines its effectiveness in eliminating GBV within agrifood systems.

Gender-disaggregated data and intersectionality in policy are insufficient

Most of the policies lack robust attention to intersectionality, including the use of a cultural lens on gender disparity, safety, language diversity, and informality of agrifood systems actors. The National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) shows a distinction by integrating marginalized and vulnerable actors in the agrifood system in strategic action plans. However, lack of gender-



disaggregated data reflecting the disproportionate experiences of actors in agrifood systems hinders development of robust, evidence-based interventions and targeted strategies.

Institutional collaboration and governance systems are promoted in the policies

The National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) has strong collaboration mechanisms, the National Agriculture Technology and Innovation Policy (2022–2027) has moderate collaboration plans in its agribusiness trade and industrial plan, and the National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019–2028) demonstrates strong interministerial and state collaboration with the private sector, the Ministry of Agrifood Systems, and the National Economic Council, alongside security and justice institutions. The National Climate Change Policy (2021–2030) mentions institutional collaboration but lacks specificity and depth in its implementation. The National Agricultural Extension Policy (2023) indicates institutional collaboration in its pluralistic extension delivery approach, although it lacks a clear enforcement mechanism. The other policies have weak or vague references to institutional collaboration, reflecting fragmentation and a lack of unification of governance systems that could support information sharing and adoption of best practices in integrating gender disparities and GBV interventions in agrifood systems.

Conclusion

The National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019) notably recognizes the existence of GBV in agrifood systems and prioritizes gender equity as a clear objective. However, its implementation strategies lack the necessary institutional capacity, financial commitment, and clear enforcement mechanisms that translate policies into measurable outcomes. The other policies lack sufficient gender-responsive approaches or vaguely indicate them. Significant gaps exist in conceptualization of gender, with a narrow focus on smallholder women farmers; limited policy awareness and implementation at the state level; institutional fragmentation that undermines coordination among gender, agriculture, and GBV actors; and inadequate gender-responsive budgeting and accountability mechanisms.

Gender data are flawed by the use of an insufficient sex-disaggregated and intersectional lens, hindering effective monitoring and evaluation. Cross-cutting issues such as entrenched cultural norms, climate shocks, conflicts, and rising GBV are poorly recognized, which in turn amplifies gender disparities. Addressing these gaps requires

broadening gender inclusion to encompass all marginalized groups, strengthening state-level capacity, mainstreaming GBV prevention and response, improving multisectoral coordination, ensuring dedicated and transparent resource allocation, investing in comprehensive data systems, and developing well-resourced, intersectional emergency response frameworks. These reforms are crucial in advancing gender-just and resilient Nigerian agrifood systems.

Policy recommendations

- 1. Defeminize gender in agrifood systems and broaden the scope of gender interventions.** Agrifood policies should define gender clearly and include all stakeholders, especially marginalized groups like smallholders, large operators, youth, and disabled individuals. Policies should use intersectional approaches to address vulnerabilities related to disability, age, conflict, and GBV. Furthermore, they would be more effective if they promoted gender-transformative strategies that challenge societal norms, boosting agency and productivity and reducing vulnerabilities for specific gender groups.
- 2. Promote institutional collaboration to achieve effective integration of gender and GBV factors.** Agrifood systems policies should integrate strong stakeholder collaboration and governance mechanisms. State governments should be involved to align national agrifood system policies with local priorities and to promote their adoption, working with state actors like gender desk officers within state ministries of agriculture, utilizing effective communication. Multi-stakeholder platforms at the state level are vital for collaboration among public, private, civil society, and research stakeholders to share experiences and accelerate implementation of best practices.
- 3. Incorporate and prioritize GBV in agrifood systems policies.** Attentively and deliberately integrate GBV action plans into all policies related to agrifood systems, extension services, and rural development programs by collaborating with specialized GBV stakeholders to raise awareness, prevent incidents, and support survivors. Provide training to extension officers, leaders of farmer groups, and service providers to recognize indicators of GBV, adhere to referral procedures, and connect survivors with suitable assistance, thereby ensuring frontline personnel can effectively prevent and address GBV within agrifood systems. GBV-responsive actions must be prioritized to



deliver justice and protection for victims and survivors, fostering participation and securing livelihoods. Budget allocations should be explicitly designated for GBV-response initiatives within the agrifood sector. Additionally, for effective monitoring and evaluation of impact, GBV-responsive indicators and targets should be integrated into planning processes.

4. **Ensure gender-responsive budgeting, resourcing, and disbursement within policies.** Earmark explicit budget lines for gender and GBV interventions in agrifood systems at federal and state levels, setting clear targets such as allocating a minimum percentage of agricultural budgets to gender-transformative interventions for marginalized groups while expanding to them access to grants, loans, and inputs. Ensure transparent financial reporting and independent audits to monitor expenditures and outcomes, with public access to the findings,

thereby strengthening transparency. Adopt best practices that enhance gender-responsive budgeting across agrifood policies. Resources should be allocated to promote gender equity and address gender-related constraints. Action plans for GBV must include a budget for gender justice and protection of vulnerable groups.

5. **Strengthen data management systems for inclusive monitoring and evaluation.** Invest in institutionalizing regular sex-disaggregated and intersectional data collection within agrifood policies, capturing key equity indicators such as gender, age, and disability. Prioritize data integration across relevant ministries and develop gender-sensitive monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks to enable evidence-based policy-making, enhance accountability, and ensure policies effectively address diverse needs and improve outcomes in agrifood systems.

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