



Integrating a gender perspective into supply chain due diligence

This note has been prepared by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) based on the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains and the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct. It provides illustrative examples and recommendations of how companies along agricultural supply chains can integrate a gender perspective into their due diligence actions.

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Women make up nearly 37 percent of the workforce globally in the agricultural sector (ILO, 2020). At certain stages of the supply chain or in specific commodity chains, women represent the overwhelming majority of the labour force. Across

regions women from various social categories face major gender-specific constraints anchored in deeply rooted social and cultural norms determining what is acceptable in terms of women's behaviours and roles. This limits their potential as economic actors and their ability to realize the full benefits of their contribution (FAO, 2020).

Much of women's work can be characterised as unrecognised and vulnerable (FAO, 2018a). In the agricultural sector, women are more likely to be concentrated in precarious jobs characterized by unequal remuneration, poor working conditions, no social security and with low levels of representation in decision making. In agricultural supply chains, women are often affected by multiple forms of gender discrimination including limited ownership and control over land and natural resources, barriers to financial services, and formal markets, lack of access to remedy and violation of their many basic human rights.



Companies operating in the agricultural sector thus have an immense opportunity to promote gender equality, raise the prospects of women in the sector, and contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.



SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- **37 percent** of the global workforce in agriculture are women
- **7 percent** of total agriculture investment goes to women in forestry, fishing and agriculture
- **14 percent** of management positions in the agricultural sector are held by women
- **5 percent** of women in the agricultural sector in developing countries have access to agriculture extension services (FAO, 2013)
- **Less than 15 percent** of agricultural landholders around the world are women (FAO, 2018b)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Supply chain due diligence, as recommended by the [OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains](#) (OECD-FAO Guidance), can enable companies to identify, prevent and mitigate risks in the agricultural sector by developing and implementing actions to respond to these adverse impacts. Integrating a gender perspective into supply chain due diligence can support companies in taking a proactive and systematic approach to risk management while ensuring that actions do not undermine gender equality (OECD/FAO, 2016). Due diligence can help demonstrate company contributions to SDG 5 in a measurable way, going beyond company's own operations to the whole supply chain.

THE OECD-FAO GUIDANCE FOR RESPONSIBLE AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAINS AND GENDER

The OECD-FAO Guidance helps companies observe existing standards for responsible business conduct (RBC), including the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the Committee on World Food Security's Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and contribute to the SDGs. It provides companies a practical framework and set of recommendations to carry out gender sensitive due diligence and address risks that may be specific to women. Using the OECD-FAO Guidance, companies can know and show that they are taking steps to address gender-related risks in their own operations and the supply chain, and that they are considering the impact of their business decisions on SDG 5 Gender Equality.

GENDER AS A CROSS-CUTTING RBC CONSIDERATION

The OECD-FAO Guidance highlights common risks in the sector including human rights, labour rights and tenure rights over and access to natural resources. Gender is one of the cross-cutting RBC risks which companies should include as part of the responsible business considerations. These considerations of risks can be incorporated into existing company policies on RBC as part of their corporate risk management strategies. Having comprehensive policies and management systems in place is the first step for companies to implement risk-based due-diligence as recommended in the OECD-FAO Guidance. Clear policy commitments and strong management systems enable companies to articulate their corporate-wide vision and strategy on gender equality. This includes assigning responsibility, supporting relevant business units in implementation and ensuring accountability.



Figure 1: OECD-FAO guidance recommendations to companies



Source: OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains, 2016.

The OECD-FAO Guidance also recommends that companies disseminate and incorporate gender sensitive policies in supplier contracts and agreements with business partners. Companies can encourage business partners to adopt gender sensitive policies and actions by using their leverage individually or in collaboration with others. Companies may also use their leverage to prompt business partners to participate in processes to provide for remedy.

RISK-BASED DUE DILIGENCE TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

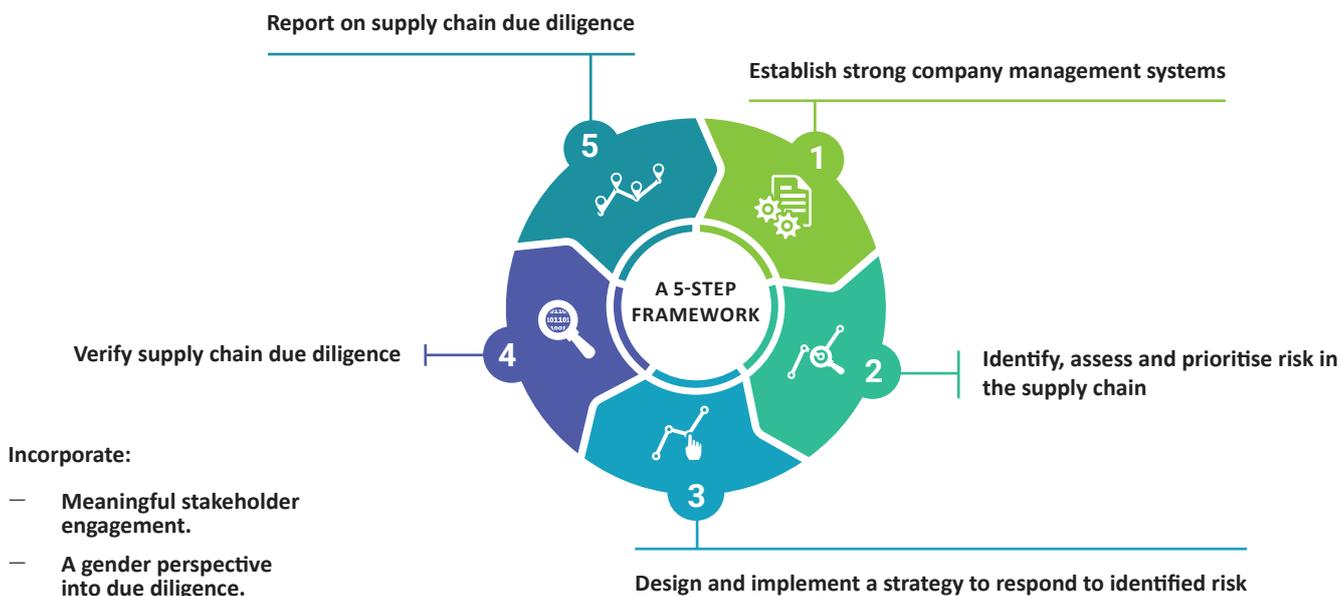
Due diligence is the process companies should carry out to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address these actual and potential adverse impacts in their own operations, their supply chain and other business relationships.

Think through how actual or potential adverse impacts may differ for or may be specific to women.

The OECD-FAO Guidance recommends an iterative, risk-based approach to due diligence. This involves tailoring approaches for specific risks and taking into account how risks in the agricultural sector, for example in high-risk contexts or supply chains, can affect women and girls and create further discrimination based on intersecting identities such as gender.



Figure 2: The five-step framework for risk-based due diligence



Source: OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains- Helping achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, 2021.

Due diligence is informed by engagement with stakeholders including women. Meaningful stakeholder engagement is a key component of the due diligence process. Women may be affected more significantly than men by a company activity, or in different ways, and may need additional attention in the context of stakeholder engagement activities. Identifying and seeking to remove potential barriers to engaging women (e.g. literacy, culture, gender and power imbalances, divisions within the community, etc.) is important to ensure that engagement is effective. Companies may also wish to consult with experts on gender issues for advice when developing and implementing gender sensitive due diligence actions.

APPLYING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE TO DUE DILIGENCE

Think through how actual or potential adverse impacts may differ for or may be specific to women.

Be aware of gender issues and women’s human rights in situations where women may be disproportionately impacted:

- In contexts where women face severe discrimination.
- In contexts where the enterprise’s activities significantly affect the local economy, environment and access to land and livelihoods.
- In conflict and post-conflict areas.
- In sectors and global supply chains in which large numbers of women are employed, such as agriculture, fresh cut flowers, domestic work among others.



Adjust, as appropriate, the actions that enterprises take to identify, prevent, mitigate and address those impacts to ensure these are effective and appropriate.

- Collect and assess sex-disaggregated data and understand whether enterprise activities impact differently on men and women.
- Develop, design and evaluate gender sensitive and gender responsive policies and plans to mitigate and address real and potential adverse impacts identified.
- Identify overlapping / accumulated vulnerabilities (e.g. indigenous, illiterate, female worker).
- Develop gender sensitive warning systems and protection of whistle-blowers.
- Support women's equal and meaningful participation in consultations and negotiations.
- Assess whether women benefit equitably in compensation payments or other forms of restitution.
- Consult women outside the presence of men and facilitate separate spaces for women to express opinions and provide input on business decisions.
- Identify gender-specific trends and patterns in actual or potential adverse impacts that have been overlooked in the due diligence processes.
- Assess whether grievance mechanisms are gender sensitive, taking into consideration the obstacles that may prevent women from accessing them.



EXAMPLES OF GENDER SENSITIVE DUE DILIGENCE ACTIONS ALONG THE AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAIN

The examples below illustrate ways to integrate gender considerations into the five-step due diligence framework (Figure 2). These examples are not meant to be an exhaustive list of due diligence actions.

Step 1. Establish strong enterprise management systems for responsible agricultural supply chains

Strong management systems help mainstream responsibilities for due diligence actions for gender equality across divisions, with accountability at the board level. A company can also refer to SDG 5 Gender Equality in its company policies and highlight how due diligence helps identify and address gender-related risks.

Examples of due diligence actions:

- Adopt, or integrate into existing processes, an enterprise policy on gender along the supply chain in line with the OECD-FAO Guidance's recommendations (Figure 1).
- Structure internal management to support gender sensitive supply chain due diligence.
- Establish a system of controls and transparency along the supply chain to monitor the implementation of the enterprise policy on gender.
- Strengthen engagement with business partners, including training, to encourage the adoption of an enterprise policy on gender.
- Establish an operational-level grievance mechanism in consultation and collaboration with women or groups representing women who have interests that could be affected by a company's activities.



Step 2. Identify, assess and prioritise risks in the supply chain

By analysing its operations and business relationships, a company can map what and where gender-related risks are and know how these impact women, in turn SDG 5 Gender Equality. Assessing identified risks supports a company in prioritising actions on the most significant risks specific to women.

Examples of due diligence actions:

- Map the company supply chain to identify the various actors involved, including the names of immediate suppliers and business partners and the sites of operations. For example, a company may request the details from high-risk business relationships for further assessment, including number of workers by gender, list of risk management practices, risk assessments undertaken, etc.
- Assess the risks of the operations, processes, goods and services of the company and its business partners over the full life cycle to identify relevant rights holders and stakeholders such as women.



Step 3. Design and implement a strategy to respond to identified risks

Designing and implementing a gender responsive strategy enables a company to move from words to actions. Proactive measures to prevent and mitigate gender-related risks, including working on root causes, facilitate progress towards achieving SDG 5 Gender Equality.

Examples of due diligence actions:

- Consider impacts on women with due regard to their role as food providers, custodians of biodiversity and holders of traditional knowledge when undertaking an impact assessment on environmental, social, human rights, health and safety risks.
- Ensure that women are treated fairly, recognising women's respective situations, constraints and needs.
- Recognise the role played by women in the sector and take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women and to help ensure their full professional development and advancement, including by facilitating equal access and control over natural resources, inputs, productive tools, advisory and financial services, training, markets and information.
- Do not discriminate against workers with respect to employment or occupation on such grounds as gender identity or other status, unless selectivity concerning worker characteristics furthers established governmental policies that specifically promote greater equality of employment opportunity or relates to the inherent requirements of a job.
- Promote women's access to training.
- Identify rights holders such as women, considering not only of holders of officially recognised tenure rights, but also of public, private, communal, collective, indigenous and customary tenure rights that may not have been officially registered and titled, including through local and open consultations.



Step 4. Verify supply chain due diligence

Verification enables a company to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its due diligence actions and in turn measuring progress towards achieving SDG 5 Gender Equality.

Examples of due diligence actions:

- Ensure that the voice of women is adequately represented in the process to verify that company due diligence practices are effective and that risks have been adequately identified, mitigated or prevented.



Step 5. Report on supply chain due diligence

Public reporting includes communicating externally gender-related risks found and outcomes of actions taken. This builds trust and credibility in a company commitments to responsible business conduct and to achieving SDG 5 Gender Equality.

Examples of due diligence actions:

- Provide affected women and business partners with clear, accurate and timely information on identified risks and on the steps and measures taken to mitigate or prevent them in a gender sensitive and accessible manner. For example, a company may use the guiding questions to identify the appropriate form of communicating with women, including what barriers in accessibility might exist for certain marginalised or vulnerable groups and what the capacity of the audience is (language, literacy, location, time, availability, technical competence).



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Please cite this content as:

OECD-FAO. 2021. *Integrating a gender perspective into supply chain due diligence*. OECD Publishing, Paris.
<https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/Integrating-a-gender-perspective-into-supply-chain-due-diligence.pdf>

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