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Agroecology and Gender

A LITERATURE LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

Written by Trimita Chakma

Against the backdrop of the climate crisis, agroecology and gender is an emerging area of research, with increasing attention to this nexus in recent years. **Agroecology** applies ecological principles to agriculture and focuses on sustainability, biodiversity, and social justice. A core focus of the field is on how agroecological practices can challenge traditional gender roles and relations in smallholder farming contexts, particularly in the Global South.

Several studies using qualitative, participatory methods have examined women's experiences with agroecology in Latin America (*Cáceres-Arteaga et al., 2020*), Africa (*Bezner Kerr et al., 2018; Ravera et al., 2019*), and Asia (*Bhattarai et al., 2015*). Across these regions, this research finds that agroecology can provide opportunities to empower women, improve gender equality, and increase women's participation in decision-making, while also supporting climate change adaptation and food security. However, outcomes depend on the socio-cultural context, with agrobiodiversity management highly gendered in some areas (*Ravera et al., 2019*).

The seminal work "Agroecology: A Transdisciplinary, Participatory and Action-oriented Approach" (2016) has significantly enriched agroecology and gender literature. Emerging from pioneers like Gliessman, Méndez, and de Molina, this volume offers conceptual insights and case studies. It underscores the need for agroecological approaches to be inclusive, participative, and pragmatic, ensuring a framework to foster sustainability while considering local contexts.

Participatory methods are widely used in the literature, including participatory action research and farmer-led workshops, to facilitate co-production of knowledge between farmers and scientists (*Bezner Kerr et al., 2018; Bezner Kerr et al., 2019*). Gray literature in the form of reports and magazine articles also provide examples of women-led agroecology initiatives, often using case study approaches (*Institute of Development Studies & Price, 2018; Nischalke, 2015*).

There is a discernible shift in the literature towards incorporating feminist perspectives into agroecology. This provides a nuanced examination of power dynamics within food systems (*Trevilla Espinal et al., 2021*). Foundational concepts of food sovereignty, social justice, and intersectionality feature strongly in this emergent feminist agroecology literature (*Fraser & Tyler, 2017; Seibert et al., 2019*). Decolonial perspectives are also gaining traction, particularly in studies rooted in indigenous contexts (*Briggs et al., 2019*).

Key gaps identified are the need for more intersectional analyses that go beyond binary gender categories (*Garutsa, 2021*), a deeper engagement with power relations (*MacInnis et al., 2022)*, and a nuanced understanding of women's vulnerabilities alongside agency as climate adaptation actors (*Nelson et al., 2002*).

Overall, the literature highlights the transformative potential of agroecology for gender relations, food security and climate justice, while emphasizing that outcomes are context-specific and power dynamics must be continually addressed. More intersectional, participatory research can support the advancement of feminist agroecological alternatives globally.

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