

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Info Sheet
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Integrating Gender and Nutrition into the Granos Básicos (Basic Grains) Value Chains

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Beans



Corn tortillas



A typical plate in Honduras includes beans and corn tortillas

Importance of Basic Grains

In many Latin American countries, diets are based around “basic grains” – corn and beans. Many rural poor families depend on basic grains for their survival, and they are considered the most important crops to the social and economic life of Hondurans. Corn and beans represent twelve percent of the agricultural GDP and generate about 300,000 permanent jobs in Honduras (www.hondurasnews.com/basic-grains-crops-good). However, with climate change and poor farming practices, many families do not grow enough of these crops for their household needs and other nutritional needs are not met due to an overemphasis on these two food sources.

Contribution of Basic Grains to Family Nutrition

Corn and beans are good sources of carbohydrates and protein and are both needed to provide the necessary amino acids for growth and development of children and pregnant women. Beans are excellent sources of protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Corn provides energy in the form of carbohydrates, and is a good source of vitamins B and C. They are part of a balanced diet and need to be considered when reviewing a household’s nutrition. To understand more about a family’s nutritional needs - see this activity sheet from INGENAES: http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/ING-Activity-Sheet-2016_07-Eating-Variety-of-Foods-Andrade-Kuyper-Bell.pdf

Family Roles

Within a household, men and women, boys and girls have different “gender roles”. These roles are often based on culture, religion and traditional influences. In Honduras, women and girl’s roles often revolve around household responsibilities such as child care, cooking, cleaning, caring for small livestock and family gardens. Men are often responsible for earning income for the family, doing agricultural work that involves more heavy labor, and marketing agricultural products. Each family member contributes in some way to the household daily survival. In some households, women and men do not have the freedom to choose changes to their gender roles. Empowering men and women to understand their ability to change is an important consideration in extension outreach.

Roles in the Basic Grains Value Chains

Within the agricultural value chains women and men have different roles and responsibilities. These are often based on culture and tradition, and can re-inforce “gender stereotypes” that only *that sex* (man or woman) can do a certain task. To understand how these gender stereotypes can influence your work as an agricultural extension person, it is important to conduct a brief exercise on understanding “who does what” in an agricultural value chain. Understanding this will assist with determining who to target for agricultural training and technologies, as well as understand where women (in particular) may need strengthening. INGENAES has an activity sheet on how to conduct a gender analysis of agricultural value chains that applies to both corn and beans: English version: <http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/8-ING-Activity-Sheet-2016-Integrating-G-and-N-into-Agricultural-Value-Chains.pdf>

Spanish version: http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/ING-Activity-Sheet-G-and-N-in-Ag-Value-Chains-Colverson-2016_010-Spanish-Version.pdf

Questions for Reflection:

- 1) Who does what in the basic grains value chain? How might this affect your ability to reach men and women farmers differently?
- 2) Are the basic grains that are produced consumed by all family members? If they are sold, who determines where the income is used and does the income benefit all family members?
- 3) How can all family members (men and women) be involved in decisions around family nutrition and who eats what?