

# WOMEN FARMERS

Caring for People & Planet

Sustaining land, water and biodiversity



© UN Women 2026.

This work is available open access by complying with the Creative Commons license created for intergovernmental organizations, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/>

Publishers must delete the UN Women logo from their edition and create a new cover design. Publishers should email the file of their edition to: [permissions@unwomen.org](mailto:permissions@unwomen.org).

Photocopies and reproductions of excerpts are allowed with proper credits.

Produced by UN Women, New York, June 2026.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

Design: Oliver Gantner



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE  
**WOMAN FARMER**  
2026

**#YearOfTheWomanFarmer**  
**#IYWF2026**

# Introduction

The United Nations declared 2026 the [International Year of the Woman Farmer \(IYWF\)](#) to celebrate the essential role women farmers play in enhancing food security and nutrition, building climate resilience, conserving biodiversity and caring for the land, water, their households and communities.

This portrait series titled “Women Farmers. *Caring for people and planet. Sustaining land, water, and biodiversity*” aims to elevate the voices of women farmers – showing both their immense contributions shaping and sustaining food systems and livelihoods and the challenges they encounter in their daily life.

This series brings to life the stories of 11 women: farmers, leaders, cooperative members, aquaculture workers, women safeguarding the environment and young women working in food systems.

The International Year of the Woman Farmer invites all stakeholders to celebrate the crucial role women farmers play across food systems and promote gender equality in agriculture. This series is a co-production of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the World Food Forum (WFF) Global Youth Action Initiative, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).



WORLD  
FOOD  
FORUM





# Breaking barriers

Advancing the rights of persons with disabilities  
for inclusive agrifood systems

– YEREVAN, ARMENIA –

In Armenia, Amalya Harutyunyan works to ensure that agrifood systems are inclusive and accessible for all. As co-founder and executive director of the Havasar Educational Foundation, she focuses on disability inclusion, gender equality and youth engagement, advocating for a world where no one is left out.



She challenges the common gap in agrifood systems design, where tools, technologies and conversations are often developed without considering the needs of persons with disabilities. Through accessible content creation, she supports institutions in translating inclusion from intention into practice.

Her initiative, the Havasar (“equal” in Armenian) startup, is a digital application that transforms school textbooks, including agricultural educational materials, into formats such as audio, video, animated lessons and sign language. This helps to make learning accessible for children with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities across the country and participate in shaping the future of agrifood systems.

As a member of the World Food Forum Global Youth Action Initiative and as a young woman with a visual disability herself, Amalya brings her experience into policy spaces, mainstreaming inclusive approaches so that sustainable agrifood systems reflect the priorities and solutions of young women with disabilities.

Learn more about the World Food Forum Global Youth Action Initiative hosted by FAO here: [www.youth.world-food-forum.org/en](http://www.youth.world-food-forum.org/en)

“Every ability carries a story, and every story shapes new possibilities.”

**Amalya Harutyunyan**



# Caring for Pachamama

Advancing Indigenous women's leadership in biodiversity and food systems

– LA PAZ, BOLIVIA –

Edith Mendoza is a leader of the Indigenous women's organisation Intercultural Women of Cochabamba, Bolivia. She is a passionate advocate for caring for the land, protecting biodiversity and preserving ancestral knowledge that underpins sustainable agriculture. Drawing on her community experience, she encourages women to take an active role in environmental initiatives and responsible food production.



"The more women learn about the effects of climate change, the more we can reflect on care for people and the planet and recover the connection we once had with the Pachamama. In this way, we can move forward with practices grounded in ancestral knowledge," Edith explains.

She believes environmental awareness must be nurtured within communities, with knowledge about caring for the land and natural resources being passed on to younger generations. For Edith, rural and Indigenous women play a fundamental role in preserving ancestral farming practices, protecting biodiversity, strengthening food security and the sustaining the ecosystems and cultural heritage of their territories.

Edith's leadership reflects the commitment of many Bolivian women who work every day toward building more resilient, sustainable communities that remain deeply connected to nature.

The initiative is supported by UN Women.

*"The more women learn about the effects of climate change, the more we can reflect on care and recover the connection we once had with the Pachamama."*

**Edith Mendoza**



# Young women in STEM

Driving climate-resilient food systems in the Caribbean through science and technology

– GEORGETOWN, GUYANA –

In Guyana, Alisha Koulen is making sure the future of agrifood systems is being shaped in classrooms and communities, not only in fields.

Across the Caribbean, the communities most dependent on agriculture and fisheries face the heaviest tolls of climate change. Yet, young women in those communities are rarely equipped with the adequate tools to respond. Through STEM Guyana's Learning Pods and STEM clubs, Alisha delivers hands-on programmes and trainings in AI and climate literacy, bringing technology education directly into the coastal and rural areas where food insecurity is most acute. The next generation of agrifood innovators will come from these communities, if given the space and equal opportunities.

Her work also extends beyond the classroom. Selected from over 13 000 applicants as a youth delegate to the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference, Alisha has carried Caribbean voices into international climate dialogues. As a member of the World Food Forum Global Youth Action Initiative, she connects youth-led consultations to agrifood innovation and digital access, grounded in the conviction that climate-resilient agrifood futures can only be built when young women are recognized as the innovators and leaders they already are.

Learn more about the World Food Forum Global Youth Action Initiative hosted by FAO here: [www.youth.world-food-forum.org/en](http://www.youth.world-food-forum.org/en)



*“When young women understand climate science and digital tools, they stop being victims of broken food systems and start becoming architects of sustainable ones.”*

**Alisha Koulen**



Photos: Yakines/Ochyn Tukan

# Seeds of change

Women preserving indigenous crops  
and building resilience

– GOLO LEWE VILLAGE, EAST NUSA TENGGARA, INDONESIA –

Before rice became a staple food, families in Golo Lewe Village, Indonesia, relied on a range of local crops that sustained generations. However, tending these local crops required time and care. “No one wants to plant them anymore because they’re too busy,” said Imakulata Jedia, known as Mama Ima.



With a changing climate, relying on a single crop has become increasingly difficult. As weather patterns grew more unpredictable, with scarcer water and stronger winds damaging crops and affecting harvests, Mama Ima saw the need to adapt and change how she farms.

Building on strengthened skills, women farmers began reinforcing food security and community resilience by returning to indigenous crops. Mama Ima led the women farmers’ group Kelompok Wanita Tani Mandiri in planting and preserving a wide range of local seeds such as tese (a local potato variety) and sela (local beans) through a community seed bank. Members can borrow seeds, plant them, and return a share after harvest. “Everything that had gone extinct, we revived again,” she said.

The group also runs a soft-loan system that helps families cover farming and household costs, providing a safety net for women and reducing the risk of debt.

Together, Mama Ima and her fellow women farmers show that resilience can begin with a single seed - planted and shared by women.

The initiative is supported by UN Women through the EmPower II: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies programme.



*Everything that had gone extinct, we revived again.*



**Imakulata Jedia**



Photos: dlv/UNYFA

# Her land, her rights

Securing women's land rights through  
community-based reporting and legal support

– MATIOLA, KAKAMEGA COUNTY, KENYA –

Jemimah Oronoga lives in Kakamega County in Kenya. After being forced by her husband to leave her home and family land with her children, she struggled to find support through local channels. Although Kenyan law protects women's land rights, entrenched discriminatory social norms and limited access to justice leave many women without recourse.



Through Haki Ardhi ("land justice" in Swahili), a community-based reporting tool that enables people to report land rights violations via a toll-free SMS hotline, Jemimah was able to seek assistance. Community health workers responded promptly and connected her with legal support. With access to information and legal guidance, she successfully asserted her rights and remained on her land.

Jemimah's experience highlights the importance of accessible reporting mechanisms and community-based support systems in strengthening land governance. By equipping community workers and local leaders to respond to land rights violations, Haki Ardhi helps improve access to justice and accountability. When women can safely report grievances and receive timely support, land rights stop being a promise on paper and become a lived reality.

Haki Ardhi was developed by TMG Think Tank for Sustainability, Kenya Land Alliance, and Rainforest Foundation UK. The initiative is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through its programme "Women's Empowerment for Resilient Rural Areas" (WE4R) and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

“When I sent an SMS to Haki Ardhi, community health workers responded immediately and connected me with a lawyer. With legal support, I successfully challenged the eviction and remained on my land with my children.”

**Jemimah Oronoga**



Photos: UN Women Lebanon/Lauren Rooney

# Rooted in resilience

Preparing for her return

– TYRE, SOUTH LEBANON, LEBANON –

For Rawand Yazbik, from Naqoura in South Lebanon, the ongoing conflict has meant separation from the land she once cultivated. When conflict escalated, she had to leave her fields behind.

“Farming means a lot to me,” Rawand said. “I left my land two years ago, and I wanted to continue working so that when I return, I can make up for everything that happened – and build my land from scratch.”

Like many women from border areas in South Lebanon, Rawand’s relationship with agriculture has been interrupted by displacement, but not ended. She is participating in a UN Women project where she farms in a community agricultural field that is in Sour, where she is displaced to. Farming away from her land allows her to stay connected to agriculture and prepare for return by learning new agroecological techniques.

For Rawand, farming during displacement is not simply a way to pass time or generate income. It is preparation for recovery – a way of holding on to the future when return remains uncertain.

“Farming is important every day,” she said. “With science and the support of organizations, we will become better and stronger – and women will continue to lead.”

The initiative is supported by UN Women through the project “Equalizing information access of women farmers to geospatial data and rehabilitation strategies for post-conflict agricultural recovery and sustainable agricultural practices” in the framework of the United Arab Emirates Strategic Partnership (2024–2027), and jointly implemented with the Union of Tyre Municipalities in partnership with INITIATE and CNRS-L.



*We learn so we can build the earth better than it was before.*



**Rawand Yazbik**



# From pond to plate

How aquaculture leverages women's empowerment

– RAKHINE STATE, MYANMAR –

Before sunrise, Daw Ni Ni Than is already at her fishpond. She checks the water quality and prepares feed by hand. As a mother of three and a grandmother, she is the main provider for her family. For many years, she struggled with low production, high costs and limited access to technical training. Living in a conflict-affected area in Myanmar made farming even more challenging. "There were times when I wanted to give up," she says. "Each poor harvest made me feel like I was failing my family."



Through targeted support, she received new equipment, renovated her pond and gained practical training on water quality management, disease control and local fish production practices.

After seven months, her harvest increased from 192 to 980 kilos. "When the fish grew strong, I knew hunger would no longer control our lives," she says. "We had food and hope."

Today, Daw Ni Ni Than is one of the few local fingerling producers in her village. She trains and advises other women farmers, helping them improve their livelihoods and confidence. By sharing her skills, she strengthens local food systems and reduces dependence on external suppliers.

The initiative Food and Nutrition Security in Rakhine State is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

*"I want other women to believe in themselves. If I can do this, they can too. If you have a dream, keep learning and never stop working for it. Our future is in our hands."*

**Daw Ni Ni Than**



# Smart water futures

Advancing data-driven water management  
through women's leadership and innovation

– LOS BAÑOS, PHILIPPINES –

In the Philippines, Jastine Mae Galang moves between a university classroom and a demonstration farm with the same conviction: to transform agrifood systems so they respond more effectively to women farmers' needs and priorities. An agricultural and biosystems engineer and an assistant professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, Jastine belongs to a generation redefining what it means to be a farmer: one who innovates, teaches and builds from within.



Jastine is scaling AQUASMART, a youth-led digital solution tackling one of today's most pressing priorities: water management. Across farming and aquaculture communities, many still rely on intuition rather than data, leading to wasted water, unpredictable yields and increasing vulnerability to climate shocks.

AQUASMART bridges the gap by combining low-cost solar-powered sensors with AI-driven weather forecasting and groundwater modelling. It gives farmers and fishers site-specific guidance for irrigation and pond management. The initiative is developed through a participatory demonstration farm where women farmers, students and researchers co-create technology, ensuring it remains women-led, accessible and grounded in lived realities.

Today, Jastine embodies a new face of the agrifood system leadership: a woman farmer who cultivates not only crops, but knowledge, innovation, solidarity and sustainable change.

Learn more about the World Food Forum Global Youth Action Initiative hosted by FAO here: [www.youth.world-food-forum.org/en](http://www.youth.world-food-forum.org/en)

“Empowering women farmers means becoming their ally, supporting, encouraging and walking beside them as they continue serving their communities”

**Jastine Mae Galang**



# Fields of equality

Shared harvest, shared prosperity through  
climate-resilient and gender-equal farming

– GISAGARA, RWANDA –

In Gisagara, Eastern Rwanda, Monique strides proudly across the plot she cultivates with her husband Theodate —beans, maize, vegetables, and fruits, Rwanda’s most economically viable crops.

“During the dry seasons, our farmland suffered and our crops were struggling as we had no knowledge on how to effectively irrigate them. We also really didn’t know how to use or make the most of our little resources.” Monique reflects.

Through the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE), they gained climate-resilient agriculture skills: rainwater management, trenches, crop covers. As a result, their harvests soared five-fold on the same plot of land.

The programme also incorporated the Gender Action Learning System (GALS+) and the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) approaches, which emphasizes gender equality and financial discipline. They now save regularly, set goals and farm as equals. “GALS+ and VSLA modules were eye-opening,” Monique says. “I’ve grown disciplined and time-sensitive.”

Today, Monique guides other women, proving how skills, solidarity, and equal opportunities turn struggling farmers into prosperous partners —at home and in the community.

Learn more about the JP RWEE, jointly implemented by FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP, here: [www.jprwee.org](http://www.jprwee.org)



*“We rise early, working the land not just as farmers, but life partners”*

**Monique**



# Age is no barrier to innovation

A journey transforming local food systems

– SOUTH-EASTERN UGANDA –

Vangi Ekirapa has spent decades farming cassava, one of the most important crops in South-Eastern Uganda. Like many women farmers over 60, she faced challenges accessing financial services and adding value to her produce, with cassava often sold at low prices and with limited processing.

Through training in leadership, organisational development, and improved agricultural practices, Vangi strengthened her skills and expanded her opportunities. During an exchange programme in Germany, she visited a farm and observed large-scale potato production and mechanised processing. Inspired by this experience, she introduced improved storage and processing methods for cassava and diversified production to include cassava-based baked goods.

Vangi also shared her knowledge with members of the Tororo District Farmers Association. As a result, the women's group increased its savings threefold within a year, strengthening their economic resilience and income generation.

Her story shows that age is no barrier to innovation. With access to knowledge, technology, and markets, women leaders can strengthen food security, increase incomes, and create opportunities for rural communities.

This initiative is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through the Global Programme Strengthening Farmers Organisations for Sustainable Agricultural Development, in partnership with dlv-LandFrauen gGmbH and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



*It is never too late. At 60, I proved innovation is for everyone.*

**Vangi Ekirapa**



# Cultivating resilience

Soy farming and agroforestry as drivers of gender-responsive rural development

– MUMBWA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA –

Racheal Chiyabi raises chicken and grows vegetables, cowpeas, maize and groundnuts in Mumbwa District in Zambia. Her success in soy farming reflects a broader story of climate resilience, mutual support and women's leadership in rural communities.



Through climate-resilient agriculture training, she adopted improved farming practices including tractor-supported land preparation and the integration of Gliricidia trees for agroforestry. These approaches helped strengthen soil health and improve long-term productivity.

Severe droughts in 2023 and 2024 significantly affected yields, leading to food shortages and livestock losses in the area. In response, she received support in the form of soy seeds to help restore production and sustain her farming activities.

Today, Racheal is part of a growing network of smallholder farmers contributing soy that is aggregated and processed into value-added products such as “Yummy Soy,” a nutritious cereal distributed in supermarkets across Zambia. This model strengthens local value addition and creates market opportunities for rural women, supporting more inclusive and resilient food systems.

The initiative Sustainable Agriculture for Forest Ecosystems (SAFE) is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in partnership with Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO).

“*What makes me proud, is how diversified my farm is. I've grown to a level where I compete with men in similar value chains.*”

**Racheal Chiyabi**



**FOR ALL  
WOMEN  
AND GIRLS**

220 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10017, USA  
[unwomen.org](http://unwomen.org)  
[facebook.com/unwomen](https://facebook.com/unwomen)  
[x.com/un\\_women](https://x.com/un_women)  
[youtube.com/unwomen](https://youtube.com/unwomen)  
[flickr.com/unwomen](https://flickr.com/unwomen)