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## WELFARE OF UZBEKISTAN RURAL WOMEN IN THE FOCUS OF SOCIAL POLICY IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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**Annotatsiya.** 2016 yildan boshlab O'zbekiston hukumati siyosati chet hududlarda yashaydigan ayollari farovonligini oshirishga erishish uchun yangi yo'nalishlarni belgilab berdi. Ushbu maqolada qishloq xo'jaligida gender tengligiga erishish va mamlakatda oziq-ovqat xavfsizligini ta'minlash va ularni qishloq xo'jaligi sohasida amalga oshirish borasida so'nggi yillarda qabul qilingan asosiy siyosiy-huquqiy Nizom va hujjatlar tahlil etilgan. Xalqaro konventsionalarni amalga oshirish va Barqaror rivojlanish maqsadlariga erishish qishloq xo'jaligi sohasida gender tengligi siyosati bilan chambarchas bog'liqdir. Shunga qaramay, qishloq xo'jaligining gender jihatlarini o'rganish shuni ko'rsatadiki, ularning ishsizlik darajasi hali ham erkaklardan yuqori va iqtisodiyotning rasmiy sektoriga kirish O'zbekistonda ta'lim olish va gender stereotiplarining ta'siri salbiyligi tufayli muammodir.

**Kalit so'zlar:** chet hududlarda yashaydigan ayollar, farovonlik, gender, O'zbekiston.

**Абстракт.** С 2016 года политика правительства Узбекистана обозначила новые направления на достижение повышения благосостояния сельских женщин. Эта статья анализирует основные политические и юридические нормативные акты и документы, принятые за последние годы в сфере достижения гендерного равенства в области сельского хозяйства и обеспечения продуктовой безопасности в стране и их выполнение в секторе сельского хозяйства. Выполнение международных конвенций и достижения Целей Устойчивого Развития тесно переплетается с политикой гендерного равенства в области сельского хозяйства. Однако изучение гендерных аспектов сельского хозяйства показывает, что несмотря на значительный вклад сельских женщин в области сельского хозяйства и продуктовой безопасности уровень безработицы среди них по-прежнему выше, чем у мужчин, а доступ к формальному сектору экономики в Узбекистане проблематичен из-за плохого доступа к образованию и влиянию гендерных стереотипов



**Ключевые слова:** сельские женщины, благосостояние, гендер, Узбекистан.

**Abstract.** Since 2016, the policy of the government of Uzbekistan has outlined new directions for achieving an increase in the well-being of rural women. This article analyzes the main political and legal regulations and documents adopted in recent years in the field of achieving gender equality in agriculture and ensuring food security in the country and their implementation in the agricultural sector. The implementation of international conventions and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is closely intertwined with the policy of gender equality in the field of agriculture. However, the study of the gender aspects of agriculture shows that despite the significant contribution of rural women in the field of agriculture and food security, their unemployment rate is still higher than men and access to formal sector of economy is problematic in Uzbekistan due to poor access to education and impact of gender stereotypes.

**Key words:** rural women, welfare, gender, Uzbekistan.

**Introduction.** The Government of the country is considering the provision and expansion of equal opportunities for the inhabitants of our multi-ethnic country, including rural women. This is one of the key factors for the country's sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 5 – achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls [1]. Achieving this Goal is interlinked with all the other SDGs and is impossible without reducing poverty, ensuring food security, and granting equal rights to women and men in accessing the management of natural and financial resources in rural areas. The "Development Strategies of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021" and a number of Presidential Decrees determine the growth of socio-political activity of women, an increase in their number at the level of decision-making, ensuring a stable income for their families and, in particular, the participation of young girls in small and medium-sized businesses in remote villages and mountain villages of Uzbekistan [2]. The decision of the Government of the country to follow the principles of equality of women and men, democracy, openness, and transparency will ensure the achievement of equal opportunities for rural women [3]. The implementation of this goal and objectives is reflected in the articles on the guarantee of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in Uzbekistan. The creation of the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support was a significant reform in the institutional structure of the country, where the creation of a gender policy and the implementation of the achievement of gender indicators became the main factors [4]. The institutionalization of the new relations also provides for the gender-legal expertise of program documents and projects, as well as the improvement of the collection of gender-disaggregated data in the agricultural sector, which is based on the implementation of 3 stages until 2026 [5].

**Literature review.** The national and international scholars and leading institutions of the world are conducting large-scale research on structured and socio-economic opportunities and factors that improve the living standard of rural women and their families. For instance, the following researchers, such as M. H. Ganieva [6], N. L. Pushkareva [7], N. M. Latipova [8], M. Tokhtakhodzhayeva [9], M. Khadzhimukhamedov [10], D. Abdurazzakova [11], G. Khasanova [12], D. Alimdjanova



[13], Z. Tursunova [14], devoted their scientific works to the study of concepts and factors that ensure a women empowerment in the social-economic life in rural areas. These scholars utilized the gender concept for their analysis of the social-economic situation and welfare of rural women. In Uzbekistan, the concept of gender and gender studies began to spread at the end of the 20th century in the implementation of projects funded by international institutions. In the Soviet era, gender issues were understood as women's issues, which is why the direction of Women and Development existed in the international community and institutionally presented as the Women's Committee in the government.

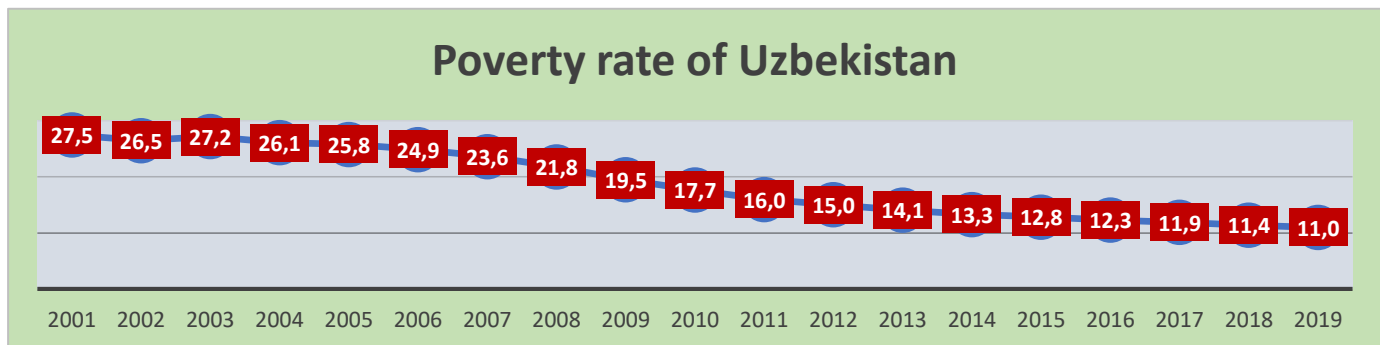
The utilizing of gender research approaches explores the social-economic challenges from different positions by using the intersectional concepts of analysis. The transition to the application of the gender concept provided an opportunity to consider how women and men farmers and dehkans interact with each other. According to the national legislation, " a dehkan farm is a small-scale family farm that produces and sells agricultural products based on the personal labor of family members on a land plot granted to the head of the family in a lifetime inherited possession." In addition to dehkan farms, the structure of agriculture includes large agricultural producers and farms, which are legal entities of entrepreneurship [15]. In 2019, the structure of the agriculture production presents that dehkan (private) farms and commercial farms produce 72% and 26% respectively [16]. According to the information of the State Statistic of Uzbekistan the GDP of agriculture constitutes 32.4%. The gender assessment of the agriculture sector revealed that rural women encounter next challenges in their business and livelihood development: poor access to management of natural and financial resources, as well as impact of gender stereotypes on their income development opportunities [17], [18].

**Analysis and Results.** This survey highlights important gender aspects of rural development and gender aspects of the agriculture sector in Uzbekistan. The literature review, qualitative surveys and focus group discussions suggest that the recent and ongoing economic reform processes may have resulted that women mostly employed in informal sector in the rural areas. [19]. In addition, gender stereotypes negatively impact on rural women and young girls. A woman plays an important role in ensuring the well-being of her family, where the main priorities are the preservation of national traditions and moral values [20]. In the era of globalization, the involvement of women in the economic life of society affects the distribution of responsibilities between spouses, the structure of the household, the achievement of professional growth, the level of well-being, along with the preservation of the foundations of the national mentality, "with a focus on preserving paternalism" [21].

Since 2016 the Government of Uzbekistan prioritizes the modernization and intensive development of the agriculture sector with a special focus on the stimulation and creation of favorable conditions for the development of farms, especially multidisciplinary ones involved in both agricultural production and processing, procurement, storage, marketing, construction work and the provision of modern market services. The Strategy for the Development of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2020 - 2030 (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy) is aimed at creating a favorable agribusiness

climate and value chains, ensuring food security of the population and rural development. Sustainable development of the agri-food sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan requires the implementation of state policy in the field on the basis of new approaches and the implementation of indicators of the Strategy Roadmap. The principles of the National Food Security Policy are based on four components such as availability, access, use and stability [22]. Nevertheless, the gender indicators for implementation of these policies were not reflected and budgeted in the state programmes. The exclusion of the gender indicators at the policy level exacerbates existing gender gaps in the agriculture sector. This trend is observed in the significant difference of urban-rural poverty rate. According to ADB, poverty rate decreased from 27.0% in 2000 to 11.0% in 2019. (Graph 1).

**Graph 1**



Source: <https://www.stat.uz/ru/ofitsialnaya-statistika/living-standards>

However, the urban–rural disparity of poverty incidence remains significant, with a poverty rate of 14.3 % for rural households and 8.4 % for urban households in 2018. Although, there are no statistic data about the poverty rate as for 2020, the increased Gini coefficient in 2020 is 0,268 shows that the difference of urban and rural poverty rate is growing [23]. In 2021, according to the statistical data, out of total population of more than 34 million, 49.4% resides in rural areas. Growth rate of rural population is twice as much as that in urban areas.

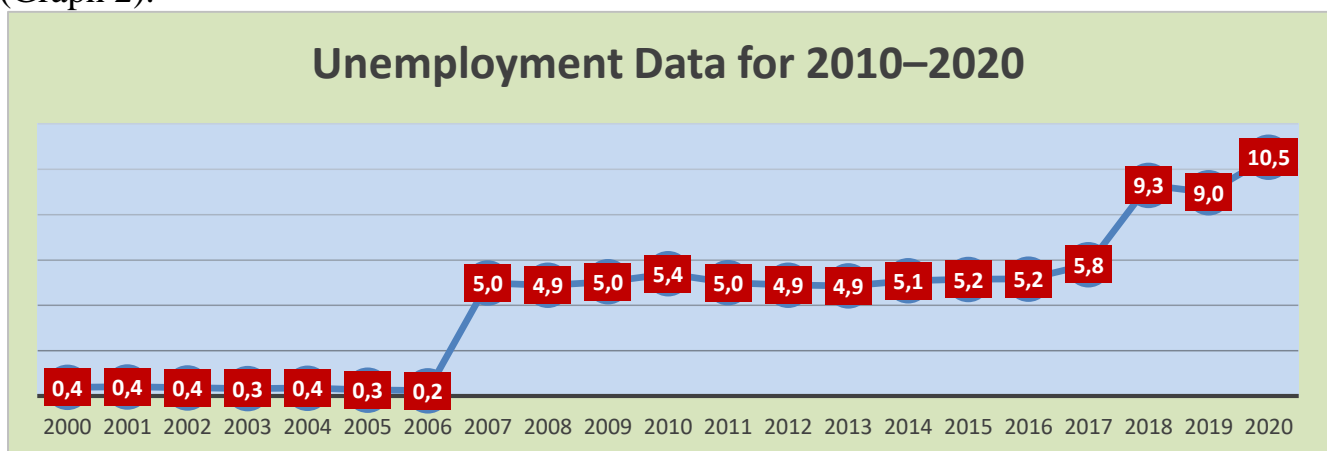
### **Women’s access to employment in agriculture sector**

The agriculture is the largest sector for the labor resources in Uzbekistan. In 2020, almost 27% of population have been employed by the agriculture sector, whereas 13% in industry and 11% in trade. Uzbekistan also continues to be the major supplier of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables to the neighboring countries, especially Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and 80 other countries around the world. Agriculture production also provides vital livelihood opportunities to majority of rural households. In 2019, the structure of the agriculture production presents that *dehkan* (private) farms and commercial farms produce 72% and 26% respectively.

The majority of the agricultural production is considered as organic production. A centuries-old tradition of vegetables, fruits and grapes production in Uzbekistan is from the outset based on biological crop husbandry principles with application of organic fertilizers only, which allow growing ecologically clean vegetables and fruits with unique

gustatory and nutritional qualities without use of genetically modifying technologies. Fruits and vegetables grown in Uzbekistan exceed substantially products from other regions by their main consumer's features, such as content of natural sugar, amino- and organic acids, vitally important trace elements and other biologically valuable substances irreplaceable in human diet. However, the utilizing of the gender concept for agro sector analysis has revealed that there are specific gender gaps which need to be closed in order to reach the SDGs and sustainable development of the society. Gender stereotypes largely define women's choices in courses and prospects for employment. When selecting a career, girls are motivated less by employment and success, but rather by the desire to obtain a qualification that will be useful in family life (e.g., health worker, teacher, or sewer). Women in rural areas are much less competitive in the labor market, largely because of the limited number of formal jobs available locally and the lack of necessary education, vocational qualifications, and skills. The need to balance work with family and household obligations likely explains why more women work part-time or in the informal sector. Informal work contributes significantly to the family budget, but it often leaves women without social protection. Rural women often work as unpaid workers at family farms and carry the burden of multiple responsibilities at household and community level which are particularly hard and time consuming in view of weak infrastructure in rural (and especially remote) areas. Their labor is often not visible and poorly recognized. Their access to resources, whether material (land, water, livestock, equipment, etc.) or non-material (knowledge, access to technologies or IT, etc.) and ability to exercise control over them, are limited, and as a result, their economic opportunities are limited [24]. Women's greater representation as informal or part-time employees/workers, very often with lower salaries and minimum social protection, makes them more vulnerable and lowers their status in the family because they contribute much less [25].

The number of unemployed people increased from 0.4% in 2000 to 10.5% in 2020. (Graph 2).



Official statistics on employment and unemployment shows that since 2010, economically active population and number of employed people in the economy grew by around 2.3 million people (or 14%–15%), reflecting increase in working-age population. The share of unemployment rate for women and men drastically increased during 2017-





2019 years. During 2018-2019 the unemployment rate increased for almost 6% for women, whereas for men it composed almost 2%.

**Conclusion.** The literature review, qualitative surveys and focus group discussions suggest that the recent and ongoing economic reform processes may have resulted that women mostly employed in informal sector in the rural areas [19]. In addition, gender stereotypes negatively impact on rural women and young girls. A woman plays an important role in ensuring the well-being of her family, where the main priorities are the preservation of national traditions and moral values [20]. In the era of globalization, the involvement of women in the economic life of society affects the distribution of responsibilities between spouses, the structure of the household, the achievement of professional growth, the level of well-being, along with the preservation of the foundations of the national mentality, "with a focus on preserving paternalism" [21]. To sum up, although women actively contribute to the farming and providing food security at their household and private farms their potential has not been fully realized in the agriculture sector. Rural women mostly involved in the informal sector of the due to low professional, educational skills and negative influence of the gender stereotypes.

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