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**Women's Empowerment in Agrifood Governance (WEAGov) Assessment  
Framework**

**Insights from the India Pilot Study**

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## ABSTRACT

Women’s equal participation and leadership in political and public life can boost a country’s long-term economic growth, foster social inclusion, and help countries reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Beyond these important outcomes, women’s inclusion in public life is a basic human right: Women deserve a role in making decisions, controlling resources, and shaping policies. Despite the importance of women’s voices and their empowerment in policy and decision-making processes, available metrics show that women’s policy and political empowerment remains low. Moreover, these metrics are inadequate in systematically tracking women’s voices and empowerment across different levels of decision-making. IFPRI developed an assessment framework—Women’s Empowerment in Agrifood Governance (WEAGov)—to assess women’s voices and empowerment in national policy processes in agrifood systems. This paper presents results from the pilot testing of WEAGov in India from January to March 2024. In this paper, we present how the WEAGov tool works in the Indian context, analyze trends in the data that we collected during the pilot, and provide an overview of the status of women’s voices and empowerment in the agrifood policy process as of March 2024. The pilot testing in India provides useful lessons on improving the measurement of these outcomes and offers valuable policy insights on critical entry points for increasing women’s voices and empowerment in the national agrifood policy process, design, implementation, and evaluation.

**Keywords:** Women’s empowerment, women’s voice and agency, policy process, agrifood system, governance, gender, measurement tools

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DAFW	Department of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
KII	key informants' interviews
MKSP	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana
MoAFW	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change
MoJS	Ministry of Jal Shakti (Water and Sanitation)
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoCAFPR	Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Procurement
MoFAHD	Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying
MoFPI	Ministry of Food Processing Industries
MP	Member of Parliament
NAPCC	National Action Plan for Climate Change
NGO	nongovernmental organizations
NMSA	National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
NNM	National Nutrition Mission
NNP	National Nutrition Policy
NPF	National Policy for Farmers
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHG	self-help groups
WEAGov	Women's empowerment in agrifood governance
WEF	World Economic Forum
PIB	Press Information Bureau
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
PM-KMY	Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana
PM-KISAN	Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
MoWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NCW	National Commission for Women
CARA	Central Adoption Resource Authority
MoCAFDP	Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
APMC	Agricultural Produce Market Committee
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women’s equal participation and leadership in political and public life can boost a country’s long-term economic growth, foster social inclusion, and support progress toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Beyond these important outcomes, women’s inclusion in public life is a fundamental human right: Women deserve a role in making decisions, controlling resources, and shaping policies. Yet, globally, women comprise only 22 percent of members of parliament (MPs) and 16 percent of cabinet secretaries. Although disproportionately employed in the agrifood sector, women often lack decision-making power over the policies that shape it. Additionally, while high-level statistics such as the share of women in national parliaments are available, there is a scarcity of tools for measuring and tracking gender equality in national- or state-level governance (EIDidi et al. 2021; Quisumbing et al. 2023; Ragasa et al. 2022). Achieving meaningful progress on gender equality demands a clear understanding of specific gaps and opportunities within a country’s policy process.

The Women’s Empowerment in Agrifood Governance (WEAGov) assessment framework, developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and partners, measures women’s voice and agency in national agrifood policymaking. Built on theoretical foundations and refined through consultations with more than 50 index developers, policy partners, researchers, donors, and practitioners worldwide, WEAGov was piloted in 2024 in partnership with agrifood policy experts in India. This paper presents the results of that pilot study.

WEAGov adopts a policy process approach, examining women’s roles at every stage of the policy cycle—design, implementation, and evaluation. For each stage, WEAGov assesses whether women are being considered, whether their voices are included, and whether they are influencing actions and decisions within the agrifood system. It comprises nine indicators across the three stages of the policy cycle, using a diverse set of credible, local data sources from agrifood organizations and policy experts. Scores for each indicator reflect the principle that women’s full and equal participation is not an aspirational goal but a target. Therefore, scores range from 1 (low) to 4 (at goal), with intermediate stages of progress as 2 (on the way) and 3 (advancing). Table 1 provides a summary of scores for India, while Table 2 provides scores for each of the 54 distinct measurements across WEAGov’s nine indicators along with scoring definitions and policy implications.

To develop the scores, WEAGov triangulates information from three primary sources. First, a comprehensive desk review examines key policy documents, including agrifood policy documents on nutrition, climate, and agricultural development, as well as related budget speeches and policy evaluations. Second, an organization survey captures key characteristics of major agrifood organizations across government, civil society, research, and private sectors at both the federal and state levels. Third, an expert survey gathers perspectives at federal and state levels. Together, these sources offer a holistic assessment of women’s voice in India’s agrifood policy processes.

**Table 1. Scoring scales, definitions, and results for India**

Scale	Definition	Implication	Count for India (out of 54 measurements)
1	Very weak	Low	5
2	Weak	On the way	25
3	Moderate	Advancing	17
4	Strong	At goal	7

Source: Authors' calculations.

### **India Pilot Results**

India has formal policies and laws promoting gender equality, and in recent times there has been considerable emphasis on promoting a women-led approach to development, as reflected in the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration 2023, which focuses on enhancing economic and social empowerment, bridging the gender digital divide, driving gender-inclusive climate action, and securing women's food security, nutrition, and well-being (PIB 2023). Despite significant progress, women's voices remain underrepresented in India's agrifood policy processes. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the main findings from the pilot, providing a diagnostic of women's voices and empowerment in Indian agrifood policymaking as of March 2024.

The WEAGov pilot highlights several strengths in India's agrifood policy system. Among the 54 measurements, India scores highly (4) on 7 and moderately (3) on 17. These strengths come from four broad areas. First, major policy documents on nutrition, agriculture, and climate show strong consideration of gender, reflecting India's broader commitment to gender equality. Second, there is a formal procedure and legal framework for citizen's consultation and inputs into policy formulation; and certain policies show women's input and influence, notably the National Policy for Farmers (NPF) and the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP). Although the NPF was repealed, local experts recognized efforts to include women's perspectives during its design. Third, MKSP and Mission Poshan 2.0, two of the six major agrifood policies reviewed in the pilot, go beyond formal consideration of gender in policy and show progress in incorporating gender into the budgeting process and in monitoring and tracking gender targets. A fourth area of strength of the Indian agrifood policy system with regard to gender is that women are well represented in leadership and staff roles within nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies engaged in agrifood policy implementation. Women's leadership in NGOs involved in the agrifood sector is positive, and female leaders can be further integrated as champions for women's and gender issues in policy processes. Women are also well represented in managerial and nonmanagerial staff in agrifood policy implementation in both government agencies and NGOs.

In contrast, India achieved a very low score (1) in five areas and a low score (2) in 25 areas, indicating very weak and weak voices and empowerment of women in those areas, respectively. Several areas are in need of concrete improvements to secure a meaningful voice for women in agrifood policymaking in the country. First, ordinary citizens more generally and women in particular have very limited opportunities to provide input into policy design and to provide feedback on how policy implementation is working for them in practice. Women's input into and influence on policy design are particularly weak in the nutrition and climate policies. Second, while gender targets and budgets are specified in the national development plan and are well-documented, and the gender budget is high in the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) (60 percent of total ministerial budget), the gender budget is very low in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW) (less than 2 percent), and experts perceived a very low budget dedicated to gender in four major policies: NPF, National Nutrition Policy (NNP), National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC), and National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). Third, India collects gender-disaggregated data through sources such as the National Family Health Survey, the Agriculture Census, and the Periodic Labor Force Survey and makes them available publicly, enabling progress monitoring against formal gender targets. However, metrics for women's empowerment, such as income control and land ownership, are captured in a limited manner.

Finally, women's presence and active participation in formal leadership in parliament and in agrifood cabinet ministries was low as of June 2024. The reservation of one-third of all seats in lower and upper legislative assemblies to women<sup>1</sup> is a great development toward getting more women into the highest levels of policymaking and implementation. This effort needs to be enforced and monitored to ensure that women are supported with an environment that enables them to take on and effectively run and manage leadership positions (such as cabinet secretary) in agrifood ministries.

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<sup>1</sup> PRS India, 2023. <https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-constitution-one-hundred-twenty-eighth-amendment-bill-2023>

**Table 2. Summary of main results by nine indicators and across policy stages**

**(1) Policy design**

Indicator	Summary of findings
<b>Gender policy targets</b>	<p>Three measures were used to track gender considerations in policy discussions and documents and were scored as 2 to 4 (weak to strong). The first measure focuses on the prime minister’s Independence Day speech, which was scored as 4 (strong, at goal) because of its clear gender targets and strategies. The second measure is a perception measure from the expert survey, in which sample experts reported that gender was not frequently discussed in high-level agrifood policy discussions. Gender salience in these policy discussions was scored as 2 (weak).</p> <p>The third measure scores the gender-intentional content of 30 agrifood policy documents. Focusing on the six most important agrifood policies, five have strong gender consideration (score 4) and one has a moderate score (score 3). Two major agricultural policies—NPF and MKSP—emphasize promoting enhanced income for women farmers and were scored as 4 (strong, at goal). Two major nutrition policies—NNP and Mission Poshan—were also scored as 4 (strong, at goal), primarily for the clarity on goals and stakeholders’ inclusion in various dimensions. Two major climate policies—NMSA and NAPCC—scored as 4 and 3, respectively. NMSA was scored as 4 (strong, at goal), which specifies that 50 percent of the budgetary allocation must be for small and marginal farmers and at least 30 percent of beneficiaries must be women. NAPCC, on the other hand, lacks clarity on achieving gender targets and was hence scored as 3 (moderate). Of the other 24 policies reviewed, 50 percent of agricultural policies, 30 percent of nutrition policies, and 30 percent of environmental or climate policies have weak or very weak gender consideration (score 1 or 2).</p> <p>Overall, there are fairly strong gender considerations and targeting in the major agrifood policies and the prime minister’s speeches. However, greater gender consideration is needed in some agrifood policy documents and public discussions on agrifood policy issues.</p>
<b>Women’s input</b>	<p>Three measures were used to assess women’s input into agrifood policy design: one objective measure on the presence of formal processes for citizens’ inputs into policy design (score 4), one perception measure on women’s involvement in policy design in general (score 2), and one perception measure on women’s inputs in the five major policies tracked (1997 NNP was not tracked for its design) (scores 1–3). While there is a legal framework and formal process for getting citizens’ inputs in policy formulation (score 4), there are limited opportunities for citizens’ and women’s involvement in the agrifood policy design processes, scoring this measure as 2 (weak). This constraint is more pronounced in rural areas and for grassroots organizations and marginalized groups. Across the five policies tracked, ratings were moderate (score 3) in women’s inputs in the design of agricultural policies (NPF and MKSP), very weak (score 1) to weak (score 2) in the design of climate policies (NAPCC and NMSA), and weak (score 2) in the design of Mission Poshan. Experts suggest the need for strong awareness campaigns that can acquaint citizens, especially in rural areas and among marginalized groups, with these policy processes.</p>
<b>Women’s leadership in policy design</b>	<p>Three measurements were used to assess women’s input into policy design processes: female parliamentarians, female members of agricultural committees in the parliament, and perceptions on women’s influence in five major policies. These show very weak to weak women’s leadership in policy design processes. As of March 2024, only 13 percent of upper and lower houses’ members of parliament (MPs) were women (score 1, very weak), and only 7 percent of agriculture-related committees in the upper and lower houses were women (score 1, very weak), but 39 percent of heads of sample NGOs were women (score 3, moderate). Across the five policies tracked (1997 NNP was not tracked for its design), ratings were moderate (score 3) in women’s influence in the design of agricultural policies (NPF and MKSP), very weak (score 1) to weak (score 2) in the design of climate policies (NAPCC and NMSA), and weak (score 2) in the design of Mission Poshan. The good news is that the reservation of one-third of all seats of lower and upper legislative assemblies to women was passed in 2023. This reservation policy needs to be enforced, coupled with capacity-building for female leaders to effectively lead legislative and policymaking processes.</p>

## (2) Policy implementation

Indicator	Summary of findings
<b>Gender-responsive budgeting</b>	<p>Three measures were used: scored gender-intentional content of the finance budget, gender budgeting process in the core agrifood ministries, and expert perception on gender budgets in the six major policies tracked. Despite the government’s initiatives and efforts to push the agenda of women’s empowerment through various means, provision for gender-responsive budgeting across different agrifood organizations remains weak to moderate and inconsistent.</p> <p>First, the 2023–2024 finance minister’s budget speech, rated on the basis of its gender content or gender targets, was scored as 3 (moderate). Second, budget on activities targeted to women or to tackle gender issues appears to be well-documented across the ministries, with 35 percent of the budget of the Ministry of Rural Development but less than 2 percent of the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW) allocated to gender activities in fiscal year 2024–2025. For other ministries, such as Education, Women and Child Development, Housing and Urban Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, and Jal Shakti, the allocation for gender-specific initiatives fluctuates between 5 percent and 12 percent of their respective budgets. However, the gender budget in several other ministries remains considerably low (less than 1 percent of the total budget). State-level ministries are also not reporting on targets set under gender-responsive budgeting, and there may be a need to explore this further and consequently conduct capacity-building at the state level. This measure was scored as 3 (moderate).</p> <p>Third, across the six policies tracked, experts reported diverse experiences and varying feedback: score 3 (moderate) for MKSP and Mission Poshan and score 2 (weak) for the other four policies (NPF, NNP, NAPCC, and NMSA). This suggests a potential gap in understanding and awareness of the effectiveness of these policies and might also reflect the differing implementation efforts. Consequently, there is a need to look at where, when, and how these policies are performing and share lessons.</p>
<b>Gender-inclusive staffing</b>	<p>Three measures were used for this indicator. Data show some progress has been made, but ratings remain weak to moderate. On average, 35 percent of staff in organizations are women (score 3, moderate). However, organizational gender policies and gender-sensitive activities for female staff are less common among organizations (score 2, weak). Forty-three percent of the sample has an organizational gender policy/strategy, 29 percent has leadership training for female employees, 26 percent has committees focusing on gender equality, and 46 percent has established gender diversity committees.</p>
<b>Women’s policy implementation leadership</b>	<p>Three measures were used for this indicator, and the rating is from very weak to weak (score 1 or 2). Although 39 percent of women are in management positions in sample organizations, only one female minister is in the federal-level core agrifood ministries (13 percent), 33 percent are female heads of state of these core agrifood ministries, and 13 percent are female state-level cabinet ministers. This measurement was scored as 1 (very weak).</p>

### (3) Policy evaluation

Indicator	Summary of findings
<b>Gender policy monitoring</b>	<p>Four measures show a weak data system with limited sex-disaggregated data and weak monitoring of gender targets in general and in specific policies. The first measure—availability of gender-disaggregated national food statistics—was scored as 2 (weak). Even though the government collects gender-disaggregated individual data through multiple surveys, such as the National Family Health Survey, the Agriculture Census, and the Periodic Labor Force Survey, these data have various limitations for policy use. These limitations are mainly due to mismatch between the data collected and the information required for effective gender-responsive policymaking, especially for rural India (Shah 2022).</p> <p>The second measure—gender analysis in the major agriculture report published by MoAFW—was scored as 2 (on the way). The annual report includes a distinct section, “Gender Perspective on Agriculture,” which outlines goals and targets specifically tailored for women within each policy or scheme. However, it lacks detailed descriptions, offering only minimal information, such as gender considerations in program design (if any) and basic statistics on female beneficiaries or those trained. Unfortunately, it provides no insight into the actual impact of these policies on women in agriculture.</p> <p>The third measure shows that 34 percent of organizations in the sample conducted gender audits, and this measure scored as 2 (weak). The fourth measure—expert perception on monitoring gender targets in the six major policies tracked—was scored as 2 (weak). Four policies (NPF, NNP, NMSA, and NAPCC) were consistently scored as 2 (weak), while MKSP and Mission Poshan were scored as 3 (moderate). Further, the majority of experts highlighted insufficient tracking and monitoring of gender goals and policy targets across the board.</p>
<b>Women’s feedback</b>	<p>Two measures were used in this indicator and were rated as very weak to weak (score 1 or 2). In India, institutionalized, systematic, or formal feedback mechanisms for citizens, and women in particular, are weak. Women have few opportunities to provide feedback on policy design and implementation.</p>
<b>Women’s evaluation and advocacy leadership</b>	<p>Three measurements were used for this indicator and were rated as weak to moderate (score 2 or 3). The share of women in managerial positions in government agencies and NGOs involved in policy evaluation is 38 percent on average (score 3, moderate). Across the six major policies tracked, the majority of experts rated women’s influence in monitoring the national agriculture, climate change, and nutrition policies as weak (score 2), except for Mission Poshan, which was rated as moderate (score 3).</p>

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

**Table 3. Summary of WEAGov scores in India**

Stage	Indicator	Measurement	Score	
Policy design	1. Gender policy targets	Scored gender-intentional content in prominent presidential or budget speech	At goal	
		Gender attention in prioritized agrifood policy issue*	On the way	
		<b>Scored gender-intentional content in national agriculture policy</b>		
		NPF	At goal	
		MKSP	At goal	
		<b>Scored gender content in national climate policy</b>		
		NAPCC	Advancing	
		NMSA	At goal	
		<b>Scored gender content in national nutrition policy</b>		
		NNP	At goal	
		Mission Poshan	At goal	
	2. Women's input	Formal process for collecting citizens' input into agrifood policymaking process	At goal	
		Opportunities for women to provide inputs into policy design*	On the way	
		<b>Women's inputs into national agriculture policy*</b>		
		NPF	Advancing	
		MKSP	Advancing	
		<b>Women's inputs into national climate policy*</b>		
		NAPCC	Low	
		NMSA	On the way	
		<b>Women's inputs into national nutrition policy*</b>		
		Mission Poshan	On the way	
		3. Women's policy design leadership	Share of women in parliament	Low
	Share of women in parliamentary agricultural committee		Low	
	Share of women leaders in nongovernment sector involved in agrifood policy design+		Advancing	
	<b>Women leading and influencing deliberations on the national agriculture policy*</b>			

Stage	Indicator	Measurement	Score	
		NPF	Advancing	
		MKSP	Advancing	
		<b>Women leading and influencing deliberations on the national climate policy*</b>		
		NAPCC	Low	
		NMSA	On the way	
		<b>Women leading and influencing deliberations on the national nutrition policy*</b>		
		Mission Poshan	On the way	
<b>Policy implementation</b>	4. Gender-responsive budgeting	Gender targets and budget are specified in the national development plan	Advancing	
		Gender-responsive budgeting in agrifood ministries	Advancing	
		<b>Perceived budgetary support and implementation of gender targets in national agriculture policy*</b>		
		NPF	On the way	
		MKSP	Advancing	
		<b>Perceived budgetary support and implementation of gender targets in national climate policy*</b>		
		NAPCC	On the way	
		NMSA	On the way	
		<b>Perceived budgetary support and implementation of gender targets in national nutrition policy*</b>		
	NNP	On the way		
	Mission Poshan	Advancing		
	5. Gender-inclusive staffing	Average share of women in total staff in agrifood policy implementing agencies+	Advancing	
		Gender-sensitive staffing policies among agrifood policy implementing agencies+	On the way	
6. Women's policy implementation leadership	Share of female agrifood ministers and permanent secretaries	Low		
	Share of women in managerial positions in agrifood policy implementing agencies+	Advancing		
<b>Policy evaluation</b>	7. Gender policy monitoring	Scored availability of gender-disaggregated national agrifood statistics	On the way	
		Scored gender-disaggregated data included in agrifood performance public reporting	On the way	

Stage	Indicator	Measurement	Score
		Agrifood policy implementing agencies conducting gender audits+	On the way
		<b>Tracking and monitoring of gender goals in the national agriculture policy*</b>	
		NPF	On the way
		MKSP	Advancing
		<b>Tracking and monitoring of gender goals in the national climate policy*</b>	
		NAPCC	On the way
		NMSA	On the way
		<b>Tracking and monitoring of gender goals in the national nutrition policy*</b>	
		NNP	On the way
		Mission Poshan	Advancing
	8. Women's feedback	Formal mechanism for providing feedback on policy implementation	On the way
		Perceived opportunities for women to provide feedback*	On the way
	9. Women's evaluation and advocacy leadership	Share of female leadership in government involved in policy monitoring and evaluation+	Advancing
		Share of female leadership in nongovernment sector involved in policy evaluation and advocacy+	Advancing
		<b>Women's perceived leading role in monitoring and review of the national agriculture policy*</b>	
		NPF	On the way
		MKSP	On the way
		<b>Women's perceived leading role in monitoring and review of the national climate policy*</b>	
		NAPCC	On the way
		NMSA	On the way
<b>Women's perceived leading role in monitoring and review of the national nutrition policy*</b>			
NNP		On the way	
Mission Poshan	Advancing		

Note: + Estimates based on the IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024). \* Indicates perception measurement collected through the IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024). Scoring is based on a 4-point Likert scale, with 1 being the weakest and 4 being the strongest. Color codes indicate 1 = very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = moderate, and 4 = strong. We also want to convey with the scoring the general principle that women's full and equal participation in the policy process (rated as strong) is not an overachievement but a target to be reached. NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and is essential for creating a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. The World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law* report (2022) highlights that approximately 2.4 billion women of working age lack equal economic opportunities, with 178 countries having laws that hinder women's full economic participation (World Bank 2022). Furthermore, the *Global Gender Gap Report 2024* reveals that the gender gap stands at 69 percent across 146 countries, and there has been very little, if any, progress in closing gender gaps in the last 10 years (WEF 2024). Among the gender dimensions, political empowerment shows the widest global gender gap and is the slowest to make progress. It is estimated that 169 years are needed to close the gender gap in political empowerment (WEF 2024). Closing this gap faster requires concerted efforts to dismantle systemic barriers, to implement policies that promote equal opportunities, and to create enabling environments where women have voices and contribute equally to achieving sustainable and productive livelihoods.

Policymakers face decisions in all areas of policy—whether food, health, education, justice, or public finance—that have a direct effect on the rights and opportunities of girls and women and that requires effective coordination across multiple ministries. If the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved, it will be because policymakers put in place the laws, policies, and funding necessary to implement them. Understanding policymaking processes and policymakers' perspectives on gender equality can provide useful information on entry points to ensure women's voices are heard and that women can exercise their agency to influence policy directions. Despite the importance of women's voices and of their empowerment in the policymaking process, it is far easier to lament their absence than to define and measure them. Beyond high-level statistics such as the share of women in national parliaments, there is a lack of tools for measuring and tracking gender equality in national- or state-level governance (ElDidi et al., 2021; Quisumbing et al., 2023; Ragasa et al., 2022). While national statistics such as the share of women MPs are important and informative, they risk missing important dimensions of women's participation and influence in public life and do not give policymakers and advocacy organizations traction on specific gaps and opportunities for increasing women's voices in policymaking. Women can, for example, advocate for policy solutions from civil society organizations and lead on policy implementation from within line ministries, among other forms of meaningful involvement in policy decision-making. On the other hand, women may be given a seat at the table through quota systems yet still lack influence over decision-making.

These gaps are further highlighted in many low- and middle-income countries, which continue to rely significantly on agriculture. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO 2023), women comprise 36 percent of the global agrifood workforce but face systemic challenges, such as earning only 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. Women are also disproportionately employed in precarious roles—part-time, low-skilled, or labor-intensive jobs—and experience a 24 percent productivity gap compared to men, even on farms of similar size. These inequalities are compounded by limited access to land, credit, and training, as well as by technologies that are often not designed with women in mind.

Focusing on agrifood systems, which are crucial for delivering the SDGs, IFPRI and partners developed a framework—Women's Empowerment in Agrifood Governance (WEAGov)—to assess women's voice and agency in national policy processes in agrifood systems. This paper presents the pilot-testing of WEAGov in India. Section 2 summarizes the WEAGov approach, including the conceptual framework and

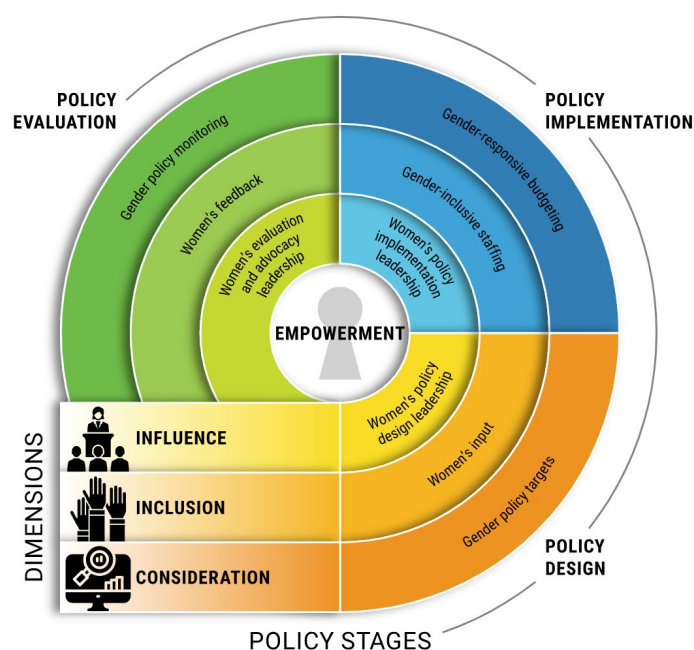
methodology. Section 3 summarizes the data collection process and sampling method for the India pilot study. Section 4 presents the results for the India pilot study, organized by 9 indicators and subdivided into policy stages (policy design, policy implementation, and policy evaluation). Section 5 discusses these results and provides policy implications and lessons for refining the WEAGov methodology. Section 6 provides key concluding remarks.

## 2. WEAGOV CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND MEASUREMENT

### 2.1 What Is WEAGov?

The WEAGov framework is a diagnostic, theory-based tool developed by IFPRI to help evaluate the extent to which women are empowered across the policy cycle related to agrifood systems. The assessment underscores the essential role that women play in agriculture and food systems and, conversely, the essential role that agriculture and food systems play in women’s lives and livelihoods, alongside the recognition that women’s voices are often missing from agrifood policymaking. WEAGov provides a way to identify gaps and opportunities to raise women’s voice and agency at different stages of the policy cycle and a basis for monitoring progress in women’s empowerment in agrifood systems governance over time. Figure 1 summarizes the WEAGov framework.

**Figure 1. Women’s Empowerment in Agrifood Governance (WEAGov) framework**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023). <https://www.ifpri.org/interactive/weagov>

WEAGov looks at three stages of the policy cycle: (1) policy design, (2) policy implementation, and (3) policy evaluation. The policy design component focuses on how different policy problems rise to the policy agenda, how policy solutions are formulated and designed, and how and whether policy solutions are adopted. The policy implementation component looks at how policies are implemented in practice, including budgetary outlays and organizational strategies for the delivery of services. Finally, the policy evaluation component considers how policy outcomes are assessed against their objectives. In reality, the

policy process is nonlinear, often without clear beginning and end points. Nonetheless, looking at the policy process through this simplified model is useful for seeing how women interact with different stages of decision-making.

Across each of these policymaking stages, WEAGov assesses the extent of women's empowerment, which we define as the process of increasing capacity and opportunities for women to participate in and to influence agrifood decision-making, realizing their own choices and goals (Ragasa et al. 2022, 11). This definition captures three of the most prominent dimensions of women's empowerment from the literature: the ability to make choices, the ability to participate in a process, and the ability to exercise agency throughout the process by both defining goals and being significant actors within a process (Kabeer 1999).

WEAGov lays out three dimensions of empowerment across the agrifood policy cycle:

- **Consideration** refers to the way the different needs and priorities of men and women are taken into account. This could involve analyzing data and information related to social and economic outcomes for women as a part of the policy formulation process. It could mean setting up equitable allocation of benefits or services across groups to reflect differential exposure to shocks or unique stressors. Or it could involve setting and measuring specific targets related to outcomes for women within a national policy or strategy. Collecting gender-disaggregated data—as well as data that can be broken down by other categories such as income, geography, disability, and race and ethnicity—is an essential component of consideration because disaggregated data become the input for both identifying disparities that need to be addressed through policymaking and tracking success in closing the gap in those disparities.
- **Inclusion** refers to the opportunities for women to participate as actors within the policy process. Are there open channels for citizen feedback, and is it possible to use them? Inclusion is also about representation within the landscape of actors involved in implementing a policy after it has been adopted: Are women among those on the frontline of implementation and in managerial positions? Gender quotas are one means of securing women's participation in decision-making processes, but routine, everyday opportunities for feedback from ordinary citizens are essential to inclusion as well.
- **Influence** refers to women's ability to shape the direction and design of policy outcomes. This includes both the ability to shape what social and economic problems rise to the level of policy discourse and to exert influence in choosing among policy alternatives to address problems. Whereas inclusion is more about the opportunity for individual women to participate in the policy process, influence operates more at the level of groups and networks: Are women part of the networks that shape policy discourse, and are there civil society organizations that advocate for their interests?

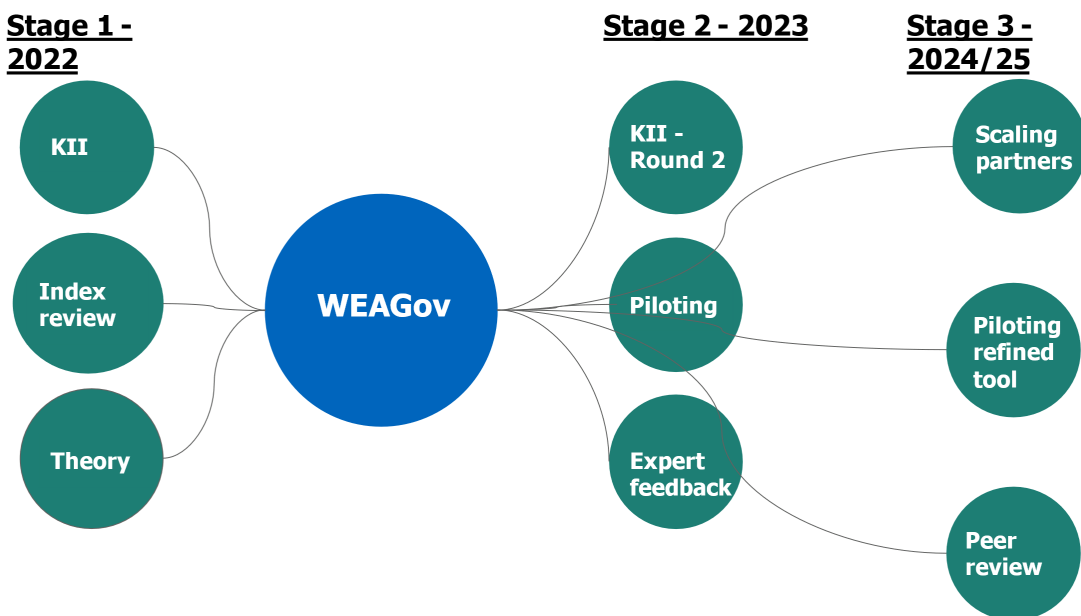
In many countries, political leaders may verbally commit to achieving gender equality and to addressing the needs and priorities of women yet fail to allocate sufficient resources toward this goal or to implement and monitor specific objectives. Mismatches may exist between public sector goals and commitments toward gender equality and the kind of cohesive civil society and research community that may be needed to uncover policy problems, find solutions to those problems, and hold governments accountable for action. No single tool can fully map every dimension of women's empowerment in agrifood policymaking. Instead, we prioritized developing a tool that could be implemented and replicated across a wide variety of countries

and contexts and that would quickly highlight gaps and opportunities for improvement. This tool combines the benefits of a qualitative desk review of specific national plans and policies with quantitative measures based on objective indicators.

## 2.2 WEAGov Development Process

The WEAGov assessment framework is methodologically pluralistic, triangulating information from multiple sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of women’s voice and agency in agrifood governance. WEAGov was developed by combining insights from key informant interviews with a scientific literature review on women’s empowerment, agrifood systems, and governance (see Ragasa et al. 2022). In 2022, key informant interviews were conducted with experts involved in the development of other frameworks and indices measuring different aspects of gender and governance; donor agency representatives; academic experts; and policy partners, researchers, civil society leaders, and private sector leaders from three countries with diverse agrifood governance institutions: Nigeria, Malawi, and India (Ragasa et al. 2022). In 2023, we conducted another round of key informant interviews and collected expert feedback to further refine the WEAGov tool and methodology. Last, pilot testing in Nigeria and India provided useful lessons for further refining the tool for scaling across partners in 2024 and beyond. The methodological tool, a peer-reviewed framework paper, and case and comparison studies are also envisioned for 2024 and beyond. Figure 2 provides a full timeline of the process of developing WEAGov.

Figure 2. WEAGov development process



Source: Authors’ illustrations.

Note: KII = key informant interviews.

## 2.3 WEAGov Indicators

Within each dimension of the concentric circles shown in Figure 1 are nine different indicators for assessing women's empowerment, reflecting consideration, inclusion, and influence in each stage of the policy process. Each indicator is measured using a variety of credible in-country data sources drawn from local agrifood organizations and local agrifood policy experts, for a total of 44 measurements in the Nigeria pilot and 54 measurements in the India pilot. Each measurement is scored on a 4-part Likert scale ranging from very weak to strong. However, we want to convey with the scoring the general principle that women's full and equal participation in the policy process (rated as strong) is not an overachievement but a target to be reached. Thus, we also use the terminology of **1 = low**, **2 = on the way**, **3 = advancing**, and **4 = at goal**. Results are presented by measurement and not aggregated by indicator or single composite index, although the narrative summary of results discusses overall policy recommendations for each indicator. WEAGov focuses on national-level plans and strategies, such as agricultural policies, agricultural development plans, climate strategies, nutrition policies, and national gender strategies. Although the specific policies, plans, and strategies most relevant for understanding agrifood governance vary across countries, the focus is consistently on women's empowerment within these high-level, formal public policies that govern agrifood in a given country. In this paper, we call these agrifood policies. On these core topics, WEAGov draws systematically on local expertise rather than on external actors and aims to bring together information about women's participation in agrifood policymaking into a single framework.

## 2.4 WEAGov's Contribution

WEAGov focuses on measuring and tracking women's voices and empowerment within the national-level agrifood policy process. This perspective complements tools and indices on women's empowerment within agriculture and agrifood systems at the household and community levels, such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) family of tools and numerous participatory tools and scorecards at community and local levels (summarized in EIDidi et al. 2021). While these tools provide important measurements of women's individual- and community-level voices and decision-making, participation in the political domain at higher levels of policymaking and women's abilities and opportunities may look quite different. WEAGov also complements existing global indices on gender that measure gender equality more broadly but do not focus on agrifood systems (summarized in Ragasa et al. 2022). In providing concrete metrics for women's empowerment in the political and policy sphere specifically through national-level decision-making that affects the agrifood system, WEAGov can help measure three of the SDGs, particularly:

- SDG 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.
- SDG 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status.
- SDG 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

Political leadership, gender-responsive policies and budgeting, gender-inclusive organizational strategies, and gender-transformative institutions are needed to dismantle systemic barriers to achieving SDGs,

especially 5, 10, and 16. WEAGov aims to contribute to this process by measuring these aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment in the political and policy sphere.

## 2.5 WEAGov Implementation

Implementation of WEAGov happens through a number of steps, as summarized below and illustrated with the India pilot as an example:

- **Landscape analysis of policies and actors.** Understanding the agrifood policy landscape in a country requires fully mapping the sets of policies and actors at the national level. The set of policies, as noted above, spans agricultural production, including crop and livestock production; forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture; and climate-smart agriculture; along with agricultural distribution and value chains and household consumption of food, including food security and nutrition. The set of actors includes the national and state ministries that design and implement all of these policies in addition to civil society organizations and private sector organizations that play a role in policy development, implementation, and evaluation in the sector. Research institutes and universities also play a role, especially in policy deliberations, reviews, and evaluations. In-country donors can also influence policy design and implementation. This mapping is conducted by local subject matter experts.
- **Content analysis and desk review.** Using a scoring rubric, local subject matter experts score key national policies and public and budget speeches for gender consideration and content, and they seek out information from national ministries on a number of other objective indicators of women's involvement in agrifood policymaking.
- **Organization and expert surveys.** Guided by the network analysis of influential actors in the agrifood policymaking process, data are collected on the key organizations in the agrifood sector. Surveys are then conducted with key experts within those organizations to elicit their views on how the agrifood policymaking process works in practice.
- **Country-level validation workshop.** An intensive day-long workshop is held, consisting of 10 to 20 subject matter experts from different sectors (public sector, local researchers, civil society, and private sector) to review results from the content analysis, desk review, and organization and expert surveys. These experts discuss results in detail to arrive at consensus about whether results are valid for the country context and about contextual factors that require further exploration or explanation.
- **Country-level policy workshop.** All material is synthesized into a country report and shared widely with stakeholders within the country for discussion and prioritization of policy conclusions and recommendations.

### 3. AGRIFOOD POLICY LANDSCAPE IN INDIA

#### 3.1 India Context

India stands as the world's third-largest economy by purchasing power parity and the fifth largest by nominal gross domestic product (GDP) on the global stage (International Monetary Fund assessment 2023). The surge in economic growth can be attributed to development in key sectors such as agriculture, information technology, services, and manufacturing. Over time, there has been a steady decrease in the contribution of agriculture<sup>2</sup> to India's overall economy, dropping from 35 percent in 1990–1991 to 15 percent in 2022–2023. Yet, its importance continues to be deeply woven into the nation's social and economic framework.

India has approximately 195 million hectares of land under cultivation, of which 63 percent is rainfed (roughly 125 million hectares), while the remaining 37 percent is irrigated (70 million hectares), as reported by the FAO (Chand et al. 2022). According to World Bank statistics (Gupta and Nair 2020), 64 percent of the Indian population resides in rural areas, with 46 percent of the workforce employed in agriculture and its allied sectors. Additionally, the share of women in the Indian rural population is close to 48 percent (Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011).

The significance of agriculture is further underscored by several socioeconomic challenges that persistently affect the rural population. These include the labor productivity gap, rising small and marginal holdings (Agriculture Census 2015–16), difficulty in ensuring food security to a rising youth population, high sensitivity of agricultural output with climate variability, decreasing share of institutional credit in agriculture and allied sectors, and lack of diversification.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the COVID<sup>4</sup>-19–induced lockdown led to excess pressure<sup>5</sup> on the rural infrastructure and agriculture labor market as a result of large-scale reverse migration (Thakur 2021).

Additionally, according to the Economic Survey 2017–2018, there has been an increase in women's participation in agriculture and allied sectors. However, the majority of these women are working as landless farmers (National Sample Survey 2011–2012). India has one of the lowest levels of women's land ownership rates in the world: Women constitute barely 14 percent of landowners owning 11 percent of agricultural land in rural landowning households (Agarwal et al. 2021). Thus, the need for cultivating both inclusive and sustainable growth in the agriculture sector has grown exponentially, particularly in light of India's place as the world's most populous country with an increased involvement of women in agriculture without commensurate increase in resource access.

India's journey toward achieving the SDGs<sup>6</sup> is characterized by significant advancements across various sectors, driven by robust policies and initiatives. The poverty rate has decreased impressively from 21.9 percent in 2011 to 10.1 percent in 2020. Similarly, the under-five mortality rate has dropped from 49 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013 to 34 in 2020, while the literacy rate increased to 77.7 percent in 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/doc/eschapter/echap09.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.indiaspend.com/overpopulated-too-reliant-on-agriculture-rural-india-cant-absorb-reverse-migrants/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/pandemic-impact-necessary-to-stop-reverse-migration/2241322/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/coronavirus-how-many-migrant-workers-displaced-a-range-of-estimates-6447840/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/rankings>

Additionally, India is rapidly transitioning toward clean energy, with renewable energy capacity reaching 150 gigawatts (GWs) in 2021.

Despite these achievements, India still ranks 112th out of 166 countries in its overall performance toward achieving the United Nations–mandated SDGs. The low ranking is largely due to insufficient progress in critical areas such as achieving zero hunger, reducing malnutrition, and achieving gender equality. Table 4 illustrates India’s progress in key development indicators over the past two decades.

**Table 4. India’s progress on selected SDG indicators**

Indicator	India (2021–2023)	India (2000–2004)
1.2.1 Poverty headcount ratio at \$2.15/day (2017 PPP) (%)	3.3*	40.6 <sup>^</sup>
2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment (%)	16.3* <sup>~</sup>	18.3 <sup>#</sup>
2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting in children under age 5 (%)	31.7*	51.1 <sup>+</sup>
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality (per 1,000 births)	19.1*	39.1 <sup>^</sup>

Source: \* *Sustainable Development Report 2023*; <sup>~</sup> Data from 2020; <sup>^</sup> World Development Indicators, 2004-05; <sup>#</sup> Global Hunger Index, 2000; <sup>+</sup> UNICEF/WHO/World Bank. Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates Expanded Database: Stunting, Wasting and Overweight. Published online May 2022. Available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/dataset/malnutrition-data>. Accessed November 22, 2023. PPP = purchasing power parity.

In terms of gender equality, India fares quite low compared with global standards. According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2024*, India ranks 129 out of 146 countries (WEF 2024). The report’s political empowerment index shows that India has achieved only 25.3 percent parity, with women comprising 15.1 percent of national parliamentarians (average of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha). Notably, countries with much lower GDPs have outperformed India in this regard. For instance, Bangladesh has achieved 55.2 percent parity, Rwanda 54.1 percent, Costa Rica 52.4 percent, and Chile 50.2 percent. Furthermore, according to another sub-index of the report, India has only 36.7 percent parity in economic participation and opportunity for women compared with men. According to the *World Inequality Report 2022* estimates, men earn 82 percent of the labor income, whereas women earn only 18 percent. Especially in the agriculture sector, gender inequality remains substantially high because of various structural problems faced by women, such as unequal access to resources, lack of mechanization, harmful gender norms, and limited market access (Ghosh and Ghosh 2014). Taken together, this leads to lower benefits for women in agriculture; for instance, according to the MoAFW annual report for 2020–2021, while a male agricultural field laborer earns an average of Indian rupee (INR) 383 per day, a female laborer makes only INR 294 per day, reflecting a wage gap of approximately 25 percent (MoAFW 2021).

Hence, India is at a crucial juncture of its growth path, wherein improved women’s participation is required for sustaining inclusive development. A fundamental objective of the WEAGov tool is to pinpoint specific

areas within policy processes, using specific key policies, where enhancements in women's participation and empowerment can be achieved, thereby spotlighting distinct strengths and weaknesses.

### **3.2 Institutional and Policy Landscape of India's Agrifood System**

India is a federal state; thus, authority is dispersed among multiple levels of government, typically the central and state governments. India's constitution delineates the distribution of legislative, administrative, and executive powers between the central government and state governments. This division is encapsulated in the Union List, State List, and Concurrent List (where powers are distributed between both the central and state government and consist of subjects of common interest to both the union and the states). Both the parliament and the state legislatures can make laws that specify the realms of authority for the central government, state governments, and areas of shared jurisdiction.

#### **3.2.1 Policy design processes**

India's constitution lays out the procedures for policy formulation in India and follows the Westminster model. Under this system, the political executive, represented by the Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister's Office, crafts policies and presents them to the parliament.<sup>7</sup> Parliament then takes up these policies for consideration and passes bills through a majority vote from its members.

However, as in most democracies, the process of policy formulation in India is not linear in practice and involves various stakeholders, including the bureaucracy (ministries and departments), legislature (parliament), judiciary, interest groups (NGOs and industry groups), academics and researchers, and the public. Ideas for new policy areas can come from each of these sectors and actors; political parties can take up policy ideas as part of the party platform to then codify when in office. For example, the idea of the Employment Guarantee Act forming the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme was first suggested by civil society activists demanding a right to food, and the ruling party later took up this idea, adding it to their national platform (Chopra 2011). The legislature refines these policy ideas and codifies them into law, with varying degrees of consultations with interest groups and experts while designing policies (Raju and Ravindra 2016). The Indian judiciary also plays a key role in policymaking by interpreting the constitution and upholding judicial review. Additionally, through the process of public interest litigations, it ensures access to justice for disadvantaged groups (Rahmat 2015).

The process of policy formulation in India is therefore complex and involves various pathways, such as responses to legal cases, state-level initiatives, and policies proposed and demanded by civil society actors. As noted above, policies can also be proposed by the executive and taken up by the legislature. To be formally adopted, the proposed policy must adhere to specific guidelines, including the preparation of concept notes, stakeholder meetings, and pilot studies. Once approved, the policy undergoes an appraisal procedure by the Expenditure Finance Committee or Standing Finance Committee, which is managed by the Department of Expenditure.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lok Sabha (lower house, that is, House of the People) and Rajya Sabha (upper house, that is, Council of States)

<sup>8</sup>

[https://powermin.gov.in/sites/default/files/webform/notices/Appraisal\\_and\\_Approval\\_of\\_Public\\_funded\\_Schemes\\_and\\_Projects\\_Revised\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://powermin.gov.in/sites/default/files/webform/notices/Appraisal_and_Approval_of_Public_funded_Schemes_and_Projects_Revised_Guidelines.pdf)

### **3.2.2 Policy implementation and evaluation processes**

In federal systems, including India, responsibility for policy implementation is divided between the state and federal level. Accordingly, expenditures for schemes and programs are divided into central sector schemes, state schemes, and centrally sponsored schemes. Sectors or programs that fall under the Union List are funded by central sector schemes, while schemes that fall under the State List come under the state schemes. Last, under the centrally sponsored schemes, the central government and the state governments share the funding (Rao 2017).

Agriculture is placed as Entry 14 under the State List; however, some agricultural items have also been placed under the Union List and Concurrent List. Agriculture is a complex endeavor, so the creators of the constitution divided the areas of legislation concerning agriculture and related issues between the union and the states. The states were given exclusive legislative and executive authority over agriculture and its closely associated matters (Inter-State Council Secretariat 2015). Consequently, agriculture expenditures fall under central sector schemes and centrally sponsored schemes depending on the scheme's purpose and vastness. Schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Man Dhan Yojna (PM-KMY) or Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme (PM-KISAN) fall under the central sector schemes, whereas schemes such as Rashtritya Krishi Vikas Yojna fall under centrally sponsored schemes, as it grants states the freedom and independence to tailor projects according to the specific needs and priorities of local farmers within agriculture and related sectors, offering a range of activities to choose from (PIB 2024).

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DAFW) under the MoAFW is the primary body for major policies and schemes in the agriculture sector. The other core ministries working closely with the MoAFW are MoRD; Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC); Ministry of Fishing, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAH&D); and Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). The DAFW consists of 28 divisions, along with 5 attached offices and 21 subordinate offices dispersed throughout the nation. These entities collaborate with state-level agencies and execute central sector schemes within their specific domains to ensure effective coordination and implementation.<sup>9</sup> In addition, there is coordination and complementarity of functions between different ministries in implementation and design of schemes and policies. For example, because agriculture is largely dominant in the rural areas, many MoAFW and MoRD policies work jointly to uplift farmers and livelihoods in the rural economy as a whole. NITI Aayog, a public policy think tank of the government of India, also works with the DAFW and collaborates closely with other pertinent ministries to chart intervention and achieve the development goals within the agriculture sector. Additionally, it evaluates and offers feedback on various execution issues and the results of various central schemes.<sup>10</sup>

With respect to nutrition, the MoWCD was created to bridge the gaps in state actions for women and children. As the nodal ministry, MoWCD formulates policies and programs and implements innovative programs for women and children, with the vision to promote their economic and social empowerment and to create a safe and protective environment for children. Further, to ensure the holistic development of children, MoWCD implements the Integrated Child Development Services, providing services such as supplementary nutrition, immunization, referral services, and preschool education. MoWCD's activities are

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<sup>9</sup> <https://agriwelfare.gov.in/en/About>

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www.niti.gov.in/verticals/agriculture#:~:text=It%20offers%20suggestions%20and%20advice,the%20progress%20of%20key%20schemes>

carried out through seven bureaus and four autonomous organizations: the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, National Commission for Women, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, and Central Adoption Resource Agency.<sup>11</sup>

On climate policies, MoEFCC serves as the central authority responsible for the execution of India's environmental and forestry policies and programs. Its main focus includes creating and enforcing policies and programs for conserving the nation's natural resources, as well as preventing and reducing pollution.<sup>12</sup> The ministry oversees three divisions: Establishment; Environment; and Forest and Wildlife.

Apart from these three nodal ministries, the MoFAH&D; MoFPI; Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution (MoCAFPD); MoRD; and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) are other core ministries<sup>13</sup> in charge of food security and agriculture in India. Even though these eight are the focal ministries under the specific thematic areas, they work in alliance with other ministries and departments to implement the policies.

Other ministries include the Ministry of Jal Shakti (water and sanitation) and the Ministry of Panchayat Raj (village-level self-government).

### ***3.2.3 Agrifood policies***

Several national- and state-level agrifood policies and schemes in the spheres of agriculture, nutrition, and climate have been designed and implemented in India. Policies provide broad directives to address macro-level issues, such as liberalizing the agriculture sector and promoting value addition within the sector. Schemes, on the other hand, are a conduit for policy implementation and lay down specific outlays and outcomes to target problems with direct initiatives, such as modifying the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act<sup>14</sup> to benefit farmers or investing in micro-irrigation (Arora 2013). For our purpose, we focus primarily on national-level rather than state-level policies within each of the aforementioned spheres or thematic areas.

Recognizing the linkages of various schemes within the overarching policies, our analysis extends beyond the national/umbrella policies and includes one to two major schemes or programs per thematic area. We focus on the 30 most relevant policies and schemes (10 under each thematic area)<sup>15</sup> to understand the extent of gender consideration and gender targets in these major policies and schemes per thematic area (Table 5, with Annex 1 presenting the scores for these 30 policies and schemes).

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<sup>11</sup> <https://wcd.nic.in/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.indiascienceandtechnology.gov.in/organisations/ministry-and-departments/ministry-environment-forest-and-climate-change-moef-cc>

<sup>13</sup> These eight ministries—MoAFW, MoRD, MoEFCC, MoFAH&D, MoFPI, MoCAFPD, MoHFW, and MoWCD—are the core agrifood ministries for our study and are covered in the WEAGov measurements.

<sup>14</sup> The APMC Act regulates agricultural markets in India. It mandates the first sale of specified commodities through licensed commission agents within APMCs. The act also specifies the various taxes, fees, charges, and cess levied on trades conducted in these markets.

<sup>15</sup> As the policies are cross-cutting, they may fall in more than thematic areas. This policy grouping is just to ensure that we are capturing the three thematic areas evenly.

**Table 5. National policies under agriculture, nutrition, and climate**

<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Nutrition</b>	<b>Climate</b>
<b>National Policy of Farmers (2007)</b>	<b>National Nutrition Policy (1993)</b>	National Mission for a Green India (2014)
<b>Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (2011)</b>	<b>Mission Poshan 2.0 (2021–2026)</b>	National Afforestation Programme (2002)
National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (2020)	Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (2021–2026)	Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016)
Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (2014–2015)	Integrated Child development Services (2017)	<b>National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (2014)</b>
Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (2020)	National Food Security Act (2013)	National Water Mission (2011)
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Man Dhan Yojna (2019)	Anemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (2018)	National Environment Policy (2006)
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (2016)	Supplementary Nutrition Program (2017)	<b>National Action Plan for Climate Change (2008)</b>
National Scheme of Welfare of Fishermen (1992)	Public Distribution System (2005)	National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change (2008)
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme (2019)	Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (2024)	National Mission on Sustainable Habitat (2010)
Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (2015)	National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme	National Agroforestry Policy (2014)

Note: The bolded policies are those chosen for further evaluation and tracking in the organization and expert surveys.

Of the 10 policies under each theme, the 2 most important were tracked and fed into the survey questionnaire. Thus, in total six major policies or schemes took center stage, forming the basis of expert and organization surveys. These policies were chosen on the basis of their significance to India’s agrifood domain and most recent policies with adequate time spent on their implementation in order to enable relevant responses for the entire policy process: drafting, implementation, and evaluation.

In most cases, we use policy and scheme synonymously to refer to a certain policy it can imply, selecting either from an umbrella of schemes under the policy or a specific scheme from the umbrella policy. The reasons for selecting particular schemes were (1) to accommodate any recent policy amendments or changes that may affect the relevance of the policy design and implementation, and (2) to make sure that the policy is not very recent so that all aspects of policy design, implementation, and evaluation are touched on while accessing the different stages of the policy, as mentioned above.

Under the broad theme of agriculture, we selected two policies: (1) NPF and (2) MKSP. NPF is India's national agriculture policy that aims to enhance farmers' economic viability and net income. It includes subsections and schemes on credit, inputs, and market linkages. However, the policy is dated (2007), and respondents may find it hard to recall its design aspect and participation or documentation of the same. MKSP, one of the recent policies (2011) launched by the government to enhance rural livelihoods, is designed to make agriculture sustainable and inclusive, increase control over resources, and improve access to government schemes and policies.

Under the nutrition category, we selected the National Nutrition Mission (1993) as the main policy of focus because it is the overarching policy for holistic nourishment in the country, with a strong gender focus. Again, this policy too is dated (1993), and therefore, we chose a second, newer policy or scheme: Mission Poshan 2.0 (2021). This scheme was introduced to focus on the nutritional well-being of adolescent girls, children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers across the country.

Under environment, we chose NAPCC (2008) as the main policy of focus because it is a national strategy with eight missions designed to empower the country to adjust to climate change and bolster the ecological sustainability of India's developmental trajectory. Thus, it was necessary to understand women's representation and participation within the policy. The other policy of focus is NMSA (2014), one of NAPCC's eight missions and a relatively newer policy. The scheme deals with the intersection of agriculture and environment with regard to boosting agricultural productivity and also ensuring sustainability. Hence, it was important to understand how gender targets are specified under the scheme.

In selecting these policies under three broad thematic areas, we recognize that the classification under each thematic area is not a watertight compartment. There are cross-cutting areas with respect to the themes, their scope, and their implementation across target groups. However, the categorization of the policies aided the implementation of surveys and thematic discussions as well as analysis of these policies and data.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

This study relied on several data collection and analytical methods: (1) a desk review to understand and map the institutional landscape, organizations involved, and relevant agrifood policies and schemes; (2) a secondary or administrative data analysis; (3) a content analysis of policy documents and key public speeches; (4) an organization survey data analysis; (5) an expert survey data analysis; and (6) a technical validation workshop. The following subsections discuss the latter four methods.

#### ***3.3.1 Policy content analysis***

For the identified agrifood policies, the research team used the following checklist to review how each policy document addresses gender issues or consideration of women:

- Overall policy objectives and goals
  - The document includes key policy objectives and goals identified in the policy, strategy, or development plan.
- Gender-intentional content
  - The document includes important quotes and discussion of gender within the key policy objectives identified in the policy, strategy, or development plan.

- The document mentions any other gender-related contextual factors.
  - The document mentions gender, women, woman, husband, wife, mother, girl, boy, social inclusion, and equity (yes/no).
  - The document mentions a gender analysis or gender study that guided and informed the policy (yes/no).
  - The document cites sex-disaggregated data (yes/no).
  - The document includes specific objectives or targets related to gender equality in access to inputs, resources, and opportunities (yes/no; if yes, provide details/quotes).
  - The document includes specific objectives or targets related to improving women’s voices and participation in decision-making and institutions, improving women’s leadership, improving women’s agency or empowerment, and addressing gendered social norms and structural gender inequalities (yes/no; if yes, please provide details/quotes).
  - The document includes considerations for intersectionality in targeting marginalized groups: whether there is citation for key words (tribal, tribe, youth, disability, disable, caste, indigenous, ethnic, ethnicity, elderly, old, young, married, widow, poor, marginalized, vulnerable, social status, mother, or pregnant) indicating that in addition to gender, other forms of social marginalization are tackled.
- Gendered participation in the policy formulation process
    - Is there evidence in the policy document (or drafts, media coverage, others) on the consultative processes undertaken? Are there any references to women, different types of women, marginalized groups, ethnic groups?
    - In the writing/drafting team, what is the proportion of women?
    - In the advisory/supervisory/review team, what is the proportion of women?

### ***3.3.2 Organization survey***

Through a desk review, we compiled a list of organizations, governmental and nongovernmental, that are either actively or likely involved in agrifood policy process or are a major player in the agrifood sector and have a potential role in agrifood policy. We reached out to all organizations in the compiled list and were able to conduct the survey with a total of 133 organizations. Overall, 36 percent of the organizations in the sample are government institutions,<sup>16</sup> 13 percent are independent government agencies, 32 percent are NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), 10 percent are private sector, and 9 percent are research institutions or universities (Table 6).

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<sup>16</sup> It consists of different state-level government institutions related to agrifood systems. This includes the Forest Department, Anganwadi, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Environment of the states studied in the organization survey.

**Table 6. Composition of sample agrifood system organizations, by sector**

Type of organization	Count	Percent (%)
Government institutions*	48	36
Independent government agency	17	13
Nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations	43	32
Private sector	13	10
Research institutions and universities	12	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024).

In terms of geographic representation and sampling, to get a holistic understanding and perspective of policymaking in India, we segregated the states into east (Bihar and Odisha), west (Gujarat and Maharashtra), north (Haryana and Punjab), south (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) and central (Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh) zones. We then ranked the states in each zone based on the percentage of female land holders as per the Agriculture Census 2015–2016. From each of the zones, we selected states with the highest and lowest percentage of registered female operational holders in order to gain as diverse as possible understanding of women’s voices in agrifood policymaking (see Annex 2). Despite the geographies selected, we also interviewed organizations that had pan-India coverage (that is, coverage spanning several states or regions) and were able to give crucial inputs from the macro perspective. The selected states also naturally reflected and represented the diversity in governance. The distribution of sample organizations per zone is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Composition of sample, by zone**

Geopolitical zone	Count	Percent (%)
North zone	46	35
East zone	18	14
Central zone	29	22
South zone	20	15
West zone	20	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024).

The organization survey collected information on gender composition of the team and staff in both leadership and nonleadership roles and the organization’s gender-focused strategies and initiatives, such as the gender quota policy for leadership, maternity and paternity leave provision, and gender budgeting, among others. Moreover, the survey also collected details on the involvement of organizations in the specific six agrifood policies (see Table 5) at the formulation, implementation, and evaluation stages. The survey used a semistructured questionnaire administered through computer-assisted personal interviews.

When conducting the survey, the primary respondent targeted was the head of the organization, often also supported by other knowledgeable staff members. Representatives of the organization were provided with various response methods, including in-person interviews, phone interviews, paper-based questionnaires, or online questionnaires. The majority of respondents opted for phone or in-person interviews, with a minority completing the questionnaire through an online survey. On average, the survey duration lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

### 3.3.3 Expert survey

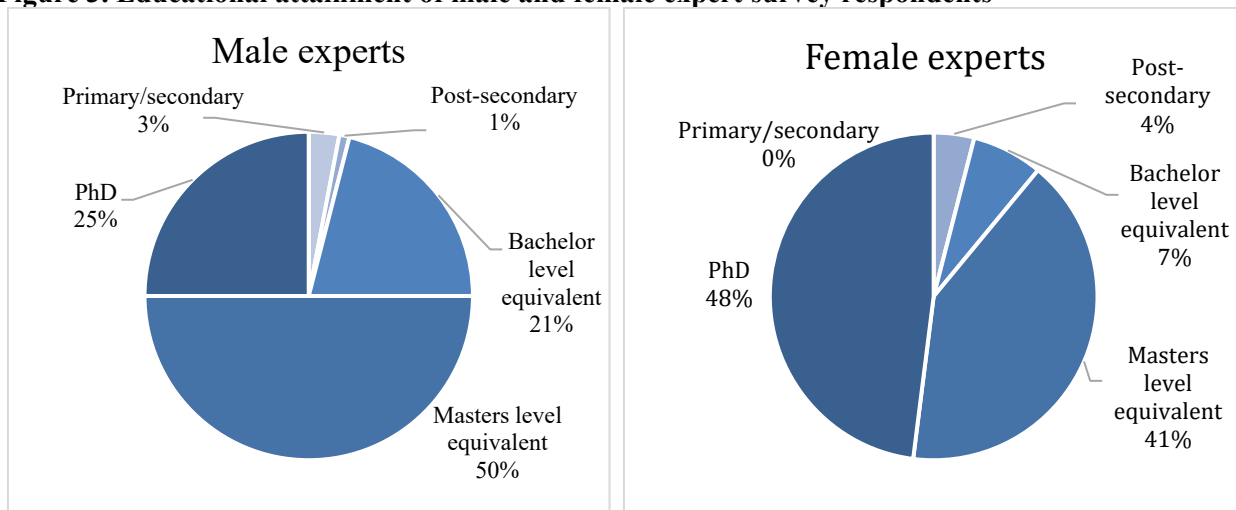
The expert survey is aimed at understanding the relationship between the formulated policy and its implementation. Responses from these surveys enable us to identify caveats in policy enforcement, if any; understand whether women are consulted while designing and implementing policies, and track gender targets and audits within policies. Table 8 and Figure 3 show the distribution of sample experts by zone and educational attainment.

**Table 8. Gender of expert survey respondents segregated by zone**

Geopolitical zone	All	Male	Female
North zone	42	25	17
East zone	28	25	3
Central zone	49	21	28
South zone	22	17	5
West zone	25	20	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>58</b>

Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

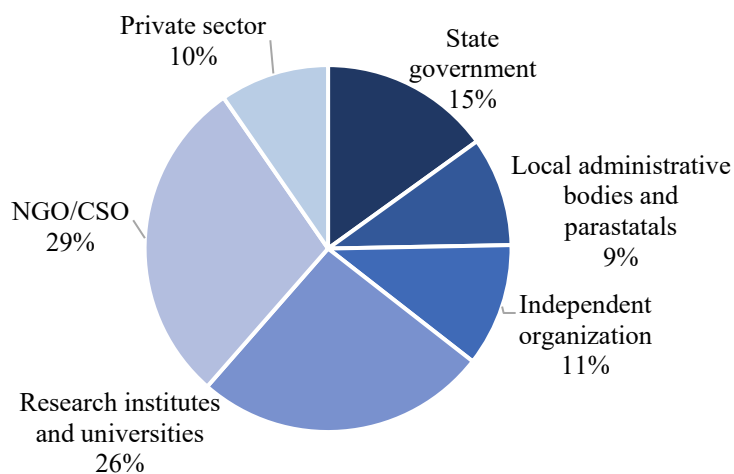
**Figure 3. Educational attainment of male and female expert survey respondents**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

We used two distinctive approaches to identify potential experts. First, in the organization survey, we requested that organization heads participate in the expert survey and recommended other key staff meeting specific expertise criteria for the sample. Second, we reached out to key stakeholders from a list of agrifood policy actors and organizations. Target respondents were members of the agrifood organizations' management team, decision-makers in the agrifood organizations, agrifood policy experts, and gender contacts for any gender-specific programming in the agrifood organizations. We interviewed a total of 166 respondents, of which 15 percent are state government officials, 10 percent are officials from local administrative bodies, 11 percent are from independent organizations, 26 percent are from research institutes and universities, 29 percent are from NGOs and CSOs, and 10 percent are from the private sector (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Sample agrifood system experts, by sector**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

Note: No expert from the federal government responded to the structured survey; however, we were able to interview some key staff from the federal Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, and their insights are integrated into this paper.

### ***3.3.4 Stakeholder workshop and policy dialogues***

In March 2024, we conducted a stakeholders' workshop involving 10 participants, with the following objectives:

1. To gather feedback that will enhance the WEAGov tool's effectiveness vis-à-vis rich ground knowledge and understanding of technical experts in agrifood systems governance in India.
2. To gather feedback on the measurement, relevance, and implications of each indicator within the WEAGov assessment framework in relation to women's role and position within the ambit of agrifood policymaking in India.

The 10 participants were selected from a range of experts within India with knowledge of agrifood systems governance. Stakeholders included researchers, private sector actors, and government representatives. The agenda consisted primarily of an introduction to the WEAGov tool, a discussion on the pilot study and results from India, and a discussion session for any clarifications on the same. Following this overview, the

workshop was divided into discussion sessions focusing on different sets of indicators, allowing for in-depth discussions among all attendees.

The following guiding questions were used to facilitate the validation exercise:

1. What are your thoughts on the accuracy with which the indicators are measured?
2. Based on your experience, can you comment on the validity of the results for India for this indicator?
3. Are the selection criteria of states for the expert surveys and those for the focus agrifood policies for the desk review/policy document analysis relevant?
4. Do the results/data/scores for India for this indicator seem accurate and valid, in your experience? Does the result seem high or low, based on your experience? Could you please elaborate on possible reasons for this divergence?
5. What are some emerging implications of the results/scores on policy and programming?
6. Is there any indicator missing that would be important for understanding women's voices and empowerment in this stage of the policy process? Are there any gaps in the indicators used in the framework to capture women's participation in this stage of the policy process?

The workshop enabled targeted feedback on both measurement approaches for each indicator in the WEAGov assessment framework and validated the pilot results for India. Discussions and conclusions from this workshop are documented in Ragasa et al. (2024).

Last, as the final step of WEAGov, we conducted dissemination events and policy dialogues (August and September 2024), where we summarized the WEAGov methodology and provided a platform for discussing some of the policy recommendations and future activities building on the WEAGov assessment.

## 4. RESULTS

The subsections that follow summarize the WEAGov results across the three policy stages: policy design, implementation, and evaluation. First, we remind readers about the different measurements for each indicator and their definitions, rationale, and scoring method, using exact illustrations and figures from the WEAGov framework (see Kyle and Ragasa 2023). Second, we summarize in a table the scores for each measurement, the data source for the score, and the implications of the results. Third, we discuss in detail the available evidence and justification for the scores. Each of the 54 measurements is scored from very weak (1), to weak (2), to moderate (3), to strong (4). However, in general, we reiterate that a strong score does not indicate women’s full and equal participation in policy as much as it signifies meeting a specific target. Thus, the terminology of scores is also represented by low (1), on the way (2), advancing (3), and at goal (4).

### 4.1 Policy Design

We first focus on the role of women in policy formulation and design. The WEAGov assessment emphasizes women’s role in influencing the diversity of social and economic issues incorporated into the policy agenda, and the tailored solutions devised and accepted. This stage encompasses three criteria, each evaluating a facet of women’s empowerment during the policy formulation phase:

- **Gender policy targets** are achieved when potentially different needs and priorities of men and women are integrated into major agrifood policies, and when gender is an important topic within agrifood policy discussions and is frequently mentioned and discussed by high-level policy officials.
- **Opportunities for policy input** are achieved when women have opportunities to share their input on how policies should be designed, know about those opportunities, and are able to use them.
- **Women’s policy design leadership** is achieved when women take on leadership roles in entities involved in agrifood policy design.

The following subsections report the results for India.

#### 4.1.1 Gender policy targets

Gender salience or prominence of gender in policy discussions or agenda setting and actual gendered content in the policy documents are important measures of gender considerations and priorities incorporated into formal policy processes. We employ two distinct metrics to gauge the prominence of gender issues in policy discussions: (1) an objective assessment based on the prevalence of gender-related content in key presidential or budget speeches, and (2) a subjective evaluation of the attention given to gender within prioritized agrifood policies. The third measure for this indicator is the scored gender-intentional content of six major agrifood policies, with Figure 5 providing detailed scoring information and Table 9 providing a summary of scores for India.









**Figure 5. Scoring metrics for gender salience**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023).

Note: \* Indicates that this measurement is collected from the expert survey. The scoring metrics used in the content analysis on agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies are the same.

**Table 9. Summary of India’s results for gender salience**

Indicator	Measurement	Score	Priorities for action
1. Gender policy targets	Scored gender content in prominent presidential or budget speech		Gender targets in public speeches should be monitored to increase accountability.
	Gender attention in prioritized agrifood policy issue*		More evaluation, research, and advocacy should be conducted on women’s roles and gender implications of agrifood policies when discussing agrifood policy issues. This would help in developing gender-responsive and evidence-based policies.
	Scored gender content in national agriculture policy		<p>The government should be transparent and publicly provide the policy formulation details, which reflect the extent to which gender-sensitive methods and procedures are used to conceptualize and design policies and programs.</p> <p>The government should ensure that gender targets in policies are communicated to the population, monitored, and enforced.</p> <p>While five of the six focus policies have strong gender consideration, NAPCC and the other 24 policies do not all have strong gender attention. The NAPCC policy document needs more specifics on its gender targets, activities, budget, and implementation plan. Thoughtful gender analysis and greater attention to gender considerations and gender targets are needed in many of the agrifood policies.</p>
	NPF		
	MKSP		
	Scored gender content in national climate policy		
	NAPCC		
	NPSA		
	Scored gender content in national nutrition policy		
	NNP		
	Mission Poshan		

Source: Gender content in presidential budget speeches and policy documents scored by authors. \* Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024). NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

The first measure examines gender content in key presidential or national budget speeches. Key for WEAGov is gender salience *in relation to agrifood policy* rather than in general (note the scoring detailed in Figure 5). Analysis of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s 2023 Independence Day speech<sup>17</sup> highlights women as key participants in development. The prime minister emphasized women-led development and announced the Namu Drone Didi scheme, a collaborative effort between MoAFW and the Ministry of Power, aimed at empowering women’s self-help groups (SHGs) with agricultural drone technology:

*“While promoting the potential of our women power, we are focusing on women-led development.”*

*“The Government of India will provide drones to thousands of such Women Self-Help*

<sup>17</sup><https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1948808#:~:text=I%20want%20to%20tell%20the,and%20daughters%20of%20my%20country>

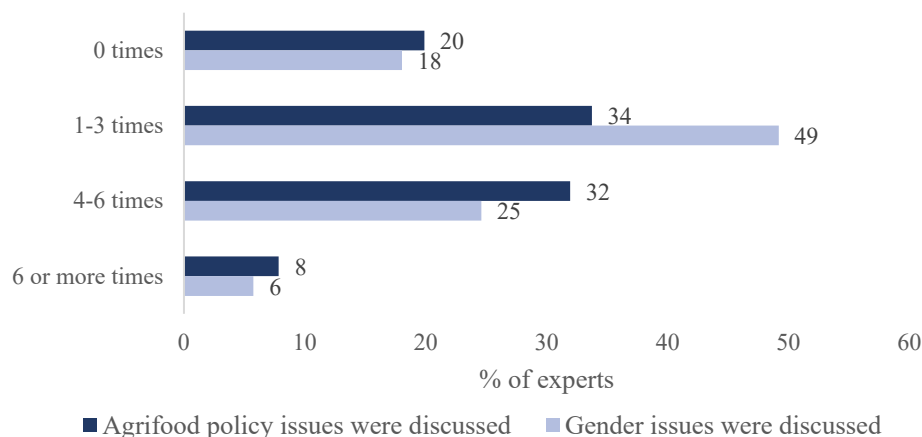
*Groups. We will initiate making drone services available for our agricultural work.”*

In this speech, he further committed to specific targets, such as promoting two crore *Lakhpati Didis*<sup>18</sup> within the village, underscoring a commitment to fostering female entrepreneurship and leadership within rural communities. Overall, this speech provides evidence of high-level attention to women’s issues within the agrifood sector at the time of the pilot, resulting in a score of 4 (at goal).

The second measure captures experts’ recall of gender issues featured in discussions specifically on agrifood policy issues or public speeches by other high-level officials. Experts were asked to identify the top agrifood policy issue that gained government attention over the past year. Respondents identified crop support prices, minimum support price, self-sufficiency in millet production, and food and nutrition security. Although most experts recalled agrifood policy discussions occurring one to six times in the past 12 months (Figure 6), they noted that gender issues within these priority policy areas were discussed far less frequently, typically only one to three times (Figure 6). Feedback during the validation workshop confirmed the survey results. This measure (gender attention in prioritized agrifood policy issues) is thus scored as 2 (weak, on the way).

The findings suggest that, despite prioritizing key agriculture policy issues, such as easy access to raw materials for agricultural production, price control, and holistic nutritional well-being, there remains limited focus on the specific needs of women farmers. The data underscore that while critical areas are being addressed, a more consistent gender perspective is essential for holistic empowerment in the sector.

**Figure 6. Number of times high-level speeches discussed agrifood policy issues in the past 12 months, and gender issues in them (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

The third measure is scored gendered content from the policy document analysis. In the policy design phase, policymakers and advocates consider solutions to pressing issues. However, despite an issue being recognized, important social and economic problems may be overlooked during the decision process. Feminist scholars have long argued for the importance of explicitly addressing men’s and women’s

<sup>18</sup> Lakhpati Didi is an initiative by the government of India to help SHG women earn an annual household income of 1 Lakh rupees. <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/lakhpati-didi#:~:text=A%20Lakhpati%20Didi%20is%20a,so%20that%20it%20is%20sustainable>

differentiated opportunities, challenges, and needs in policy (Bhattacharya and Rani 1995; McPhail 2003). Their main premise is that the use of gender-neutral language in policy fails to acknowledge and address the gender differences that exist in society, does not cater to the differentiated needs of men and women, and may exacerbate preexisting inequalities. Policy documents can play a foundational role in the transformation of unequal gender power relations (Jacobs et al. 2021); and integrating gender-inclusive language and considerations in agrifood policies is seen as crucial for holding governments and institutions accountable to their commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment (Ampaire et al. 2020; Brown 2011).

To analyze how gender salience may (or may not) translate into policy design, we focus on six policies or schemes (two per theme). We review and score each policy on the basis of the extent of consideration of gender-related issues, with scores ranging from 1 to 4. According to our indicator, gender is considered in policy design if major agrifood policies integrate potentially different needs and priorities of men and women and explicitly include gender targets and indicators to track progress. Under the scoring metrics shown in Figure 5, India achieves scores of 4 (strong, at goal) for five of six focus policies, while one policy (NAPCC) is scored as 3 (moderate, advancing) (Table 9).

On agriculture policies, both NPF and MKSP are scored as 4 (at goal), which means that these documents mention strong gender targets and specific agendas. NPF discusses women's issues and specifies gender targets. It not only covers women's income from crops but also considers how to increase the income from the fishing, livestock, and poultry subsectors. Along with mentioning support services such as creches for women farmers, the policy guidelines highlight credit access for women farmers through the Kisan Credit Card scheme. NPF also has a dedicated section on attracting youth in the policy document, which points out how, through various trainings, it can retain or attract more youth in the agriculture sector, although it does not differentiate challenges and opportunities of female and male youth. MKSP is a women-centric policy that lays out clear objectives and stakeholders required for women's empowerment within the agriculture sector. The policy document also stresses the importance of focusing on the poor and on the most vulnerable women, such as scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST), minorities, landless individuals, and the primitive tribal groups.

On climate policies, NAPCC is scored as 3 (moderate, advancing), while NPSA is scored as 4 (at goal). NAPCC acknowledges that women are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It also highlights that special attention should be paid to gender-related aspects in adaptation programs. However, it does not specify other intersectional identities and or specific ways in which adaptations should be carried out for them or for any other gender targets, for that matter. NMSA's policy document, on the other hand, specifies that 50 percent of the budgetary allocation must be for small and marginal farmers, in which at least 30 percent of beneficiaries must be women. Further, 16 percent and 8 percent of the total allocation or in proportion of the SC and ST population in the district must be used for the Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan, respectively. It also has a sex-disaggregated matrix format attached for reporting the progress of the policy.

On nutrition policies, both NNP and Mission Poshan are scored as 4 (strong, at goal), which implies that these documents mention strong gender targets and specific agendas. Their policy documents identify the key issues women face in attaining proper nutrition, then identify the potential stakeholders who need to be served as well as those who can help with easy dissemination of essential services at the grassroots level. The potential solutions as well as methods for achieving them are also well elucidated in these documents.

The Mission Poshan policy document, in particular, also provides updated data on the demographics and nutritional levels of adolescent girls and pregnant women. In addition, it provides a succinct five-year outcomes plan, detailing all the milestones the policy aims to attain.

Overall, the assessment indicates significant progress in integrating gender perspectives into national policies related to agriculture, climate, and nutrition, with some policies already achieving their goals and others advancing toward them. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in ensuring the effective implementation of gender target measures across all policy domains.

A total of 24 other sectoral policies and major schemes were also reviewed and show weaker gender content: 50 percent of agriculture policies, 30 percent of nutrition policies, and 30 percent of environment/climate policies reviewed have weak or very weak gender considerations (score 1 or 2) (Annex 1). Overall, there is a need for greater gender consideration in agrifood policies.

#### ***4.1.2 Opportunities for policy input***

Although the first indicator assesses the extent to which women’s needs and priorities are included in policy design, consideration of gender does not necessarily mean that women have voice and agency in the surrounding policy debates and decisions. To determine whether women themselves were included in the first stage of the policy cycle, we look for evidence that women had the opportunity to weigh in and share their views on potential policy problems and solutions.

Including women’s voices is a two-step process: (1) Governments must be open to the participation of CSOs and citizens in policymaking and have mechanisms for them to share their ideas and feedback, and (2) opportunities for participation must be open to women specifically. Our indicator measures whether women have opportunities to share their input on how policies should be designed, know about those opportunities, and are able to use them. We use one objective measure—presence of formal processes for collecting citizens’ input into the agrifood policymaking process—and four perception measures—opportunities for women’s input into the agrifood policy process and national agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies (see Figure 7 for the scoring metric and Table 10 for the scores).








**Figure 7. Scoring metrics for women’s input**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023).

Note: The scoring metrics used for the content analysis on the agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies are the same. \* Indicates that this measurement is collected from the expert survey.

**Table 10. Summary of India’s results for women’s input**

Indicator	Measurement	Score	Priorities for action
2. Women’s input	Formal process for collecting citizens’ input into agrifood policymaking process		<p>Frameworks and methods for identifying beneficiaries and key stakeholders must recognize women as farmers and key actors in agricultural value chains. Recognition of women as farmers must be explicitly addressed to prevent their systematic exclusion from agrifood policy processes.</p> <p>The government and development partners should intensify awareness campaigns, capacity-strengthening, and access to the opportunities and mechanisms available for citizens and women to provide inputs into policy processes. Special attention is needed to extend awareness, capacity, and access by rural areas, marginalized groups, and local organizations working at the grassroots level to these mechanisms and opportunities to provide inputs.</p>
	Opportunities for women to provide inputs into policy design*		
	Women’s inputs into national agriculture policy*		
	NPF		
	MKSP		
	Women’s inputs into national climate policy*		
	NAPCC		
	NMSA		
	Women’s inputs into national nutrition policy*		
	Mission Poshan		

Source: Formal process for collecting citizens’ input, scored by authors. \* Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024). NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

India has a clear legal framework (called the “Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy”) requiring that the public has a chance to provide input on any new policy. These consultations sometimes go all the way down to the general population level and build up to the state, regional, and national levels. This measure is scored as 4 (at goal).

According to experts, a formal process for collecting citizens’ input on the agrifood policymaking process is established; however, there is uneven awareness of such mechanisms, as noted by one respondent:

*“Both State and Union governments get inputs from the public while preparing budgets; this generally stops interaction with Unions or getting inputs through online platforms. Therefore, only those citizens who know these very well provide their input. But the real people who belong to marginalized sections are out of this one.”*

Male, expert associated with a CSO

Experts agree that people or organizations situated in the urban areas are more aware about such mechanisms; however, people at the grassroots level or NGOs working in the remote area of the country are still unaware of them. As a result, they often miss out on providing inputs during policy formulation:

*“While some discussion is held with key people, like some NGO heads or networks, voices of grassroots organizations are missed.”* Female, expert associated with a CSO

*“NGOs and civil society have the opportunity to give feedback, but that is in urban areas. We still need to include people from rural areas.”* Male, expert associated with a CSO

Many have also mentioned the limitations of using online platforms (the usual solicitation approach), as digital media and the internet are still not widely available:

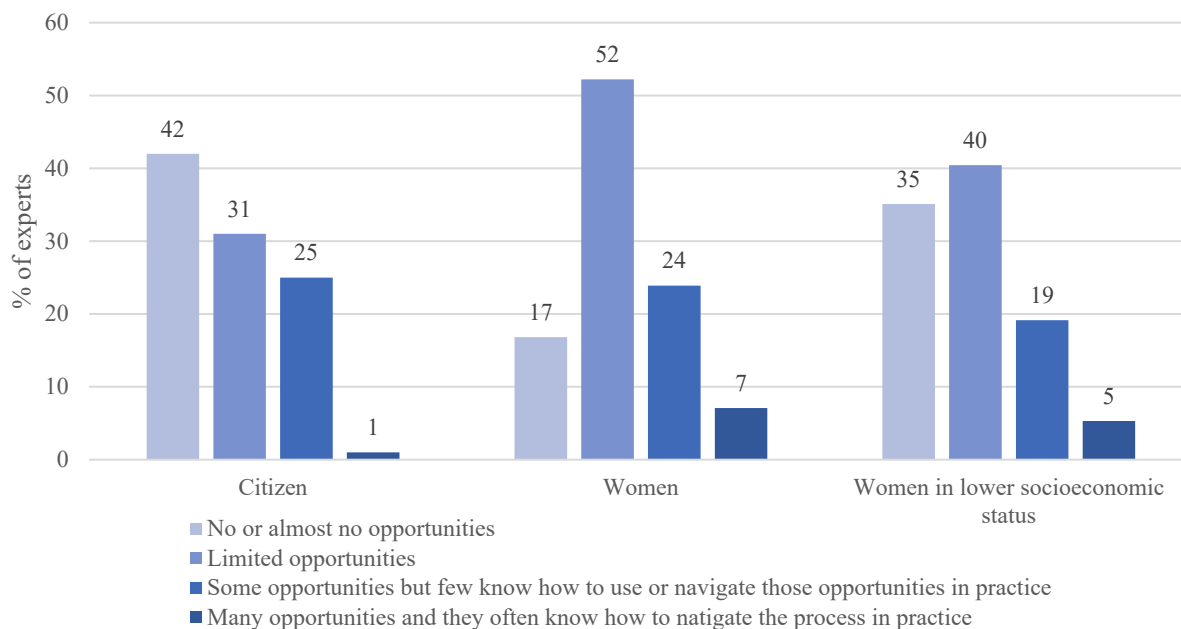
*“Most formats to provide inputs are app based. Not all citizens are able to use the apps effectively, especially senior citizens, [and] such exercises are time consuming too. Therefore, in spite of having good inputs to provide, citizens stay away from doing so and rather concentrate on issues that affect them directly in day-to-day life.”* Female, associated with state/parastatal

Governments ask for inputs on the policies through the government portal, websites, and print media. As a result, individuals or experts residing in rural areas with limited internet connectivity or those with minimum education often miss such notifications. During the validation workshop, the participants mentioned that there is no formal structure or processes in which citizens from the different states can provide inputs when forming policies. States provide inputs on an ad hoc basis. Publication on these policies can be found on the MyGov.in website, but not everyone can access or understand it. The participants suggested that a formal process for providing inputs in policy formulation should also be considered, which MyGov.in does not account for. Not many are aware of citizen awareness platforms. Thus, this first measure is scored as 2 (weak, on the way).

While it is an important step to have these mechanisms in place for citizen input into policymaking, increasing their usage is critical for gaining perspectives from across India’s diverse population, including from women. Public input makes the policymaking process work better because policymakers can then design solutions based on information from a broad range of perspectives and localities. A range of approaches could facilitate broader participation and better leverage the formal participation mechanisms that India already has in place, including pairing online participation opportunities with listening sessions with communities and individuals affected by an issue, conducting targeted grassroots outreach, and training local NGOs and groups on how to provide useful feedback and ideas through My Gov and other portals.

The second measure is based on the expert survey. Consistent with the review of the formal process for citizen input, experts also reported that citizens have limited opportunities to provide input into agrifood policy formulation (Figure 8) and that woman, especially from lower socioeconomic segments, have limited opportunities to provide inputs into policy design (Figure 8). This second measure was scored as 2 (weak, on the way).

**Figure 8. Opportunities for citizens, women, and women of lower socioeconomic status to provide inputs into agrifood policy formulation (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

Most respondents note that primarily women who are involved in local, state-level, or national-level governments have the opportunity to provide input:

*“As mentioned in [the] previous question, only women who are part of unions or groups who interact with government departments give their inputs.”* Male, expert associated with a CSO

Awareness about processes also seems to be an issue, as noted by an expert:

*“The women I have met are generally not aware of whom to connect with to provide their inputs on agrifood policy formulation.”* Male, expert associated with state/parastatal

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments were introduced to increase the political participation of women by mandating a 33 percent reservation in *panchayats* and local bodies. Certain states have further increased the reservation of seats to 50 percent under the constitution’s 110th Amendment Bill 2009 (Fadia 2014). Yet, many women have limited experience exercising decision-making power, especially in rural areas. As a result, they often miss out on opportunities to provide input on agrifood policymaking as well.

*“Only a few women have been able to navigate those opportunities because these women have been able to sustain challenges arising out of sociocultural biases, capacity-building issues, issues related to market access, etc.”* Male, expert associated with CSO/NGO

Experts mentioned that training programs through SHGs can increase awareness levels among women in rural areas and thus increase their participation at the grassroots level.

*“SHG ko kaam karna chahiye, training and survey hona chahiye” [SHG should work in raising awareness through community programs].* Female, expert associated with state/parastatal

*“Awareness programs should be held at the village level.”* Female, expert associated with state/parastatal

In addition to expert feedback on general opportunities for input within the existing institutional landscape, we also asked about women’s input into the development of specific national agrifood policy plans and strategies. We asked in the expert survey if sample experts perceived that those women had been consulted and included during formulation of each of the six focus policies.

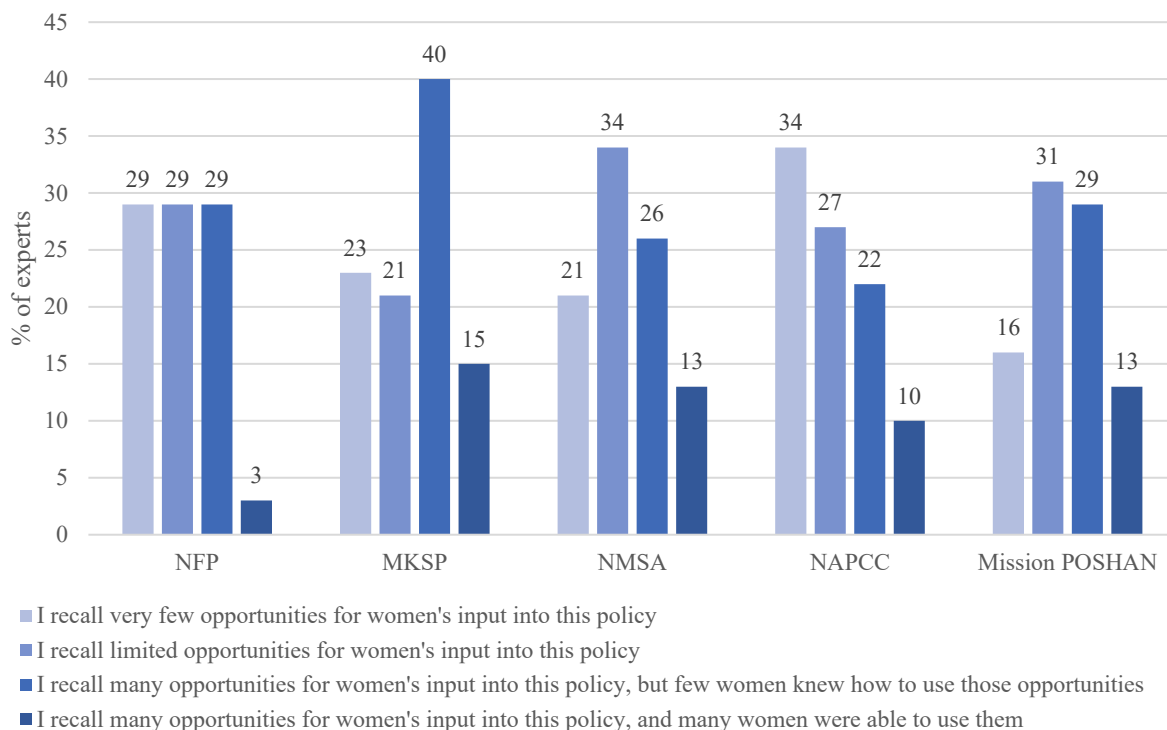
On agricultural policies, sample experts hold divergent views, with an equal split among those reporting very few opportunities, limited opportunities, and many opportunities for women’s input into the NPF (Figure 9). Experts were asked to answer only for those policies with which they were familiar, as those who are familiar with climate policy are not necessarily the same as those who are experts in nutrition policy. Thus, experts were expected to use their knowledge base and experience in their assessments and ratings. Nonetheless, expert disagreements can arise for a number of reasons. First, in a complex policy system with multiple institutions and actors, experts may interact with different parts of the system and have different perspectives about how things work in practice. Second, given India’s sprawling federal system, real differences may emerge in outreach and inputs into policymaking across localities, driving divergence in expert perceptions. Given the age of the policy, it is also possible that expert recall of the policy design stage was poor (see Box 3 in Kyle and Ragasa 2024 for further discussion on expert disagreement).

Given the lack of expert consensus, we supplemented this measure with desk research and in-depth discussion in the technical workshop. Desk research found that, in 2006, the Swaminathan Commission, tasked with drafting an NPF, requested that the National Commission for Women contribute specific gender-related insights to the policy. Consequently, the National Commission for Women established a panel of experts and collaborated with them to compile a comprehensive document on the subject. This note was then forwarded to Dr. Swaminathan as per the commission’s request.<sup>19</sup> Thereupon, women’s inputs into NPF design is scored as 3 (moderate, advancing). On the other hand, sample experts are reporting a convergence on women’s inputs into the MKSP design, in which 40 percent of respondents feel that women have some opportunities to provide inputs into the formulation process, although improvements can be made to make these opportunities more known and for women to use them. Therefore, women’s inputs into the MKSP design are also scored as 3 (moderate, advancing).

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<sup>19</sup> <https://feministlawarchives.pldindia.org/wp-content/uploads/draft-policy-for-women-in-agriculture-2008-.pdf>

**Figure 9. Women’s opportunities to provide inputs into major agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

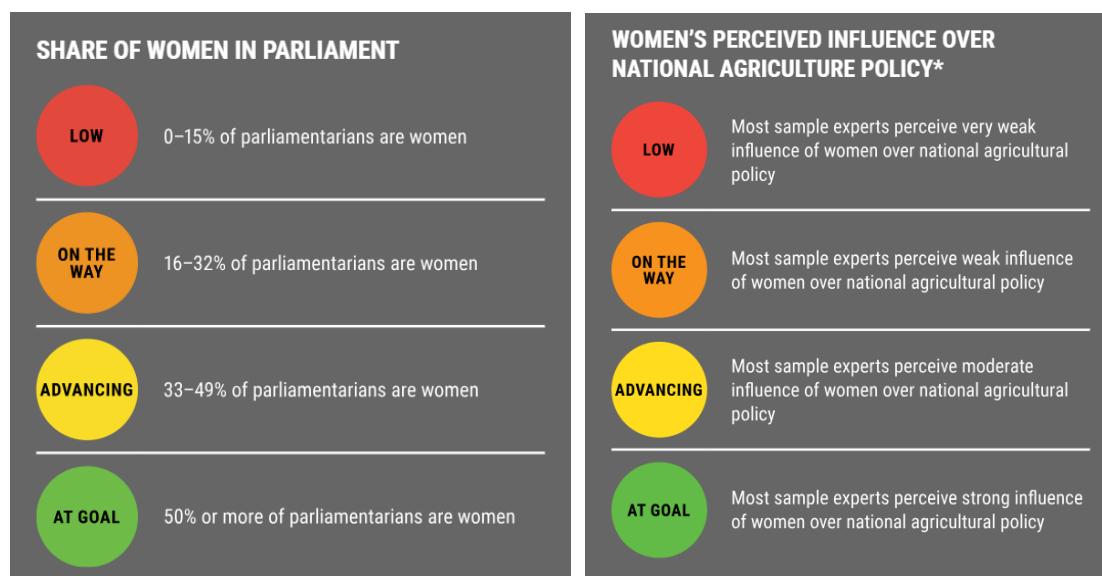
On climate policies, the majority of experts recalled very few opportunities for women’s inputs into the NAPCC design (score 1, very weak) and limited opportunities for women’s inputs into the NMSA design (score 2, weak).

On nutrition policy, experts had divergent views between limited and many opportunities for women’s inputs into the Mission Poshan design. However, the majority recalled that few women are aware of and use these opportunities. Therefore, Mission Poshan is scored as 2 (weak, on the way).

#### **4.1.3 Policy design leadership**

In the initial stage of the policy process, numerous actors from various sectors are involved, each with distinct roles, interests, and authorities. Private sector entities, multilateral organizations, and academic experts may advocate for specific issues to be placed on the policy agenda, but it is ultimately MPs who decide whether new policies are adopted. Ministries are typically responsible for crafting policy designs, while both ministries and parliamentarians play crucial roles in advocating for different issues and shaping the policy agenda. However, this phase is characterized by complex dynamics, with multiple actors influencing the agenda and the final design of national policies. The focus of investigation in this stage is on understanding the extent to which women hold leadership positions within the constellation of organizations shaping policy problems, potential solutions, and final policy adoption. To determine whether women take on leadership roles in different entities involved in agrifood policy design, we use six measures, with scoring details in Figure 10 and the results for India summarized in Table 11.

**Figure 10. Scoring for women’s policy design leadership**




Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023).

Note: The scoring metric is consistent for all “share of women in leadership” measures; the scoring metric for perceived influence measures is also consistent across agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies.

**Table 11. Summary of India’s results for women’s policy design leadership**

Indicator	Measurement	Score	Priorities for action	
3. Women’s policy design leadership	Share of women in parliament	LOW	Intensify the provision of women’s leadership and confidence-building trainings.  Support women going into politics/parliament.  Get more female group leaders involved in policy deliberations; build capacity of citizens and women to provide inputs and influence policy design.  Support and expand opportunities for female leaders in government and nongovernment entities to engage with and influence policy design.  Ensure the presence of gender expertise (gender focal points or dedicated teams) within agrifood ministries. Empower these focal points or teams with institutional support and recognition to incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives into agrifood policy processes and to seek external support when necessary to address knowledge or capacity gaps.	
	Share of women in parliamentary agricultural committee	LOW		
	Share of female leaders in nongovernment sector involved in agrifood policy design <sup>+</sup>	ADVANCING		
	Women leading and influencing deliberations on the national agriculture policy*			
	NPF	ADVANCING		
	MKSP	ADVANCING		
	Women leading and influencing deliberations on the national climate policy*			
	NAPCC	LOW		
NMSA	ON THE WAY			

Indicator	Measurement	Score	Priorities for action
	Women leading and influencing deliberations on the national nutrition policy*		
	Mission Poshan		

Source: Share of women in parliament and on agricultural committees, scored by authors. + Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024). \* Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD survey (2024).

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

As of March 2024, women account for 15 percent of *Lok Sabha* (lower house, that is, the House of the People) MPs and 13 percent of *Rajya Sabha* (upper house, that is, Council of States). This measure is scored as 1 (very weak). Similarly, women account for only 7 percent of the members of the 30-member Parliamentary Committee of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Food Processing. Two female members are in this committee: (1) Shardaben Anilbhai Patel, member of Lok Sabha; and (2) Ramilaben Bara, member of Rajya Sabha.<sup>20</sup> This measure is scored as 1 (very weak). In September 2023, the Lok Sabha introduced the Constitution Bill, 2023, which reserves one-third of all seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies to women.<sup>21</sup> Reservation of seats often enhances participation of women in policymaking, and women leaders may have a distinct policy preference compared with male leaders; thus the current bill increases women’s participation prospects (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

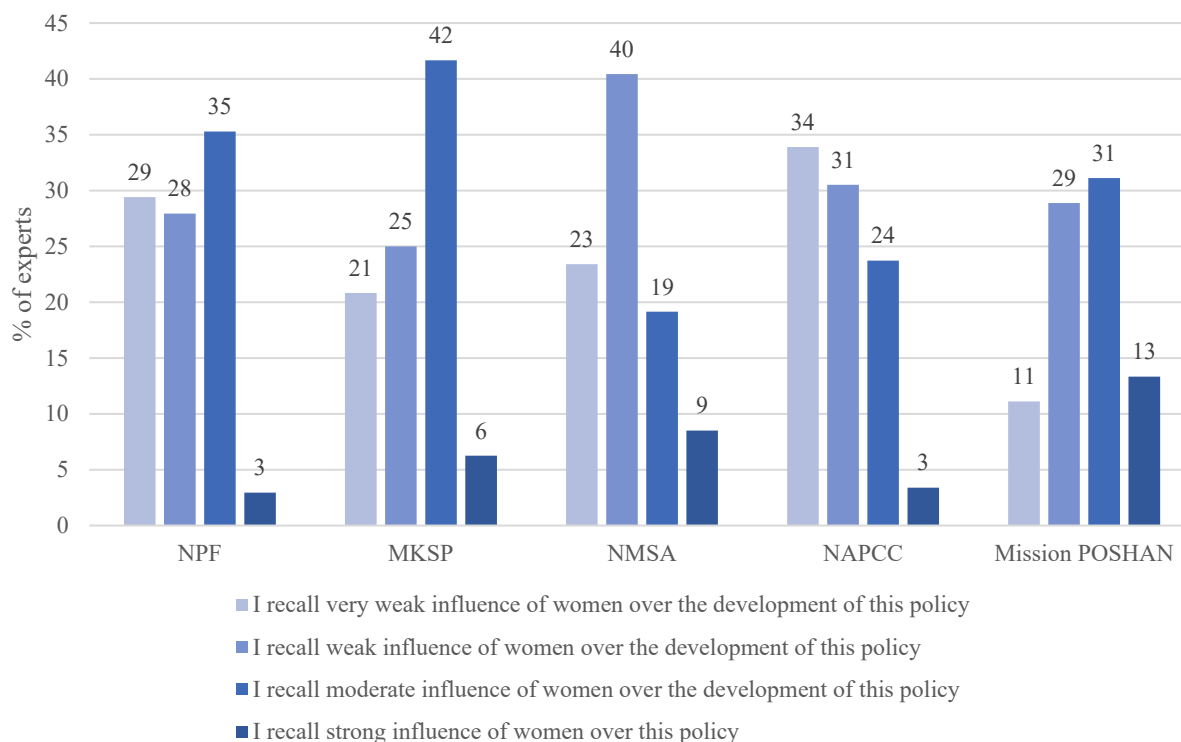
In addition to formal policy and legislative institutions (parliament), we also consider NGOs involved in policy design. Based on the organization survey, 39 percent of leaders in the sample NGOs involved in agrifood policy design are women. This measure is scored as 3 (moderate, advancing).

For measurements four to six, we asked experts for their perceptions about whether women were leading and influencing deliberations and the development of the six focused agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies. Most sample experts recalled moderate influence of women over NPF and MKSP (both scored as 3, advancing) (Figure 11).

<sup>20</sup> <https://prsindia.org/parliamentary-committees/agriculture>

<sup>21</sup> [https://prsindia.org/files/parliament/vital\\_stats/Vital\\_Stats-Womens\\_Reservation.pdf](https://prsindia.org/files/parliament/vital_stats/Vital_Stats-Womens_Reservation.pdf)

**Figure 11. Women’s influence on the development of agrifood policies (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

For the climate policies, most experts reported very weak influence by women on the NAPCC design (score 1) and weak influence by women on the NMSA (score 2). This measure is scored as 2 (weak). For the nutrition policy (Mission Poshan), most respondents recalled weak influence of women over the policy (score 2).

Our analysis of national agrifood policy design highlights the need to incorporate women’s voices and issues into the policy design stage. While some policies, like MKSP and NPF, show promising levels of influence by women, others, including Mission Poshan, NMSA, and NAPCC, reveal considerable gaps in women’s participation and influence.

Strengthening women’s role in shaping agricultural and climate policies is crucial, not only for gender equity but also for effective and sustainable development. Moving forward, policymakers and stakeholders should prioritize strategies to increase female representation and leadership in policy deliberations. This could include initiatives to empower women in decision-making processes, to address structural barriers to their participation, and to promote gender-sensitive policy formulation. Targeted actions might include training and capacity-building opportunities tailored to women’s needs, ensuring equitable access to resources and information and fostering supportive environments that enable women to contribute effectively.

Addressing structural barriers to women’s participation is also essential. This includes tackling discriminatory practices, cultural norms, and institutional biases that limit women’s access to decision-making roles and opportunities. Efforts should also focus on closing the gender digital divide, especially as online platforms grow as tools for consultation and feedback on policies and services. By prioritizing these strategies, policymakers can create more-inclusive and effective agricultural and climate policies that harness the full potential of women as agents of change and ensure sustainable development outcomes for all.

## **4.2. Policy Implementation**

In the second stage of the policy cycle, we focus on the practice of policy implementation following formulation and adoption. This stage includes key processes, such as budgetary outlays, organizational strategies, and delivery of services. In spite of successful formulation and adoption, policies often fail to produce desired results, particularly when the implementation is flawed. In the case of delayed or inadequate budget outlays, formally adopted policies often fail to meet intended targets. Furthermore, tools and budgetary systems allow budgets to meet the needs of the various demographic groups in the country and achieve desired outcomes.

In addition to ensuring adequate levels and responsiveness of budgetary outlays, the capacity of the public sector is necessary for translating policy decisions into the provision of goods and services (Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock 2017; World Bank 2017). When policy implementation is delegated to state or local governments, local governments also need sufficient resources to successfully deliver policies, and access to services varies according to the capabilities of local governments (Kyle and Resnick 2019).

This second stage of WEAGov covers three indicators that address each dimension of women’s empowerment in policy implementation:

1. **Gender-responsive budgeting** is achieved when agrifood agencies allocate budget equitably, addressing the different needs of men and women.
2. **Gender-inclusive staffing** is achieved when female staff are represented in agrifood policy implementing agencies and gender-inclusive staffing policies are in place to support hiring, promoting, and retaining female staff.
3. **Women’s policy implementation leadership** is achieved when women hold leadership roles in agrifood policy implementation.

### ***4.2.1. Gender-responsive budgeting***

Gender-responsive budgeting seeks to address gender inequalities through budgetary decisions. It acknowledges that government budgets are not gender neutral, and that budget allocations have different effects on men and women given their varied socioeconomic and political circumstances. While gender-responsive budgeting does not set out to attain an evenly split budget across men and women, it does aim to assess whether the existing budget split ensures that the differing needs of men and women are addressed. Adopting a gender-responsive budgeting system creates transparency in identifying budgetary outcomes for different groups. It also acts as a key tool for advocacy, accountability, and participation and helps governments identify necessary policy reform in order to meet their objectives (Budlender and Hewitt 2003).

We use the following six measurements for this indicator, with Figure 12 and Table 12 providing details on measurement and scoring:









**Figure 12. Scoring for gender-responsive budgeting**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023).

Note: The scoring metric for perceived budget allocation is consistent across agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies.

**Table 12. Summary of India’s results for gender-responsive budgeting**

Indicator	Measurement	Score	Priorities for action
4. Gender-responsive budgeting	Gender targets and budget are specified in the Interim Budget Speech		Ensure that budget allocations and dedicated funds are earmarked toward specific announcements and commitments outlined in high-level speeches.
	Gender-responsive budgeting in agrifood ministries		Ensure responsible management of public funds and encourage involvement and feedback from citizens.
	Perceived budgetary support and implementation of gender targets in the national agriculture policy*		Increase gender budget at the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and other agrifood ministries with very low or no gender budget.
	NPF		
	MKSP		Strengthen gender-responsive budgeting implementation within all ministries by careful in-depth gender analysis, identification of priority action areas based on identified major gender gaps and inequalities, proper planning, and setting of short- and long-term goals. Budget allocation should be based on these efforts and data.
	Perceived budgetary support and implementation of gender targets in the national climate change policy*		Advocate for greater recognition of women as farmers, complemented by more efforts to collect gender-disaggregated data. This recognition and data will help ensure that more of the budget is allocated to women and gender issues are funded.
	NAPCC		
	NMSA		Gender budget cells should be assessed, re-thought, and reinvigorated. Data from these cells should be collated on a regular basis and made available in the public domain to inform budget allocation and fund management.
	Perceived budgetary support and implementation of gender targets in the national nutrition policy*		
	NNP		
	Mission Poshan		The government and its development partners should provide greater transparency, public awareness, and further training on the gender-responsive budgeting methodology.
		Strengthen training and capacity for gender-responsive budgeting at national-level ministries, state-level ministries, and other organizations, especially among those that currently are not implementing gender-responsive budgeting.	

Source: Gender content in National Development Plan, scored by authors. + Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2023). \* Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2023).

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

The primary indicator to understand whether budgeting is gender responsive in a country is whether the country’s ministry of finance sets aside dedicated budget lines for gender programming and whether gender targets set within national development plans have corresponding funding lines.

We looked into the Interim Budget speech 2024–2025, presented by the Honorable Minister of Finance

earlier this year. A detailed review of this document indicates that preparation of the budget document keeps in mind the needs of four demographic groups in particular (youth, the poor, small farmers, women, and SCs/STs) and articulates the goal of inclusive development. Specific efforts have been made in the form of introducing programs such as the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihood Mission to mobilize rural women into SHGs so as to enhance financial and entrepreneurial developments. Additionally, the Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas program will ensure that women from vulnerable caste groups too are provided equal opportunities. To improve socioeconomic conditions of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), the budget speech also mentioned the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission that will be launched. The score for this measurement is 3 (moderate, advancing).

The second measure looks at gender-responsive budgeting activities in agrifood organizations. Since 2004, gender-responsive budgeting was adopted and institutionalized in India as a tool to promote gender equality and ensure equitable provisions for women through responsive planning and budgeting practices. The nodal ministry at the central level, which leads with this initiative, is the Ministry of Women and Child Development. At the state level, some states in India have institutionalized gender budgeting by issuing a gender budget statement as part of their annual budget. This statement reflects the allocation of funds for schemes that directly benefit women or indirectly impact their welfare. While some states often allocate funds for gender-responsive initiatives under various sectors such as health, education, social welfare, rural development, and livelihoods, in other states, the Department of Women and Child Development, Department of Social Welfare, or Department of Finance and Planning look into allocating funds based on the needs of the different state-led women-centric policies (Thomas, 2022). A gender-budgeting cell (GBC) is then set up, composed of senior/mid-level officials from the Planning, Policy, Coordination, Budget and Accounts Division of the ministry or department concerned. This cell is primarily responsible for:

1. Gender analysis of the ministry's or department's schemes and programs, and linking to outcome budgets.
2. Conducting performance audits.
3. Organizing training and capacity-building workshops for the officials who formulate policy/program implementation, budget, and accounts.
4. Disseminating best practices of gender-budgeting initiatives by other ministries or departments.
5. Coordinating with the nodal authorities on gender budgeting at the national or state level (MWCD 2023).

Since the institutionalization of gender-responsive budgeting in 2004, gender budgets appear to be well-documented across the ministries, although information on gender budgeting processes is not available in the public domain for some ministries and policies/schemes. Since India's first gender budget statement was published in 2005–2006, the country's gender budget amount increased more than eight-fold in 2018–2019 (Sushant and Laha 2021); however, gender budget as a proportion of India's total budget and expenditure remained at about 4 to 5 percent since 2005 (Hooda and Kataria 2022). During 2005–2006, the women-specific program (WSP) alone received budgetary approval, with a 33 percent share in gender budgeting and a significant increase in WSP allocation, which was 45 and 41 percent during 2007–2008 and 2008–2009, respectively. But in later years, the trend of budgetary allocation in WSP started to decrease and reached just 20 percent in 2020–2021, reflecting a sharp decline by 21 percent composition during the period (Hooda and Kataria 2022).

Aside from these low proportions of gender budget, many experts have highlighted that gender-responsive

budgeting in India has been an elementary and mechanical exercise, and the current gender budget statement format has reduced gender-responsive budgeting to merely an exercise with numbers with limited strategic direction and limited impact on addressing gender inequalities (Hooda and Kataria 2022; Khullar 2023; Mishra and Sinha 2012; Sushant and Laha 2021). Several critiques address the measurement and methodology of apportioning budget that goes to women and men, with many studies consistently revealing that gender budgeting in India falls short of achieving its goals (Hooda and Kataria 2022; Ghadai and Misra, 2019; Khullar 2023; Mishra and Sinha 2012; Sushant and Laha 2021). This is attributed to a range of factors, such as lack of sufficient funding, utilization of resources, weak and fragmented approach to implementation, poor monitoring and evaluation system, limited engagement of women in leadership roles, and lack of accountability mechanisms (Hooda and Kataria 2022; Ghadai and Misra, 2019; Khullar 2023; Mishra and Sinha 2012; Sushant and Laha 2021).

Focusing on the agrifood system, we used publicly available budget data and organization survey responses to understand if and how gender-responsive budgeting is practiced by agrifood organizations, particularly the core agrifood ministries at the central level. The gender budget at the central ministry level is released annually by the Ministry of Finance (see Annex 3 for the 2022–2025 gender budget). For the financial year 2024–2025, among the eight core agrifood ministries, MoWCD allocated the highest percentage of its budget to gender-centric policies at 78 percent. MoRD followed with 60 percent, and MoHFW allocated 38 percent. In contrast, MoAFW, the main agrifood ministry, allocated merely 2 percent of its budget to gender policies and activities, and this outlay was even lower in previous years (for example, only 1.4 percent in 2022–2023). MoCAFPD also allocated less than 2 percent of its budget to gender policies. Additionally, the rest of the eight core agrifood ministries—MoEFCC, MoFAH&D, and MoFPI—did not allocate any budget toward gender policies for the financial year 2024–2025 considered in our study.

Given the reported limitations in the gender-responsive budgeting process and impacts, weaknesses in implementation and monitoring, and very low percentage of budget to gender or women-centric policies in MoAFW, this measure—gender-responsive budgeting in core agrifood ministries—was scored as 3 (moderate, advancing), indicating much room for improvement. Experts suggest several recommendations to improve the gender-responsive budgeting process and impacts in India:

1. Strengthen gender-responsive budgeting implementation within all ministries using a comprehensive strategy that includes in-depth gender analysis, identification of priority action areas based on identified major gender gaps and inequalities, proper planning, and setting of short- and long-term goals. Budget allocation should be the culmination of such an effort. Collecting, analyzing, and publicizing gender-disaggregated data; recognizing women as farmers and key value chain actors; and integrating these data with the outcome budget will help result in better evaluation and focused allocation. It is also important to go beyond gender binaries and include the transgender community in policy decisions (Khullar 2023).
2. Reassess, rethink, and reinvigorate these GBCs. Unfortunately, however, the GBCs have not been able to execute the tasks assigned to them. Despite a commitment in the Eleventh Plan that “data from these cells will be collated on a regular basis and made available in the public domain” (ibid: 200), not much is known about the functioning of these cells. Within policy circles, there seems to be a latent feeling that these cells have been largely ineffective and remain mostly on paper (Khullar 2023). No comprehensive review of these GBCs has been conducted by the government so far (Khullar 2023). There needs to be an assessment of these

GBCs, and data from these cells should be collated regularly and made available in the public domain.

3. There is a need for greater transparency, public awareness, and further training in the gender-responsive budgeting methodology. For example, a transparent mechanism should be introduced to explain how weights are assigned to various schemes, leading to their placement in either Part A or B of the gender budget statement (Khullar 2023). The capacity of officials responsible for producing gender budgets is questionable, and further training is needed (Suchant and Laha 2021). Officials who are responsible for producing gender budgets need to be sensitized to women's needs and priorities (Suchant and Laha 2021).
4. In India, gender focal points are mostly driven by individuals. Though these points benefit from the individuals' energy or commitment, there is a major weakness in this arrangement as well. Oftentimes, when they are transferred or shifted, the work has to be initiated all over again. The underlying problem is that the focus has not been on developing the necessary institutional capabilities but has remained largely individual-centric, therefore failing to bring about transformations at the level of institutions and systems (Khullar 2023). Because a lot of energy has been invested in conducting gender-responsive budgeting trainings and capacity-building exercises in several countries, including India, it would be valuable at this stage to take stock of all these efforts toward capacity-building in gender-responsive budgeting and reflect in a strategic way on whose capacities need to be built, what kinds of capacities need to be built, and what is the best way of doing so (Khullar 2023).
5. Because gender-responsive budgeting by its very definition entails cross-sectoral work and requires coordination among various sectoral ministries, an institutional mechanism to facilitate the process is required. Different countries have experimented with different structures. For example, some have set up committees and task forces, while others have set up cells within line ministries and/or a secretariat to coordinate them. Unfortunately, gender-responsive budgeting efforts in India have been severely impeded because there is no coordinating mechanism for harmonizing the work of GBCs across line ministries (Mishra and Sinha 2012). It is imperative that the gender-responsive budgeting machinery involved in the sectoral ministries (not just in the MoWCD and the Ministry of Finance) is robust and functional (Mishra and Sinha 2012).

The organization survey in this WEAGov pilot study in India reveals that only 10 percent of the organizations report having gender-responsive budgeting processes. Most state-level organizations report that they do not have gender-responsive budgeting. There may be a need to explore this further and consequently conduct capacity-building on gender-responsive budgeting at this level.

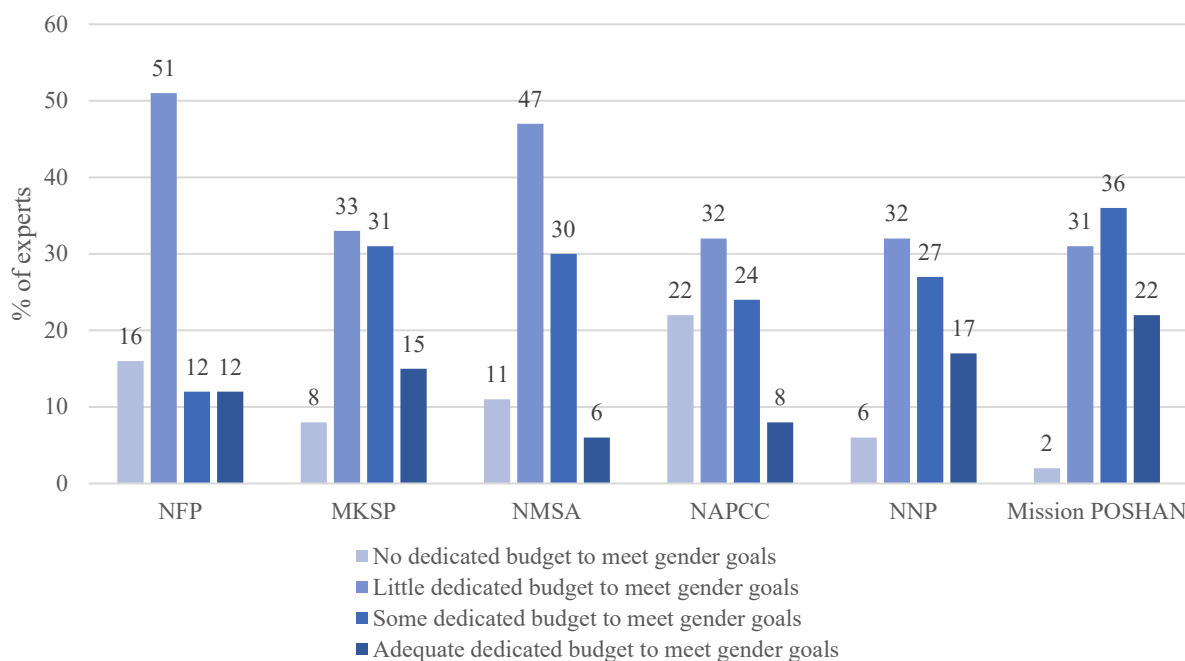
For the third set of measures, we looked at available documentation and asked experts about their perception of the budget adequacy for gender targets specified in the focus agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies. Official documentation on gender budgeting processes is not available in the public domain for NPF, NNP, NAPCC, and NMSA; however, official reports suggest that the Mission Poshan scheme urges stakeholders to undertake social audits to ensure proper use of budgets and implementation of interventions. These are to be supported by direct feedback from the benefactors of the scheme, such as mothers' groups, Poshan Panchayats, and the Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNCs) (MWCD 2022).

Further, in the case of MKSP, secondary data suggest that as of March 31, 2019, the program has supported approximately 36 lakhs women farmers and 86,000 SHGs. Moreover, 50 percent of the budget for the

MKSP is dedicated to training women farmers and enabling them to build their own institutions through capacity-building. This is achieved by introducing “seed mothers” in the tribal belt of Odisha, who help in identifying, collecting, conserving, and propagating the local traditional seeds. In parallel, in Bihar, female-led institutional mechanisms have been established to provide a continuous supply of quality checks at subsidized prices, selling of birds and eggs, vaccination, and healthcare support (Madan et al. 2020). To economically empower women, MKSP not only focuses on agricultural activities but also emphasizes the importance of nonagricultural sustainable livelihood options. In line with this, SHG members across various states have been identified and trained to become Bank Sakhis, who further the goal of financial inclusion by becoming last-mile delivery agents providing banking solutions in rural India. Similarly, SHG members in Jharkhand run office canteens under the Aajeevika Didi’s Cafe brand (Madan et al. 2020). However, in spite of these efforts, experts at our workshop felt that there is much room for improvement and that implementation of this scheme can be improved in many other states. The lack of recent implementation reports and data further strengthened their belief. This policy has thus received a score of 3 (advancing), which is in accordance with the consensus of the workshop discussion.

Within the realm of climate change, a desk review suggests that the approaches adopted under the NAPCC are too broad and lack specificities (Barooah et al. 2023). Experts from the stakeholder workshop reiterated these concerns. In the absence of detailed and updated documentation, it is difficult to gauge the implementation processes and their true impact. Among the various sub-schemes, the National Solar Mission has ambitious targets and has shown the most promise. Most notably, an additional capacity of 8,003 megawatts (MW), combining capacities of the years 2016–2018, has been added since 2016, resulting in a cumulative capacity of 14,766 MW until September 30, 2017. This bolstered India to the seventh position globally in installed capacity for solar power, surpassing Australia and Spain. Additionally, a total budget of INR 47.80 crores was allocated to the Green India Mission for 2017–2018 to ensure the protection, conservation, and restoration of India’s diminishing forest cover (Rattani 2018). These policies do not mention gender or women or other intersectional identities and scored as 2 (weak), consistent with the common responses from the expert survey (Figure 13).

**Figure 13. Perceived budgetary support for gender policy targets (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NFP = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

#### 4.2.2 Gender-inclusive staffing

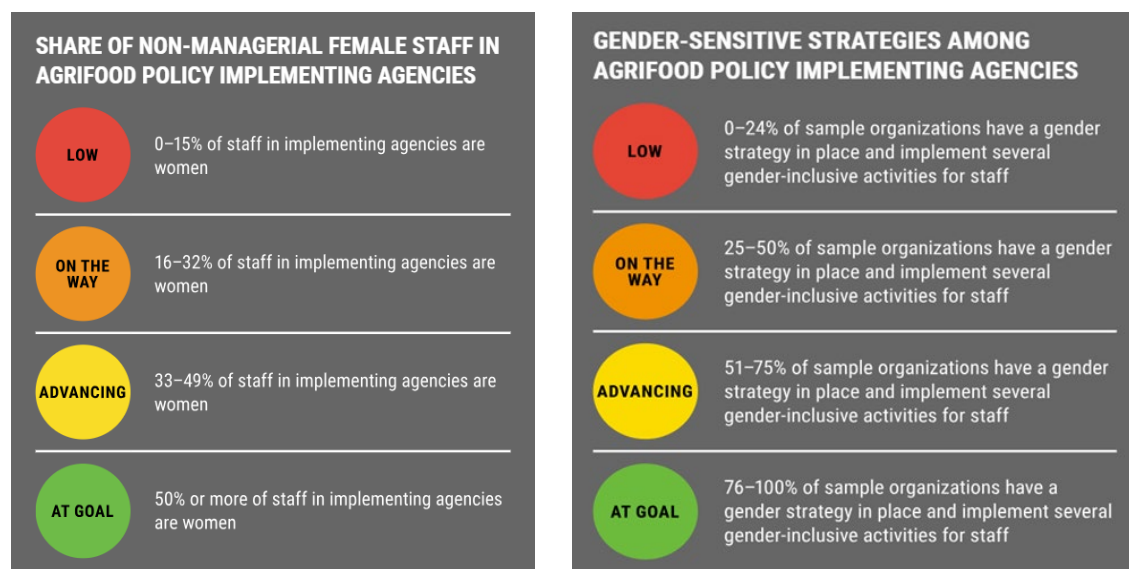
The government of India must enhance women’s participation in the paid labor force as well as in governance. Initiatives such as Saksham Nari Saksham Bharat, organized by the MoWCD and the Ministry of Labour and Employment, have spotlighted the importance of “women-led development” (PIB 2024). These efforts aim to empower women, build their capacities within the workforce, and strengthen their agency in decision-making and policymaking processes (PIB 2024). Meanwhile, the passage of the Women’s Reservation Act in 2023, reserving 33 percent of seats for women in the Lok Sabha (lower house in the parliament), represents a significant step toward institutionalizing women’s inclusion in governance (Agrawal 2024).

To assess women’s inclusion in policy implementation, our study evaluates whether women are adequately represented in the ministries and agencies implementing agrifood policies. Two key indicators are used: (1) the share of female staff in agrifood policy implementing agencies, and (2) the existence of gender-sensitive strategies within these organizations. Figure 14 and Table 13 provide detailed information on scoring methodology and scores in these indicators.

1. **Female staff in agrifood implementing agencies:** Among surveyed organizations, women comprise 31 percent of the nonmanagerial workforce involved in agrifood policy implementation, a figure scored as 2 (on the way).
2. **Gender-sensitive strategies among implementing agencies:** While 43 percent of surveyed organizations have a formal organization-level gender policy, other key gender-intentional activities are less commonly practiced. For example, only 23 percent of government organizations


have gender diversity committees, and 35 percent provide leadership training for women. NGOs perform slightly better, with 46 and 47 percent, respectively, adopting these practices (Figure 15). These results indicate room for improvement, particularly among government ministries, and was also scored as 2 (on the way).

**Figure 14. Scoring metrics for gender-sensitive staffing**



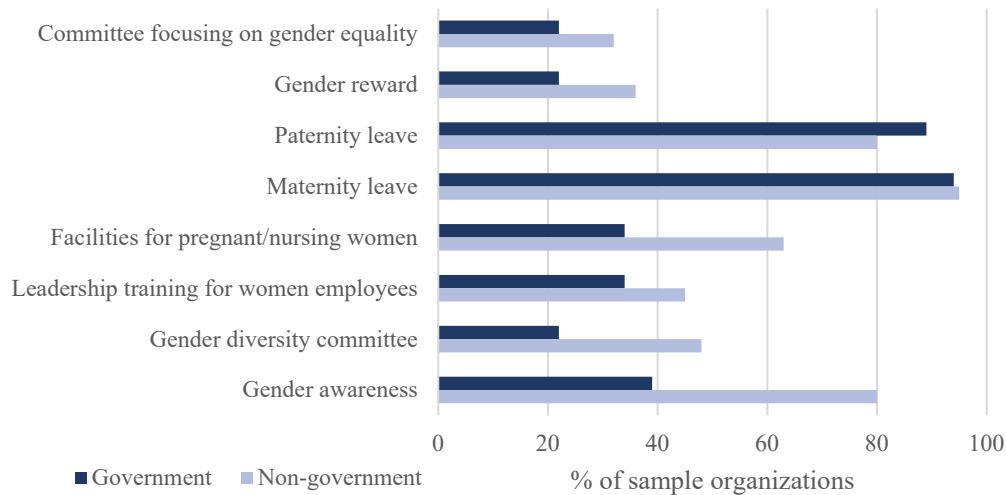
Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023).

**Table 13. Summary of India’s scores for gender-sensitive staffing**

Indicator	Measurement	India	Priorities for action
5. Gender-inclusive staffing	Share of female staff in agrifood policy implementing agencies <sup>+</sup>		Implement affirmative action and gender quotas to ensure more opportunities for hiring women in agrifood policy implementing agencies; encourage more women to enter the agrifood sector and build its capacity; and encourage women’s participation in leadership roles starting in elementary and high school.
	Gender-sensitive staffing policies among agrifood policy implementing agencies <sup>+</sup>		Provide incentives and capacity-building for organizations to include gender strategies and implement gender-sensitive staffing policies.

Source: Gender content in National Development Plan, scored by authors. <sup>+</sup> Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024).

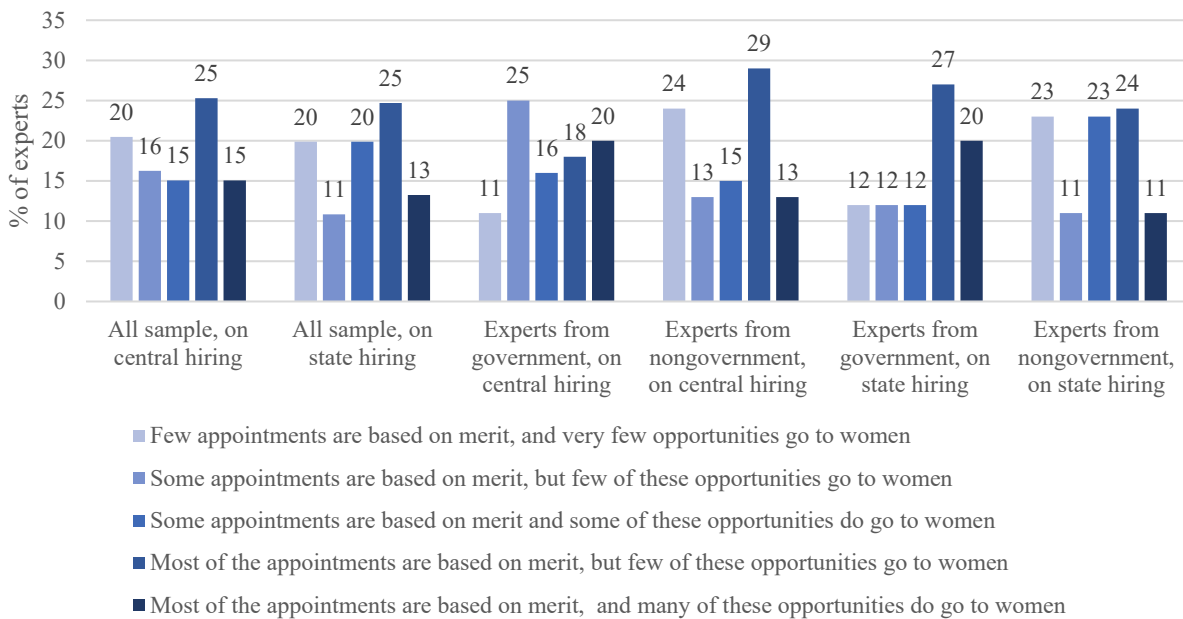
**Figure 15. Gender strategies in agrifood organizations (% of sample organizations)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024).

The presence of women in policy implementation roles reflects a mix of historical barriers and newer policy initiatives. Workforce transformation is a gradual process requiring systemic changes, from education and training pipelines to recruitment practices, which can take decades to fundamentally alter workforce composition. To explore current trends, we asked agrifood policy experts about opportunities for women to pursue career opportunities within agrifood ministries. Experts generally agreed that most appointments are merit-based within the civil service at both the state and federal levels. However, they consistently noted that women occupy few of these positions (Figure 16).

**Figure 16. Hiring opportunities and efforts for women (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

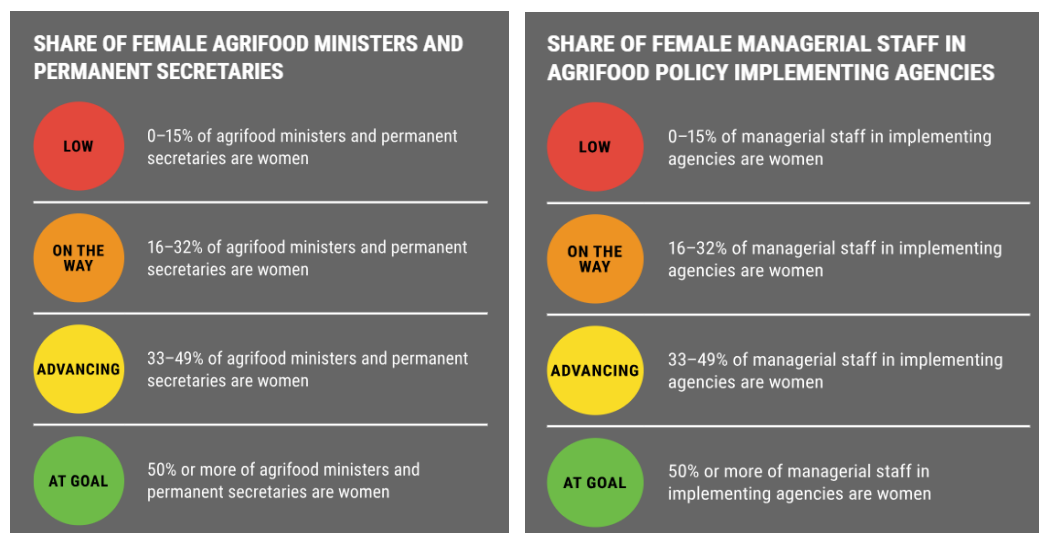
Across diverse sets of respondents—including from government or NGOs, or from the state or central levels—a consistent theme across expert responses is that women face limited opportunities to enter bureaucratic roles, even when they possess the requisite qualifications and skills. Structural barriers and biases in recruitment processes constrain women’s entry into these career paths, undermining efforts to promote gender equity in agrifood governance.

#### 4.2.3 Women’s policy implementation leadership



To assess women’s influence in the policy implementation process, we examine their representation in leadership roles and their perceived impact on agrifood policy implementation. We use two objective measures: (1) the share of women serving as agrifood ministers and permanent secretaries, and (2) the share of women in managerial positions within agrifood policy implementing agencies. Figure 17 and Table 14 detail the scoring metrics and scores for India.

1. **Share of female agrifood ministers and permanent secretaries:** To determine the share of female ministers and permanent secretaries, we looked at publicly available data on the share of male and female members across the eight core agrifood ministries considered in this study. As of June 2024, among the eight core agrifood ministries, there is only one female federal-level cabinet minister (13 percent) (Annex 4a). At the state level, women account for 33 percent of heads of states but hold just 13 percent of cabinet ministers’ portfolios in the same ministries (Annex 4b). This limited representation signals a lack of prioritization of women’s leadership at high levels, where the influence on agenda setting and policy implementation could address gender-specific needs. This metric is scored as low (1).
2. **Women in managerial roles in agrifood policy implementing agencies:** Women represent 35 percent of managerial staff in sample organizations involved in agrifood policymaking. This metric is scored as advancing (3). We also find that 66 percent of sample agrifood policy implementing agencies do not have a gender quota for leadership; advancing quota policies could provide leadership opportunities to more women, enabling them to hone their skills and attain higher positions within agrifood governance.

**Figure 17. Scoring metric on women’s leadership in policy implementation.**



**Table 14. Summary of India’s scores for women’s policy implementation leadership**

Indicator	Measurement	India	Priorities for action
6. Women’s policy implementation leadership	Share of female agrifood ministers, state ministers, and permanent secretaries		Support more female leaders and managers to hold the highest positions in agrifood agencies.
	Share of women in managerial positions in agrifood policy implementing agencies <sup>+</sup>		The government should prioritize partnerships with CSOs/NGOs that have proven expertise in promoting gender equity at grassroots levels.

<sup>+</sup> Source of raw data: <sup>+</sup>IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024).

Note: CSOs = civil society organizations; NGOs = nongovernmental organizations.

### 4.3 Policy Evaluation

Governments across the world spend trillions of dollars on programs aimed at improving the social and economic well-being of their citizens. However, most often, the true test of their effectiveness remains unknown. This problem highlights the importance of policy evaluations. Especially in the context of low- and middle-income countries, where resources are limited and development challenges are prevalent, an efficient evaluation process is integral for continuous improvement and strengthening of democratic governance. The following are the suggested main steps for developing an evidence-based policy monitoring and evaluation process across different implementing agencies (Vedantham and Kamruddin 2015):

1. Define the objective and identify the evaluation criteria.
2. Collect data to assess the policy against the defined criteria.
3. Analyze the collected data.
4. Develop a feedback mechanism.

Policy monitoring and evaluation are crucial to highlighting and understanding the diverse needs and challenges faced by women across India. By involving women in the evaluation process of the agrifood system, policymakers can better understand and address the specific issues affecting women in agriculture. This will ultimately lead to more effective and equitable policies that contribute to the overall development of the sector and the nation.

The third stage of WEAGov—policy evaluation—covers four indicators that address each dimension of women’s empowerment in the policy evaluation (Kyle and Ragasa 2023):

1. **Gender policy monitoring** is effectively conducted, agrifood policy implementing agencies review their gender policies and strategies periodically, and gender-disaggregated data are collected and available for policymakers to assess how policies are working for women and to take corrective action if needed.

2. **Women’s feedback** on policy is achieved when women have opportunities to provide feedback on how policies are being implemented and their impacts, know about those opportunities, and are able to use them.
3. **Women’s policy evaluation leadership** is achieved when women have leadership roles in evaluation and advocacy for evidence-based agrifood policy reform.

#### ***4.3.1 Gender policy monitoring***










Gender-disaggregated data and information must be available for policymakers so they can assess how agrifood policies are working for women and take evidence-based corrective actions if needed. Ideally, such data should be tracked over time and made available to the public. We use two objective measurements for this indicator: (1) scored availability of gender-disaggregated national agrifood statistics, and (2) scored gender-disaggregated data included in agrifood performance public reporting. Figure 18 and Table 15 provide detailed information on scoring metrics and scores for India.

**Figure 18. Scoring metrics for gender-disaggregated data**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023). Note that scoring for tracking and monitoring of gender goals across agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies are the same. \* Indicates that this measurement is collected from the expert survey.

**Table 15. Summary of India’s scores for gender-disaggregated data**

Indicator	Measurement	India	Priorities for action	
7. Gender policy monitoring	Scored availability of gender-disaggregated national agrifood statistics		Expand data system with gender-disaggregated data, including indicators of intrahousehold dynamics, asset ownership, control over income, agency, and empowerment.	
	Scored gender-disaggregated data included in agrifood performance public reporting		Strengthen the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data and field-based case studies to monitor gender outcomes effectively. These data should inform ongoing evaluations and be integrated into public reporting systems, ensuring accountability for gender-specific impacts in agrifood governance.	
	Agrifood policy implementing agencies conducting gender audits <sup>+</sup>		Encourage organizations to conduct gender audits and track gender policy targets, and support them through training.	
	Tracking and monitoring of gender goals in the national agriculture policy*			Increase awareness of gender targets in agrifood policies and greater advocacy for tracking gender targets in agrifood policies.
	NPF			
	MKSP			
	Tracking and monitoring of gender goals in the national climate policy*			
	NMSA			
	NAPCC			
	Tracking and monitoring of gender goals in the national nutrition policy*			
	NNP			
	Mission Poshan			

Source: Measures scored by authors.

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

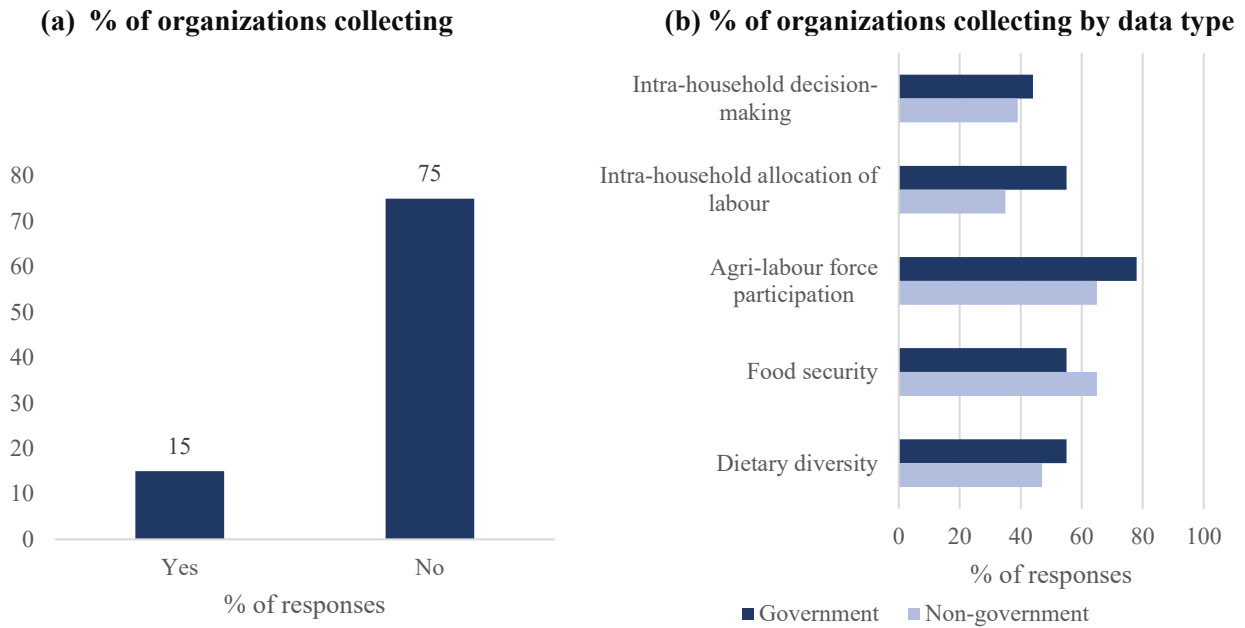
Since 1995–1996, the Agriculture Census has been diligently collecting gender-disaggregated data. Moreover, national surveys such as the Employment and Unemployment Surveys, the Periodic Labor Force Survey conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, and the National Family Health Survey overseen by MoHFW also contribute to this data collection effort. However, these surveys primarily gather basic gender-disaggregated data and often lack the depth required to inform comprehensive agrifood policies (Swaminathan and Singaraju 2021). Furthermore, certain datasets crucial for informed policymaking remain inaccessible to the public. For instance, MoAFW’s Cost of Cultivation Surveys, which capture gender-disaggregated information on work hours and payments associated with crop cultivation and livestock rearing, are not readily available. Thus, because of the various limitations in the usage and availability of gender-disaggregated data for policy evaluation, the score for this measurement is 2 (weak, on the way).

Furthermore, we examined the 2022–2023 MoAFW report (MoAFW 2023) to assess the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data in public reports on agrifood policy. Our analysis revealed a dedicated section, “Gender Perspective on Agriculture.” It offers minimal information, such as general mentions of gender considerations in program design (if any) and basic statistics on the number of female beneficiaries or those trained. Unfortunately, it fails to provide any insight into the real impact of these policies on women in agriculture. Consequently, this evaluation earned a scoring of 2 (weak, on the way).

To understand further the policy evaluation from a gender lens, the organization survey asked the entities involved in the agrifood policy process if their organization produces or uses any gender-disaggregated data on agrifood indicators. These indicators include dietary diversity, food security, agriculture labor force participation, intrahousehold allocation of labor, and intrahousehold decision-making. We found that only 15 percent of the surveyed organizations produced or used any gender-disaggregated data on agrifood indicators (Figure 19a). While general data systems are available and gendered, the low collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data underscore the critical need for integrating a gender perspective into agrifood policymaking in India.

Figure 19b presents the percentage of sampled organizations that collect gender-disaggregated data by sampled government organizations and NGOs across five dimensions: intrahousehold decision-making, intrahousehold allocation of labor, agricultural labor force participation, food security, and dietary diversity.

**Figure 19. Percentage of sample organizations producing or using gender-disaggregated data**

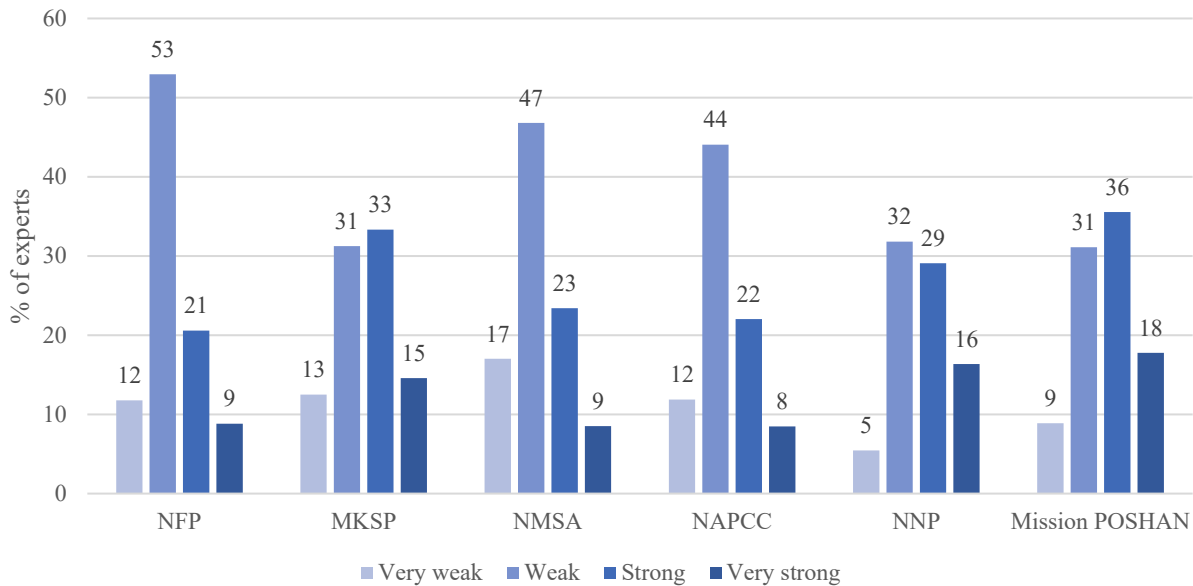


Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024).

As national agrifood plans and strategies establish distinct gender objectives, it is imperative to continuously monitor and evaluate these targets to gauge policy effectiveness. Organizations regularly reassess their gender strategies and targets to ensure alignment with objectives. Effective gender audits occur when agrifood policy implementing agencies periodically review their gender policies and strategies, taking corrective measures as necessary.

According to our examination of the surveyed organizations, 34 percent of those involved in implementing agrifood policies conduct periodic gender audits and reviews. This measurement is scored as 2 (weak, on the way). Additionally, we use the expert survey to understand the monitoring process of gender targets across agriculture, climate, and nutrition policies. Their response ranged from “not tracked” to “tracking of gender targets strong in practice”; however, the most common response for NPF, NNP, NMSA, and NAPCC was “weak tracking.” Therefore, the score for these policies is 2 (weak, on the way), while most sample experts from the expert survey scored Mission Poshan and MKSP as 2 or 3 (Figure 20).

**Figure 20. Expert assessment of monitoring of gender goals in the agrifood policies (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

Note: Figure 20 also contains “don’t know” as a response that has not been included in the figures. NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NFP = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

The technical validation workshop resolved the conflict in the scoring (between 2 and 3) for MKSP as 3 (advancing), highlighting that MKSP being a women-centric policy has a comparatively higher gender audit. Moreover, NITI Aayog, the apex public policy think tank of the government of India, has the Development Monitoring and Evaluation office (DMEO). A DMEO report released in 2022 suggests that the NMSA scheme had only 1,348 female beneficiaries compared with 10,199 male beneficiaries, accounting to around 14.8 percent between 2014 and 2020. However, 26 crores more women than men have been participating in Poshan Abhiyan, 2018. Moreover, in contrast to our survey findings, we note a strong monitoring system for the Mission Poshan scheme, also facilitated by Niti Aayog. This system uses technology through the Poshan Tracker and provides annual progress reports (Paul, Sarwal, and Menon 2022). We give the Mission Poshan scheme a score of 3 (moderate, advancing). With that, the overall conclusion for the indicator— monitoring gender audits across agrifood policies excluding Mission Poshan and MKSP—is weak.

#### 4.3.2 Women’s feedback

Feedback mechanisms play a pivotal role in both implementing and evaluating policies effectively. They serve as channels for gathering insights, experiences, and suggestions from stakeholders involved in policy implementation. This feedback loop enables policymakers to gauge the real-world impact of their initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments to ensure desired outcomes are achieved. Its importance is further highlighted in a decentralized economy such as India, where effective feedback mechanisms are crucial to ensure responsiveness and transparency in service delivery as well as enhance accountability by bringing decision-making closer to local communities (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006).

An indicator of women’s empowerment is that they have opportunities to provide feedback on how policies are being implemented and their impacts, know about those opportunities, and are able to use them (Weldon 2002; Caiazza 2004). We use one objective measurement for this indicator—formal mechanism for citizens to provide feedback on agrifood policy implementation—and one perception-based measure—perceived opportunities for women to provide feedback on agrifood policy implementation. Figure 21 and Table 16 provide detailed information on scoring metrics and scores for India.

**Figure 21. Scoring metrics for women’s feedback**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023). \* Indicates that this measurement is collected from the expert survey.

**Table 16. Summary of India’s scores for women’s feedback**

Indicator	Measurement	India	Priorities for action
8. Women’s feedback	Formal mechanism for providing feedback on policy implementation	ON THE WAY	Create a mechanism that helps to include the voices of people from the rural areas and NGOs working at the grassroots level.
	Perceived opportunities for women to provide feedback*	ON THE WAY	Intensify the awareness campaign of the opportunities and mechanisms to provide feedback on various agrifood policies.  Incorporate training programs and capacity-building within the SHGs, which will in turn provide more agency to women.

Source: Formal mechanism for providing feedback on policy implementation collected by authors. \* Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

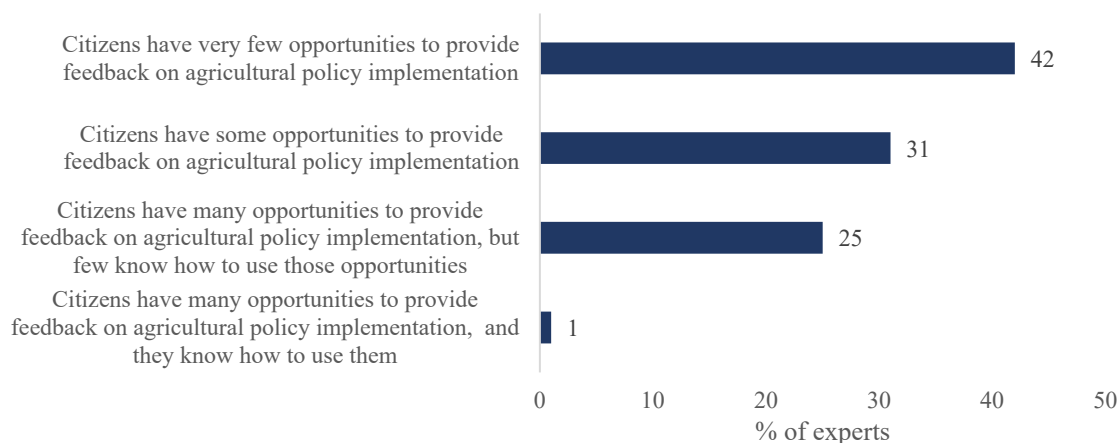
Note: NGOs = nongovernmental organizations; SHGs = self-help groups.

Despite the absence of a constitutional mandate or national policies, evaluations were regularly initiated by both the central (federal) and state governments whenever necessary under the mandates of the Planning Commission (PC). After the dissolution of the central planning system and introduction of NITI Aayog in 2015, the Program Evaluation Office (PEO) in the erstwhile PC was merged into the DMEO. The score of the measurement—a formal mechanism for providing feedback on policy implementation—has been scored as 2 (weak, on the way).

To understand the government’s effort in including women’s perspectives on policy, experts were asked their opinion on government efforts to increase citizen’s feedback in the agrifood policy implementation. Forty-two percent of the sampled experts stated that there are very few opportunities to provide feedback, and 31 percent said there are limited opportunities to provide feedback on agriculture policy implementation. Thus, the above findings reveal significant gaps in citizen feedback opportunities, particularly regarding women’s perspectives in agrifood policy implementation, suggesting room for improvement in inclusivity and responsiveness.

India has an online platform, the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System, which allows citizens to register their complaints with public authorities on any aspect of service delivery. It serves as a unified portal with links to all government of India ministries and departments as well as state governments. Nevertheless, these systems lack the capacity to establish a more resilient framework for enabling real-time adjustments in policy evaluation (Chander and Kush 2012). Further, there are various technical challenges with the existing public grievance system, such as the centralized nature of the data, causing degradation of quality of services, lack of prioritization, etc., thereby hindering knowledge discovery (Govinda and Hanumanthappa 2021). Hence, according to the expert survey, the score is 1 (very weak). However, because Indian citizens have various means, including representatives in parliament as their voice and a policy grievance mechanism, the score for citizen feedback is 2 (weak, on the way).

**Figure 22. Expert assessment of opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on policy implementation (% of experts)**



Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024).

Note: Figure 22 also contains “don’t know” as a response that has not been included in the figure.

### 4.3.3 Women’s evaluation and advocacy leadership









To enhance our comprehension of women’s influence on policy evaluation, we sought evidence indicating their leadership involvement in monitoring, evaluation, and advocacy for evidence-based agrifood policy reform. We use the following five indicators (as shown in Figure 23 and Table 17) to assess women’s leadership positions within organizations and across the various agrifood policies analyzed in our study.

**Figure 23. Scoring metrics for women’s leadership in policy evaluation**



Source: Kyle and Ragasa (2023). Note that both objective and perception measures have the same scoring system across the different indicators; only one example of each is shown here. \* Indicates that this measurement is collected from the expert survey.

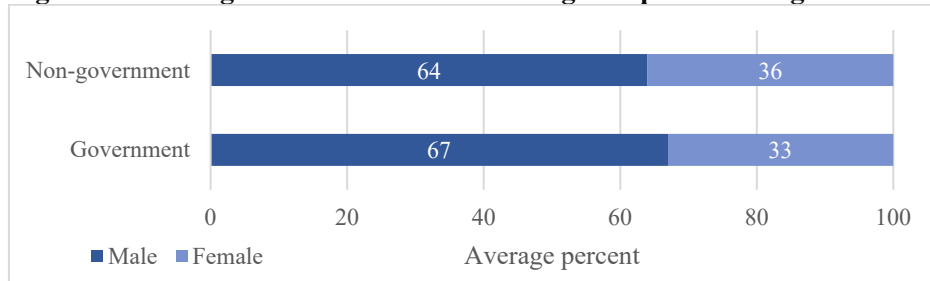
**Table 17. Summary of India’s scores for women’s leadership in policy evaluation**

Indicator	Measurement	India	Priorities for action	
9. Women’s evaluation and advocacy leadership	Share of women in managerial positions in government involved in policy evaluation <sup>+</sup>		Provide women with leadership and confidence-building training; implement gender quota for leadership; and provide training for evidence-based advocacy on gender.	
	Share of women in managerial positions in nongovernment sector involved in policy evaluation and advocacy <sup>+</sup>			
	Women’s perceived leading role in monitoring and review of the national agriculture policy*			
	NPF			
	MKSP			
	Women’s perceived leading role in monitoring and review of the national climate policy*			
	NMSA			
	NAPCC			
	Women’s perceived leading role in monitoring and review of the national nutrition policy*			
	NNP			
	Mission Poshan			

Source: <sup>+</sup> Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey (2024). \* Source of raw data: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey (2024). Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

Our study found that among the governmental organizations that are active in the agrifood policy review and evaluation process, women hold 33 percent of managerial positions. Similarly, among NGOs, women hold 36 percent of managerial positions (Figure 24). These numbers highlight the advancing contribution of women in management.

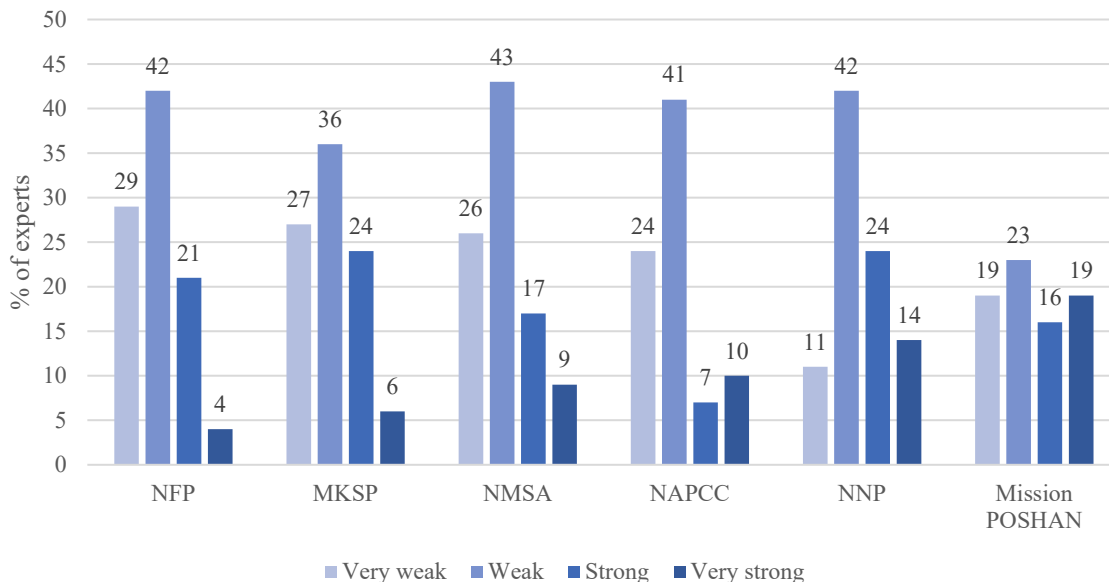
**Figure 24. Average share of women in managerial positions in government agencies and NGOs**



Source: IFPRI/LEAD organization survey 2024.

Alternatively, experts surveyed expressed varied views on the involvement of women in policy monitoring and evaluation. Approximately 40 percent of expert respondents indicated that few women are leading monitoring and review of agricultural policies. All the agrifood policies across agriculture, climate, and nutrition domains received a score of 2 (weak, on the way), except Mission Poshan, which received more diverse opinions (Figure 25). Recalling women’s influence in Mission Poshan monitoring, 19 percent of sampled experts recalled women playing no role, 23 percent recalled women having limited roles, and another 19 percent recalled women often leading the monitoring and evaluation process. However, following extensive discussions at the WEAGov technical workshop, we conclude that the scoring for the Mission Poshan is 3 (moderate, advancing). This decision was reinforced by the fact that Mission Poshan policy has significant participation of women in various stakeholder roles, such as Anganwadi helpers, engaged in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process (Scheme Guidelines, Ministry of Women and Child Development 2022). The above weak scoring of the different measurements as perceived by experts suggests that there is a critical gender gap in the leadership position of the agrifood policies in the M&E process.

**Figure 25. Women’s perceived influence in policy monitoring (% of experts)**



Source: IFPRI/LEAD expert survey 2024.

Note: Figure 25 also contains “don’t know” as a response that has not been included in the figures. NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NPF = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Summary of Scores for India

The WEAGov pilot study highlights both strengths and areas for improvement in women’s inclusion and influence within India’s agrifood policy process. Tables 18 and 19 summarize the results and scores as of early 2024, offering a diagnostic of women’s voices and empowerment within the national policy process in the sector.

Among the 54 measurements, high scores (4) were recorded in 7 areas, and medium or moderate scores (3) in 17 areas. Key strengths include strong gender considerations in agriculture, nutrition, and climate policies, as well as a prominent gender focus in prime ministerial and budget speeches. Additionally, two major policies (MKSP and Mission Poshan) showed moderate performance in gender budgeting and tracking of gender targets. There is a formal procedure and legal framework for citizen’s consultation and inputs into policy formulation, and a moderate score in women’s inputs and influence in policy design for NPF and MKSP and in policy evaluation for Mission Poshan. Women are also well represented in NGOs involved in the agrifood sector, and these NGOs can champion women’s issues in policy processes. Finally, women are also well represented in managerial and nonmanagerial staff in agrifood policy implementation in government agencies and NGOs.

However, the score was very low (1) in 5 areas and low (2) in 25 areas, indicating weaknesses in women’s empowerment in specific areas. Notable gaps include limited opportunities for public input, particularly for women, in policy design and feedback on policy implementation. While gender targets and budget are specified and well-documented in the national development plan, and the gender budget was high in the MoRD (60 percent of total ministerial budget), the gender budget was very low in the MoAFW (less than 2 percent), and experts perceived a very low budget in four major policies (NPF, NNP, NAPCC, and NMSA). Implementation and impact of the gender-responsive budgeting process within the ministries will need to be improved through in-depth gender analysis; intensified gender-disaggregated data collection, management, and regular dissemination; identification of priority areas based on the major gender gaps; better planning and goal setting; and intensified gender sensitization and training for those who decide and prepare these budgets.

**Table 18. WEAGov scoring**

Scale	Definition	Implication	Count for India (out of 54 measurements)
1	Very weak	Low	5
2	Weak	On the way	25
3	Moderate	Advancing	17
4	Strong	At goal	7

Several experts highlighted that a major constraint on increasing women's participation in policy processes or in greater budget allocation for women or gender issues is the lack of recognition of women as "farmer". Women are mostly left without any title of land in their names and often not considered as "farmers", and their status is confined to that of mere helpers or laborers (IDR 2018; Jain et al. 2023). This has major implications on their exclusion in policy processes, budget planning and allocation, and beneficiary targeting in agricultural projects and schemes as land ownership is an eligibility condition for many these processes, projects, and schemes (IDR 2018; Jain et al. 2023). This implies the need to strengthen women's land rights and to reframe, redefine, and recognize the crucial role of women in agrifood and value chains in policy discourse and frameworks, and not base provision targeting mainly on land ownership. Several initiatives have been in place to enhance women's land rights, such as a reduction in stamp duties on property registration by women, spousal ownership provisions, or in inheritance laws (Jain et al. 2023). While these were effective in some states, they have a lower influence in others, and the reasons are the lack of proper implementation, prevailing social attitudes and customs, and lack of education and awareness of legal rights, which makes women more open to exploitation while limiting their opportunities (Jain et al. 2023). Experts suggest that rights, provisions, or frameworks should be within reach of women, for which it is essential to create greater awareness through community involvement and educating both rural women and men and making them aware of women's land rights, other rights, and other important provisions in policies and laws. At the same time, it is equally important to translate these laws and provisions into a simple local language, as ordinary people do not understand the legal language and remain ignorant about it.

Gender-disaggregated data should also be strengthened. While these data are available for many development indicators through sources such as the National Family Health Survey, the Agriculture Census, and the Periodic Labor Force Survey, and while this is a good basis for evaluating women's status on key economic and labor force indicators, other gender data are weak, including on intrahousehold dynamics, control over income, ownership of land and other assets, agency, and empowerment and monitoring gender targets for most agrifood policies would contribute significantly to the strength of policy evaluation. Women's formal leadership in parliament and agrifood ministries at the national level also remains limited as of June 2024. While the recent one-third seat reservation in legislative assemblies marks significant progress, this initiative will also require capacity-building and a supportive environment to ensure that women can effectively run and manage these positions.

Further improvement is needed in budgetary support, implementation, and evaluation of agrifood policies. While Mission Poshan had better documentation and evidence on its implementation and was perceived quite highly among most sample experts, all other five policies did not have documentation and were perceived quite poorly by most sample experts. Within the realm of agriculture, we find that only 12 percent of the sample believe that NPF has a dedicated budget to meet gender goals; in the case of MKSP, there is a lack of clarity as to whether gender budgeting is adequate, given that 33 percent of the sample feel that current gender budgeting cannot meet targets, while 31 percent feel that some progress has been made. For the two nutrition policies, 32 percent of experts report that NNP has made weak progress in meeting gender targets through gender budgeting, whereas 36 percent believe that Mission Poshan has been able to do so. In the case of climate policies, experts believe that NAPCC and NMSA have very low gender budgets and therefore have met only a few gender targets. These findings imply a high degree of lack of awareness or knowledge of gender budgeting and its benefits in reaching gender targets. Additionally, the lack of official documents in the public domain prevents us from gaining a nuanced understanding of how these policies are performing in terms of implementing and achieving gender targets.

Available documentation and expert perceptions show weak gender target monitoring and evaluation of five policies, although they reveal a better score for Mission Poshan. Monitoring efforts of gender targets in these five policies show that there are limited opportunities for citizens and women to provide feedback on these five policies, and women are rarely included in the policies' review and evaluation teams. While Mission Poshan scored higher than other policies, there is room for improvement, especially in areas or states that are lagging in their implementation.

## **5.2 Results on Policy Tracking**

The WEAGov tool also tracks specific policies. Table 19 summarizes scores along the policy cycle for each of the six focus policies. We observe several patterns. First, all six policies score as high in the design stage but score lower in implementation and evaluation. Second, there are differences across policies. Four of the policies (one umbrella agriculture policy, NPF; one umbrella nutrition policy, NNP; and two climate policies, NAPCC and NMSA) have strong content in the design, but scored as weak in implementation and evaluation. NAPCC particularly scored as very weak in women's inputs and influence in its design. MKSP (a major agricultural scheme) and Mission Poshan (a major nutrition scheme) scored much higher along the policy cycle. Aside from strong gender content, MKSP received mostly scores of 2 or 3, and Mission Poshan received mostly a score of 3.

Third, there are more convergent views in the responses in some policies and divergent perspectives in others. Four of the policies (NPF, NNP, NAPCC, and NMSA) received more convergent views and clearer modal or most common responses from sample experts, while MKSP and Mission Poshan received divergent views from respondents in terms of their implementation and evaluation. Available documentation, desk review, and insights from the focus group discussion and technical workshop provided further evidence and clearer consensus on the final scores. For example, on agricultural policies, there are divergent views among sample experts, with an equal split among those reporting very few opportunities, limited opportunities, and many opportunities for women's input into the NPF.

However, based on the desk research, it was established that in 2006, the Swaminathan Commission, tasked with drafting a NPF, requested that the National Commission for Women contribute specific gender-related insights on the policy. Consequently, the National Commission for Women established a panel of experts and collaborated with them to compile a comprehensive document on the subject. This document was then forwarded to Dr. Swaminathan as per the commission's request (Feminist Law Archives 2008). Thereupon, women's inputs into NPF design are scored as 3 (moderate, advancing). However, NPF is scored as weak in the other indicators, especially in policy implementation and evaluation. Nayak (2013), in evaluating the NPF in Odisha state, finds that the benefit of its implementation accrues to "interests of big farmers and intends to increase corporatization and landlordism in agriculture." Nayak (2013) also noted that the policy enabled the state's withdrawal from its responsibilities toward the welfare of farmers and supporting agriculture in general. Bhaswati (2021) critiques the NPF for lacking a female empowerment goal in the context of increased feminization of agriculture in India without a commensurate increase in women's land rights and benefits from agricultural projects.

Mission Poshan had the most documentation and evidence available. Official reports suggest that the Mission Poshan scheme urges stakeholders to undertake social audits to ensure proper use of budgets and implementation of interventions. These are to be supported by direct feedback from benefactors of the scheme, such as mothers' groups, Poshan Panchayats, and VHSNCs (MWCD 2022). This system uses

technology through the Poshan Tracker and provides annual progress reports (Paul, Sarwal, and Menon 2022), indicating a strong monitoring system for the Mission Poshan scheme, also facilitated by Niti Aayog. We give Mission Poshan a score of 3 (moderate, advancing) for budgetary support, implementation, and tracking of gender targets. In women's involvement and leadership in policy review, Mission Poshan is scored as 3, combining data from the expert survey, workshop participants, and available documentation. According to workshop participants, Mission Poshan has significant participation of women in various stakeholder roles, such as Anganwadi helpers, engaged in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process (Scheme Guidelines, Ministry of Women and Child Development 2022). However, in another analysis of the performance of the Mission Poshan, Pooja (2022) notes that progress toward meeting its goals is slow and requires better coordination between the center and the states and calls for technology-driven solutions.

Overall, very few studies on these six policies adopt a gender lens. A study by Parikh et al. (2012) that looks at gender integration into NAPCC notes that gender is mentioned in passing and calls for more concrete gender-specific measures for each NAPCC mission. However, only Pooja (2022) evaluates a policy, reiterating the dearth of evaluation studies of policy implementation mentioned in the 4.3 introductory section. Even scarcer are evaluation studies of policies from a gender perspective.

**Table 19. Scores for India pilot, by policy**

Indicator	NFP	MKSP	NNP	Mission Poshan	NAPCC	NMSA
Scored gender content in policy document						
Women's inputs into policy design*			Old 1993 policy; design processes were not tracked			
Perceived women's influence in policy design			Old 1993 policy; design processes were not tracked			
Perceived implementation of gender targets*						
Perceived adequacy of funding*						
Tracking and monitoring of gender targets*						
Perceived women's leading role in policy review*						
Summary	Strong gender content, moderate score in women's input and influence in policy design but weak in all other indicators	Strong gender content; moderate score in implementation, budget, and monitoring of gender targets; but weak in women's inputs and leadership in design and review	Strong gender content, but weak in all other indicators	Strong gender content; moderate score in implementation, budget, and monitoring of gender targets and in women's influence in policy review; diverse perceptions from experts, perhaps because of differing implementation efforts	Moderate gender content in the policy, but weak to very weak in all other indicators	Strong gender content, but weak in all other indicators

Note: NAPCC = National Action Plan for Climate Change; NNP = National Nutrition Policy; NFP = National Policy for Farmers; NMSA = National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture; MKSP = Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

### 5.3 Policy Implications

Our study developed targeted policy recommendations through extensive consultations with agrifood policy experts over the course of the WEAGov study, a comprehensive review of policy documents in the sector, and collaborative deliberations during a technical workshop and a dissemination event. These events brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from civil society, agrifood ministries, research institutes, and the private sector, to critically analyze study findings, interpret the evidence, and identify actionable entry points for strengthening women’s voices in India’s agrifood policy process. The resulting recommendations below reflect a shared commitment to advancing gender equality through practical and evidence-based interventions.

- **Reframe and redefine women as farmers and key value chain actors.** A fundamental issue of exclusion of women in policy processes and budget allocations is how a farmer is defined, how women are considered, and how their roles are valued. Oftentimes, women are not considered as farmers or key actors in the agrifood value chains. The government and its development partners need to take a critical look at and rethink these definitions and frameworks, with better recognition of women as farmers and key value chain actors so that women are not excluded but become central in policy consultations, discussions, implementation, evaluation, and budget allocations.
- **Ensure that opportunities for policy input and feedback reach a wide audience, including women and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.** While we heard from local experts that public consultations are often held in India before a policy is implemented—and there is a legal requirement to do so through the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy—many experts cited significant gaps in the inclusion of women and marginalized voices in consultations. We identify several key actions that agrifood ministries can take to advance this goal:
  - **Promote awareness of existing consultation processes.** Even when pre-legislative policy consultations are held, experts emphasized that citizens often do not know about these opportunities or how to engage in them productively. Media campaigns and grassroots campaigns working through CSOs with strong local networks could work in tandem to reach a broader cross-section of the population. During outreach, efforts to engage with grassroots organizations that can effectively reach women and marginalized groups can help to ensure that these groups learn about opportunities to participate in consultative processes.
  - **Leverage alternative channels for participation.** Given that women often have mobility constraints and limited access to information and face restrictive norms against their participation in public spaces, nontraditional participation channels are a promising way to enhance their voice and participation. For example, providing virtual participation options and/or financial and logistical support for participants to attend consultations could diversify participation.
  - **Combine consultation opportunities with trainings.** Because women may have limited experience with providing inputs into the policy process, it is important to provide trainings on how to engage effectively to SHGs and other grassroots organizations that want to weigh in on policy consultations. For example, these groups may not know that they are allowed to engage,

when and where to do so, or what types of feedback on policies are most valuable and likely to have influence while policymakers design policy.

- **Elevate women from management roles to leadership roles.** The strong presence of women in managerial roles within agrifood government agencies and NGOs can be leveraged to fill top positions in legislation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. We found significant gaps between the presence of women in managerial roles—which was relatively strong if not yet gender-equal—and perceptions that women were influencing policy outcomes—which was relatively low. This suggests that even when women are taking on leadership roles within agrifood organizations, they are not being recognized publicly as influential leaders in the policy space. Elevating women into highly visible roles at the cabinet or ministerial level within key agrifood ministries could enhance the prominence of women’s influence in the sector. Women have gained prominence in India in other sectors, such as health, labor, and child welfare as ministers and permanent secretaries. Similar progress should be pursued in the agriculture sector. Beneath the level of cabinet member and permanent secretary, women can be appointed with greater frequency to policy and other steering committees, which provide opportunities to translate management experience and skills into influence over outcomes. The cohort of female leaders can also be increased over time by providing targeted capacity-building and trainings designed to prepare women for higher levels of leadership.
- **Implement and monitor gender policy targets.** High-level gender commitments in agrifood policies often lack consistent budgetary support, implementation, and evaluation. To address this lack:
  - **Establish robust monitoring frameworks.** From the high-level speeches already being made on gender goals and targets in the agrifood sector, civil society actors can develop online platforms to hold government accountable for progress toward targets. Think tanks and research institutes in India already do this in many cases, taking publicly available budget data and analyzing expenditure patterns and advocating for greater participation in budgetary processes. Similar approaches could be taken up with a focus on gender and the agrifood sector explicitly.
  - **Conduct public reporting on progress toward gender goals.** For government ministries, experts recommended more frequent and transparent public reporting on reaching gender goals and targets.
  - **Build in gender budgeting and monitoring from the beginning.** While many states and ministries use gender-responsive budgeting, this process is often done after budgets have been allocated as an exercise to analyze expenditures. However, gender budgeting should be conducted during the policy design process to ensure that budgetary outlays can meet the targets set. Unlike most of the agrifood policies that we analyzed, experts perceived strong budgetary and implementation support for Mission Poshan; this can provide a model for other policies and programs to follow.
- **Implement a comprehensive gender strategy to guide gender-responsive budgeting.** India has made major efforts to institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting within its government structures. To strengthen the gender-responsive budgeting implementation and impact, the government and development partners need to implement a comprehensive strategy that includes

careful in-depth gender analysis, identification of priority action areas based on identified major gender gaps and inequalities, proper planning, and setting of short- and long-term goals. Collecting, analyzing, and publicizing gender-disaggregated data must be strengthened, along with greater recognition of women as farmers and key value chain actors and integration of the data with the budgeting process. Budget allocation should be the culmination of such efforts and based on data and evidence.

- **Standardize evaluation processes across policies.** Inconsistencies in policy evaluation across policies and over time hinder progress toward gender targets. The DMEO under the NITI Aayog oversees the evaluation of government programs in India. Previously, the PEO was the independent government agency responsible for this task. However, we found that both institutions have struggled to establish a structured evaluation system as well as ensure accountability (Mehrotra 2013). While experts reported strong auditing for some policies, such as Mission Poshan, they reported weaker auditing for many other agrifood policies, especially those related to climate. Developing an online management information system for agrifood ministries to feed into in real time with progress updates could enable continuous monitoring of gender targets and facilitate coordination across ministries toward reaching those targets. It could also allow agrifood ministries to coordinate more around data collection and monitoring. Relying solely on periodic evaluation studies, which are inherently infrequent, may not yield sufficient actionable insights (Agarwal, Rao, and Nandi 2023). Prioritizing regular evaluations for all agrifood-related policies and continuous progress monitoring in real time would improve the granularity and effectiveness of policy evaluation in the sector.

#### **5.4 Lessons for Refining WEAGov**

Beyond the findings and the policy recommendations that emerged from this study, the India pilot study led to several significant improvements in the WEAGov methodology that highlight the benefit of piloting this type of measurement tool. The insights and lessons on refining the WEAGov tool came from the experience in implementing the surveys and from the technical validation workshop.

First, there were more divergent views from experts in India than in the first pilot in Nigeria. This is partly due to experts' comments on the difficulty of generalizing the implementation of a policy at a national level because implementation by state differs. That is why there are varying responses on these questions across experts. The technical validation workshop provided us a way to gather more insights and evidence from participants, settle the divergence, and agree on the most relevant score for the measurements with divergent views from the expert survey. Triangulation of results across various sources helped in finalizing the scores.

Second, some survey questions were vague to a few experts, including on merit-based appointment, which inherently differs between government and nongovernment and state and federal appointments and positions. There may also be differences in the types and levels of positions available for hiring (lowest or entry-level positions versus management positions; administrative versus technical positions). For the analysis, we disaggregated by nongovernment and government positions and between central and state levels. In the next pilots, we will clarify the levels and types of positions. Given its complexity and importance, it is best to expand on this question to inform about why we see gender gaps in staffing or leadership in agrifood organizations.

Third, workshop participants suggested using available reports, documentations, and evidence on how the policies or schemes are being implemented to complement the perception indicators. The scores derived from desk reviews might differ greatly when we factor in the implementation and evaluation of the policies, and the participants suggested exploring all possible studies or reports that discuss the impacts or implementation of the policies or schemes and to get the perspective of government agencies responsible for these policies through targeted interviews with key officials. We reviewed available studies and reports and got insights from government officials leading the focus policies. These efforts have helped strengthen and provide triangulation and cross-validation of the data and scoring.

Fourth, because policies are implemented through schemes or projects, participants also asked whether the umbrella policy or the specific projects or schemes under it should be the focus on policy implementation and evaluation indicators. For example, the differentiation is not clear between those project managers or teams that implement as well monitor projects and those external M&E or policy review teams, researchers, or universities that do independent review and evaluation of projects/schemes or the umbrella policies. The difference was also not clear between project monitoring and the periodic review or evaluation of the umbrella policy. These considerations have implications for indicators such as women's leadership in policy evaluation. Participants pointed out that for some of the considered schemes, women play an important role as project managers and ground staff but are not represented at higher positions in the evaluation committee. These were clarified during the validation workshop. In future WEAGov pilots and applications, these will be made more explicit in the survey questions.

Fifth, another takeaway from both the Nigeria and India pilot studies was the importance that local experts place on data credibility and on being able to understand and to explain to their own stakeholders where the underlying scoring data come from. In India, we discussed the study with NITI Aayog, which participated in and provided useful feedback during the technical workshop. One way that we incorporated this feedback into WEAGov scoring for India and for future pilot countries was to ensure that every WEAGov indicator contains at least one objectively measure that can be collected either through the organization survey, desk review, or publicly available national statistics. This enables a rapid-assessment version of WEAGov and also ensures that we can very clearly see where objective and perception measures may diverge. We also provide publicly available information on our survey sample to ensure transparency and credibility.

Sixth, from the India pilot, we were able to further streamline the indicators from 11 to 9 after merging gender salience and gender policy targets and merging gender-disaggregated data and gender audit. We also reduced the number of required measures and moved some of them as optional measurements that can help inform about the mechanisms. These are (1) efforts and opportunities to hire women in agrifood policy implementing agencies, which could be used as a mechanism to reach gender parity in agency staffing; (2) a gender quota in leadership, which could be used as a mechanism to increase female leadership in these agencies; and (3) presence of a national gender policy on agriculture, which can be a supporting policy along with the national agriculture policy.

Finally, while our initial approach was to focus exclusively on the national level, we heard early on from local stakeholders that the interaction between the national and state levels is essential to understanding the agrifood policy landscape, especially around policy implementation. Our intention to focus on the national level was driven partially by pragmatism in the beginning; given the complexity of the exercise, starting at one level of analysis would enable us to refine the tool and subsequently develop subnational extensions. We included state-level experts as respondents in the surveys and intend to further develop the state-level

perspective in the future, especially in how states might be designing their own policies and not just implementing federal ones. Overall, the India pilot not only yielded useful findings and policy recommendations for India but also contributed to the refinement of the WEAGov tool and methodology. All these lessons and the evolution of the WEAGov tool are detailed in Kyle and Ragasa (2024) for easy use and reference among stakeholders who plan to adopt it.

## 6. CONCLUSION

WEAGov is a framework and tool to help measure and track women's empowerment in agrifood governance and policy process. WEAGov is designed to inform debate and identify concrete actions to improve the state of women's voice and agency in certain areas of the country's agrifood policy process. In this paper, we present how the WEAGov tool worked in the Indian context, analyzed the data, and provided a diagnostic on the status of women's voices and empowerment in the agrifood policy process. The pilot testing in India provides useful lessons on improving the measurement for future use, along with valuable insights on critical entry points for increasing women's voices and empowerment in the national agrifood policy process.

This assessment describes the status in 2023 and early 2024; periodic monitoring and revisiting of the key indicators should be conducted to track progress and measure the effectiveness of specific actions and reforms over time. WEAGov should be complemented by other tools and evidence of women's voices at the community level and empowerment at the household level. Last, WEAGov pilot testing in India tracked national agrifood policies; stakeholders can extend the use of the WEAGov framework to track design, implementation, and evaluation of state-level policies and local-level governance with a gender lens.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1

As part of the desk review, we also focused on 24 other policies and schemes under each of these thematic areas. Based on the review, the final scores are as follows.

Policy/Scheme	Score
<b>Agriculture</b>	
National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (2020)	4
Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (2014–2015)	4
Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (2020)	3
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Man Dhan Yojna (2019)	2
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (2016)	1
National Scheme of Welfare of Fisherman (1992)	1
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme (2019)	1
Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (2015)	1
<b>Nutrition</b>	
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (2021–2026)	4
Integrated Child Development Services (2017)	3
National Food Security Act (2013)	3
Anemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (2018)	3
Supplementary Nutrition Program (2017)	3
Public Distribution System (2005)	2
Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (2024)	1
National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme	1
<b>Climate</b>	
National Mission for a Green India (2014)	4
National Afforestation Programme (2002)	4

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016)	4
National Water Mission (2011)	3
National Environment Policy (2006)	3
National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change (2008)	2
National Mission on Sustainable Habitat (2010)	1
National Agroforestry Policy (2014)	1

**Annex 2. Estimated number of female and male operational holders by state/UT, as per Agriculture Census 2015–16**

No.	Zone	State/UT (Union Territory)	Female	Male
			Number (in '000)	Number (in '000)
1	East	Arunachal Pradesh	14	97
2	East	Assam	46	2,691
3	East	Bihar	2,297	14,090
4	East	Jharkhand	316	2,483
5	East	Manipur	10	140
6	East	Meghalaya	80	152
7	East	Mizoram	11	79
8	East	Nagaland	19	177
9	East	Odisha	198	4,667
10	East	Sikkim	5	66
11	East	Tripura	71	502
12	East	West Bengal	230	7,008
13	West	D & N Haveli	3	12
14	West	Daman & Diu	2	6
15	West	Rajasthan	775	6,866
16	West	Maharashtra	2,364	12,894
17	West	Goa	19	55
18	West	Gujarat	877	4,440
19	North	Chandigarh	Neg	1
20	North	Delhi	3	17
21	North	Haryana	240	1,371
22	North	Himachal Pradesh	74	922
23	North	Jammu & Kashmir	108	1,307
24	North	Punjab	17	1,074
25	North	Uttrakhand	105	775

26	North	Uttar Pradesh	1,824	21,972
27	South	A & N Islands	4	8
28	South	Andhra Pradesh	2,565	5,955
29	South	Karnataka	1,743	6,919
30	South	Kerala	1,472	5,778
31	South	Tamil Nadu	1,560	6,350
32	South	Telangana	1,368	4,579
33	South	Lakshadweep	4	5
34	South	Puducherry	8	26
35	Central	Madhya Pradesh	1,189	8,808
36	Central	Chattisgarh	553	3,475
	All India	All India	20,439	12,571

Note: Neg = negligible (that is, less than 500). Highlighted states are those sampled for the surveys.

**Annex 3. Gender budget and annual budget of the eight core agrifood ministries from the fiscal years 2022–2023 to 2024–25**

Ministry	2022–2023			2023–2024			2024–2025		
	Gender budget	Total budget	%	Gender budget	Total budget	%	Gender budget	Total budget	%
Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare	1898	132,514	1.43	2,130	125,036	1.70	2,750	127,470	2.16
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	12	217,684	0.01	22.29	205,765	0.01	29.09	213,323	0.01
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change	0	3,030	0.00	0.00	3,079	0	0	3,266	0
Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying	687	6,037	11.38	0.00	6,577	0	0	7,106	0
Ministry of Food Processing Industries	0	2,942	0	0	3,288	0	0	3,290	0
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	30,795	86,201	35.72	31,959	89,155	35.85	34,295	90,659	37.83
Ministry of Rural Development	54,695	138,204	39.58	88,661	159,964	55.43	108,058	180,233	59.95
Ministry of Women and Child Development	16,089	25,172	63.91	20,056	25,449	78.81	20,513	26,092	78.62

**Annex 4a. Name and gender of cabinet ministers and heads of state of core agrifood ministries, federal level (June 2019–June 2024)**

No.	Ministry name	Cabinet minister	Gender	Head of state	Gender
1.	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare	Shri Arjun Munda	Male	Sushri Shobha Karandlaje Shri Kailash Choudhary	Male Male
2.	Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	Shri Piyush Goyal	Male	Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti	Male Female
3.	Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change	Shri Bhupender Yadav	Male	Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey	Male
4.	Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying	Shri Parshottam Rupala	Male	Loganathan Murugan	Male
5.	Ministry of Food Processing Industries	Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras	Male	Shobha Karandlaje	Female
6.	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Shri Mansukh L. Mandaviya	Male	Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar	Male Female
7.	Ministry of Rural Development	Shri Giriraj Singh	Male	Shri Faggansingh Kulaste Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti	Male Female
8.	Ministry of Women and Child Development	Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani	Female	Dr. Munjapara Mahendrabhai	Male

**Annex 4b. Male and female ministers in core agrifood ministries, by state**

No.	State	Ministry								Total females	Total males
		Agriculture and Farmers Welfare	Consumer Affairs	Environment, Forests and Climate Change	Health and Family Welfare	Rural Development	Women and Child Development	Food Processing Industries	Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairy		
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male	2	6
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
3.	Assam	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	1	7
4.	Bihar	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	1	7
5.	Chhattisgarh	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	5
6.	Goa	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
7.	Gujarat	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
8.	Haryana	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
9.	Himachal Pradesh	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
10.	Jharkhand	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
11.	Karnataka	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
12.	Kerala	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	3	5
13.	Madhya Pradesh	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
14.	Maharashtra	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
15.	Manipur	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
16.	Meghalaya	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	2	6
17.	Mizoram	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male	2	6
18.	Nagaland	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
19.	Odisha	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
20.	Punjab	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
21.	Rajasthan	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
22.	Sikkim	Male	Male	Male	Male	Femal	Male	Male	Male	1	7

						e					
23.	Tamil Nadu	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
24.	Telangana	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	2	6
25.	Tripura	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	0	8
26.	Uttar Pradesh	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	1	7
27.	Uttarakhand	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	2	6
28.	West Bengal	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male	2	6
	Total									29 (13%)	194 (87%)

Note: The table excludes all the union territories of India.

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