



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMEN FARMER PORTRAIT SERIES • ISSUE 2

WOMEN FARMERS CARING FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

Sustaining land, water and biodiversity



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE
WOMAN FARMER
2026





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UN WOMEN



**FOR ALL
WOMEN
AND GIRLS**

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FOREWORD

Across the world, rural women farmers grow food and sustain livelihoods. They manage land and water, conserve biodiversity, and help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Yet structural barriers limit their rights and access to land, natural resources, finance, technology and markets. They also restrict their participation in decision-making. Removing these barriers is essential to ensuring women can shape their communities' futures.

In 2026, the International Year of the Woman Farmer and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists bring renewed attention to these contributions. We also mark the International Day of Rural Women under the theme "Rural Women Farmers Caring for Mother Nature". Together, these observances call for greater recognition of rural women's rights, knowledge and leadership.

Building on the [first edition of this portrait series](#), this second issue shares the stories of 12 rural women from across the world. Through collective action and innovation, they adapt to environmental change and build livelihoods. They strengthen food security and nutrition, protect natural resources and create opportunities for their families and communities.

Their experiences connect global environmental goals to daily life. Climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation affect the resources women manage and the food systems they sustain. As countries meet at the Conferences of the Parties to the Rio Conventions, rural women's knowledge and priorities must inform their decisions. Supporting women's leadership is essential to achieving these goals and building resilient rural communities.

Recognition must translate into action. We must uphold women's rights, invest in their opportunities and support their leadership. Rural women must have the voice, resources and power to shape a more sustainable future for people and planet.



Sima Bahous

Executive Director, UN Women



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FROM TRADITION TO MARKET

Terezina Kola

Guri i Zi Administrative Unit, Shkodër, Albania

For more than 30 years, Terezina Kola has cultivated seedlings in the rural community of Guri i Zi in northern Albania. Together with her family, she grows traditional varieties of peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, melons and other vegetables inside a 1,000 m² greenhouse, preserving seeds passed down through generations.

“Seedlings are like newborn children. They need care every day, water, shade and attention. If you do not create the right conditions for them, they cannot grow,” says Terezina.

In an area where employment opportunities are limited, farming has become the family’s main source of income and a way to build a more secure future. Terezina works alongside her children in the greenhouse, while her husband sells their products at local markets. Yet uncertain sales and limited access to formal markets remain challenges.

With support from UN Women, Terezina is one of 30 women farmers strengthening their skills in vegetable seedling production. Through training, technical assistance and mentoring, she is learning to apply climate-resilient practices, improve the quality of her production and work towards seedling certification, helping her build a stronger, more resilient farming business.

Today, Terezina is encouraging other women in her community to believe in their own potential and pursue opportunities through agriculture.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the project “Empowering Women for Rural Development in Northern Albania”.



“Seedlings are like newborn children. They need care every day, water, shade, and attention. If you do not create the right conditions for them, they cannot grow.”

Terezina Kola



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THE WOMAN WHO BUILDS HIVES

Hripsik Petrosyan

Shirak Region, Armenia

In Hripsik Petrosyan's beautifully furnished yard in the Shirak Region in Armenia, the gentle hum of bees fills the air, mingling with the sweet scent of honey and beeswax from her newly built workspace.

Hripsik has been a beekeeper for more than 15 years, but her connection to bees began much earlier. At just five years old, she started learning the craft from her grandmother and mother, who were both beekeepers.

Recently, she participated in technical workshops organized by UN Women that strengthened both her beekeeping and entrepreneurial skills, helping her expand her business. She is now eager to share her knowledge with other rural women, helping them turn beekeeping from an initial source of income into a strong livelihood.

Hripsik believes that rural women have a vital role to play in economic development, describing them as hardworking, organized and determined. For her, the queen bee offers a powerful example: "The queen bee manages and organizes the hive of 60,000 bees," helping it grow stronger, produce honey and bring forth new bees.

Alongside honey, she produces and sells natural remedies, using materials from every stage of honey production. With loyal customers who buy exclusively from her, she believes that every product derived from beekeeping has value.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the project "[Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus](#)".



"I would happily teach another woman to keep bees and give her a beehive, because when we support one another, we all grow stronger."

Hripsik Petrosyan



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READING THE WEATHER, SHAPING THE FUTURE

Liu Qian

Sichuan Province, China

For Liu Qian, weather has always been an integral part of farming. In her village in Sichuan, China, tea pickers can spend up to two hours walking uphill to reach the ancient tea plants and trees. Sudden rain can affect tea quality, disrupt harvesting and create safety risks for women working in the fields.

Liu Qian leads a tea cooperative, creating flexible work opportunities for local women balancing income-generating activities with family responsibilities. She experienced how increasingly unpredictable weather makes it harder for farmers to plan and protect their livelihoods.

Following training on climate resilience, Liu Qian began to connect the weather changes she had long observed in her community with the reality of climate change. She also saw how scientific and technological approaches could help address these challenges, opening new possibilities for farmers.

Liu Qian is now working closely with meteorological experts to explore a localized early-warning approach. She plays a key role in bringing farmers, local government and technical experts together to develop a solution. She brings farmers' observations and needs into the conversation, helping shape how the early-warning approach can serve the wider farming community.

It is estimated that this approach could save each farmer 40–80 hours per year, allowing them to use the time for other livelihood activities such as planting, raising livestock and gathering medicinal herbs.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the “Sichuan Women Cooperative Leaders Capacity Development Programme.”



“Give me access to tools, resources and opportunities, and I can earn my own income.”

Liu Qian



GROWING MARKETS, GROWING RECOGNITION

Olga Chacón Caicedo

Municipio de Leiva, Departamento de Nariño, Colombia

In the lands of the Sachamates Community Council, Olga Chacón Caicedo has been cultivating far more than lemons: through her leadership, she has sown empowerment and a future for rural women, transforming the lives of dozens of women who turned Tahiti lime production into a pathway towards greater economic independence.

“Before, we were invisible, now we are entrepreneurs,” she says while walking through the Tahiti lime fields.

Fifteen years ago, Olga took over the leadership of an association of 32 women producers that was struggling to sustain its activities. Through new knowledge and resources, the women introduced the use of bio-inputs, irrigation systems and drought barriers, reducing costs and improving product quality, even in a territory historically affected by armed conflict.

The women also strengthened their access to markets. Instead of relying on intermediaries, they established direct commercial agreements with local companies, multiplying their income and securing fair prices. Today, they produce close to 400 tons of Tahiti lime and are moving toward export markets.

But their greatest achievement is another: becoming recognised as rural businesswomen, entrepreneurs and leaders.

“The countryside is not only for men; we can also lead and grow,” Olga concludes.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the project Raíces, mujeres sembradoras del cambio (“Roots: Women Sowing Change”).



**“Before, we were invisible,
now we are entrepreneurs.”**

Olga Chacón Caicedo



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A FUTURE ON HER OWN TERMS

Samar Hamdy

Minya, Egypt

Samar, a mother of two from a rural village in Minya, Egypt, experienced marriage and divorce at a young age. She faced significant social and economic challenges, yet she was determined to build a more prosperous future for herself and her children.

Overcoming resistance at home, Samar fiercely negotiated with her father and brothers to take up work at a local farm. What began as an effort to secure food and shelter for her children became a journey of profound personal rebirth.

Through training and learning opportunities, Samar built new skills and strengthened her sense of self-worth. She now earns a stable monthly salary that supports her children. Challenging traditional community norms that often limit women's access to paid employment, she learned to focus on solutions rather than obstacles. She now plans to join the labour committee to advocate for fellow working mothers.

"I will always strive to prove to everyone that women, even when uneducated, can do wonders," she says.

Today, Samar no longer views work as a mere means to survive, but as her personal path to happiness. Looking forward with optimism, she dreams of owning her own agribusiness not only to inspire her children, but also to open doors for other uneducated rural women to rewrite their own stories.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the Women's Employment Promotion Programme.



"I will always strive to prove to everyone that women, even when uneducated, can do wonders."

Samar Hamdy



WOMEN BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER

Naira Bolkvadze

Maradisi, Marneuli Municipality, Georgia

Naira Bolkvadze, from the village of Maradisi in the Marneuli municipality in Georgia, is strengthening her livelihood through greenhouse farming. In her greenhouse, Naira grows lettuce, basil, ornamental cabbage, asparagus, kale and cucumbers, selling her produce locally and at the Tbilisi wholesale market.

What began as a small initiative has significantly strengthened her economic independence.

"Before the new greenhouse, I had a simple greenhouse, and my crops often spoiled. In July and August, I could not grow anything at all. Now, other women and I have set up greenhouses according to our needs, with modern ventilation and irrigation systems" she says.

With support from UN Women and the Rural Development Agency, Naira is among a group of women farmers who have gained access to modern greenhouses. Building on this progress, the women farmers established a cooperative to expand production and strengthen their position in the market. By working together, they aim to improve production practices, promote the safe and responsible use of fertilizers, enhance product quality and increase the visibility and recognition of their produce.

For Naira, the new greenhouse and the establishment of the cooperative have created a stronger foundation to expand her production, improve the quality of her produce and pursue new market opportunities.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the project "Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus".



"I had a simple greenhouse and my crops often spoiled. Now, we have greenhouses matching our needs."

Naira Bolkvadze



© Oscar Lelva

COFFEE, COURAGE AND GROWTH

Yolani Santos

El Tablón, San Francisco del Valle, Honduras

In the community of El Tablón, in San Francisco del Valle, coffee is more than a crop, it is a way of life. For Yolani Santos, coffee has become both a family tradition and a path toward empowerment. She works in her coffee nursery cultivating Parainema, Catimor and Anacafé 14 varieties, part of the region's rich coffee-growing culture.

"My family has always worked with coffee," Yolani says. "My parents, my father-in-law and my husband all dedicate themselves to this work. It is what sustains us."

Yolani is an active member of her community. As president of the Rural Savings Fund El Arte de Crecer Juntos, Yolani has also seen how financial inclusion can transform women's lives. After acquiring new skills, women who once felt too shy to speak in public have learned to lead, work collectively and strengthen their businesses.

Yolani uses affordable loans from the fund to invest in her nursery and support her daughters' future. "Everything I do is for my girls," she says. "I want them to have better opportunities."

Today, the fund represents not only financial support, but also confidence, solidarity and hope for rural women in Honduras.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the "Women, Local Economy and Territories" (MELYT) Programme.



"My family has always worked with coffee. Everything I do is for my girls. I want them to have better opportunities."

Yolani Santos



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CULTIVATING POTENTIAL, ONE STEP AT A TIME

Getrudis Rusiana Rini

Lalong Village, West Manggarai, Indonesia

Getrudis Rusiana Rini, a woman farmer from Lalong Village in West Manggarai, Indonesia, has seen increasingly unpredictable weather threaten the rice farming on which her community has relied for generations. “When it rains, it rains endlessly. When it’s dry, it’s completely dry,” she says.

When harvests fail, her family’s livelihood is at risk. Seeking another way to support her household, Getrudis began growing vegetables in her backyard. What started as a way to feed her family gradually grew into a source of income through sales at the local market.

Through training, Getrudis and her Momang Koe women farmers’ group gained climate-resilient agriculture skills, from planting local crops and making organic compost, to conserving water and managing land more sustainably. They also learned about advocacy and leadership.

“Before, we didn’t speak up, especially in front of government officials. Whatever we wanted to say, we kept to ourselves. The training gave us the confidence to make our voices heard. Now, when we have the opportunity to speak and share our ideas, we feel that we are capable.”

Today, Getrudis confidently brings women farmers’ concerns into public forums, driven by her dream of contributing to her village prosperity, strengthening food security and protecting the environment.

The initiative is supported by the Joint Programme EmPower II: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies, implemented by UN Women and UNEP.



“Now, when we are given the opportunity to speak and share our ideas, we feel that we are capable.”

Getrudis Rusiana Rini



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BUILDING A BLOOMING ENTERPRISE

Beryl Akoth Odhiambo

Saika, Nairobi County, Kenya

Beryl Akoth Odhiambo, an agribusiness entrepreneur from Saika in Nairobi County, Kenya, demonstrates how women-led businesses strengthen food systems through innovation and value addition.

In 2023, Beryl founded Bellyz Organics with just three kilograms of peanut butter. Today, her business produces up to 100 kilograms each month, offering consumers healthy peanut butter products made from aflatoxin-free groundnuts. Her range now includes plain peanut butter, peanut butter blended with sesame and pumpkin seeds and roasted peanuts.

Growing the business has not always been easy because of limited access to finance, high production costs and difficulties accessing raw materials and business opportunities in male-dominated supply chains. Yet Beryl remained determined to expand her enterprise and reach new markets.

A turning point came when she participated in capacity building initiatives and gained knowledge on procurement systems, certification requirements and market opportunities. She opened a procurement account, strengthened product compliance and began applying for tenders to access new institutional markets.

Today, Beryl continues to grow her business while contributing to food security, nutrition and local employment. By setting an example, she is showing other women that entrepreneurship can begin with small steps.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through a project focusing on Gender-Responsive Procurement.



“In five years, I do not just want to sell peanut butter. I envision a company with bigger machines, where other entrepreneurs can produce in my space.”

Beryl Akoth Odhiambo



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GUIDED BY THE WIND

Fatima Makhnass

Belyounech, Morocco

For Fatima, the sea has been a source of livelihood and strength since childhood. Growing up in Belyounech, a coastal village in northern Morocco, she began helping her father pull in fishing nets at just 10 years old. Today, at 54, she leads a women's fisheries cooperative and is one of the few women in her community engaged in small-scale fishing.

Before dawn, Fatima pulls on her wetsuit, starts the outboard motor and heads out to sea. "Before I go, I raise a finger to the sky to feel which way the wind is blowing," she says. Back on shore, she sorts and sells the catch and repairs nets.

Like many women working in fisheries, Fatima faced many barriers in accessing aquaculture gear, finance and markets. Through training, the provision of equipment and support to the cooperative, Fatima and other women strengthened their technical and managerial skills, expanded their economic opportunities and increased their participation in the fisheries value chain.

Today, the cooperative is more structured, enabling its members to build sustainable livelihoods and plan for the future. As a leader, Fatima is also creating space for the next generation, passing on her knowledge and confidence to younger women.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the "Supporting the Economic Inclusion of Women Working in the Fisheries Sector" project.



**"Today, our cooperative is stronger and
we are more equipped to plan for the future."**

Fatima Makhnass



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FROM HARD LABOUR TO HIGH YIELDS

Aisha Suleiman

Dabarkda, Bauchi State, Nigeria

For Aisha Suleiman, rice farming is an important source of income for her family living in the rural community of Dabarkda, Nigeria. For years, processing her harvest was a major challenge. Turning harvested rice into market-ready grain meant travelling outside the community, paying high milling fees and often returning with rice that was not of the quality needed to secure better prices at the market.

When a rice milling machine was installed in Dabarkda with support from UN Women, the situation began to change. “Having a rice mill in our community has made a big difference,” Aisha explains.

The new rice milling machine destones and polishes the crop on the spot, resulting in higher-quality rice that sells for about one and half times the previous price. With the mill nearby, Aisha no longer loses hours on the road and can process her grain more quickly before returning home to care for her family and engage in other trades.

With the additional income, Aisha buys schoolbooks and clothes for her children while contributing to her cooperative’s savings pool.

The mill has become a lively community hub where women run the show together. With more time and improved earnings, Aisha is able to invest in her family and her future.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through its Women’s Economic Empowerment programme.



“We no longer spend hours travelling to process our rice. The time we save is now used for caring for our children and running our businesses.”

Aisha Suleiman



© UN Women Uganda

MAKING WAVES IN AQUACULTURE

Evelyn Auma

Waka Waka landing site, Bugiri District, Uganda

Evelyn Auma has every reason to celebrate her remarkable transformation and empowerment journey. From Bulidha Sub-County in Bugiri District, Eastern Uganda, the mother of eight has transformed her livelihood through aquaculture.

Before taking up aquaculture, Evelyn grew maize and beans as a rural subsistence farmer. Whatever she harvested was consumed at home, leaving little or nothing to sell and few opportunities to improve her livelihood. Like many women in her community, she sought alternative sources of income, including charcoal production.

"I went as far as cutting trees in Igwe Forest Reserve with several women," she recalls. "At the time, we had no idea we were destroying our environment."

A turning point came when she received support from UN Women through training in climate-resilient aquaculture, financial literacy and business development.

"It was after the training that I chose aquaculture as my enterprise," she says. "That decision has completely changed my life."

Today, Evelyn is part of a growing movement of 1,400 women succeeding in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Through aquaculture, women are improving household incomes and nutrition while contributing to local food production.

Evelyn's story highlights how access to skills, knowledge and opportunities can empower women to transform their livelihoods.

This initiative is supported by UN Women through the Women Economic Empowerment Bugiri project.



"It was after the training that I chose aquaculture as my enterprise. That decision has completely changed my life."

Evelyn Auma

UN WOMEN'S WORK WITH WOMEN FARMERS WORLDWIDE

UN Women's mandate is grounded in advancing gender equality, empowering women and girls and ensuring that women's rights and gender equality are integral into global, regional, national and local frameworks and processes.

UN Women places gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of efforts to achieve a just transition towards inclusive and sustainable green and blue economies. This includes applying a feminist approach to climate-resilient agriculture, food systems and the realization of the right to food, recognizing that agriculture, food production, climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation are deeply intertwined with gender inequality. Women, especially women farmers, often experience the greatest impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, while playing critical roles in food production, environmental stewardship, biodiversity conservation and the well-being of households and communities.

UN Women's feminist approach is particularly important as women farmers navigate increasingly interconnected economic, climate and environmental shocks. For UN Women, investing in women farmers means addressing the structural barriers that shape women's rights, access to resources, agency and decision-making, as well as ensuring that investments contribute to lasting and structural shifts in the systems and institutions in which women live and work.



Building on its long-standing engagement with women's rights advocates, women's organizations, rural women, farmers, activists, governments and development actors, UN Women works to advance lasting change for women farmers by:

- **Strengthening women's livelihoods and income security**, including through women's access to productive resources, markets, finance, technology and social protection;
- **Expanding women's voice, agency, leadership and participation in decision-making**, from households and producer organizations to local, national and global institutions;
- **Advancing gender-responsive laws, policies, normative frameworks and institutions**, including those addressing women's rights to land, natural resources and economic opportunities;
- **Recognizing, reducing, redistributing unpaid care work and representing, rewarding and resourcing paid care work**, recognizing that care remains a major structural constraint on women's economic autonomy and resilience; and
- **Addressing discriminatory social norms and gender inequalities** that constrain women's economic participation, leadership and decision-making.



DRIVING IMPACT FOR WOMEN FARMERS

Results from UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025

From 2022 to 2025, UN Women supported **over 60 countries** to advance gender-responsive climate and environmental action, with programmes directly reaching **more than 283,000 women**, including women farmers, strengthening livelihoods, resilience and economic opportunities.

This support translated into stronger livelihoods and climate resilience for women farmers. Across the Pacific Islands, the Markets for Change programme since its inception reached more than 50,000 women market vendors, supporting livelihoods and contributing to safer, more equitable markets. In Sierra Leone, 12,540 rural women farmers accessed climate-resilient agricultural equipment, technologies and seedlings, while 15,410 strengthened their knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture and business development.

Women were also supported to innovate, lead and shape agricultural and climate solutions. In Argentina, Indigenous Qom women advanced agroforestry grounded in ancestral knowledge, improving productivity while strengthening civic agency. In Lebanon, 128 farmers, the majority women, used satellite imagery and geospatial tools for the first time to assess conflict-related land damage and identify rehabilitation strategies, strengthening women's participation in recovery and decision-making.

These efforts were reinforced by institutional strengthening and translating women's priorities into policy and systems change. Approximately 388 partners strengthened their capacities to advance gender-responsive climate and environmental policy and legislation, while around 38 climate- and environment-related laws, strategies and policies were adopted or revised. This included national frameworks such as Brazil's Integrated Action Plan on Women and Climate, and Tunisia's Action Plan for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Women and Girls in Rural Areas by 2030.

UN Women also addressed the structural constraints on women's economic participation, including unpaid care work. Nearly 70,000 women accessed care-related services, infrastructure and technologies in 2025. In Rwanda and Senegal, 7,333 women gained access to or began using labour- and time-saving, low-carbon and energy-efficient technologies, including water tanks and improved cooking technologies.

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social norms and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector, coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations, deliver lasting changes. We make strides in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and peace, security and humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



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