



## Gender briefing note: Women in the pork value chain in Vietnam

### Vietnam's index on gender

- Gender Development Index (GDI) developed by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP): Vietnam's ranking in 2020: 65 out of 162 countries .
- Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) developed by the World Economic Forum: Vietnam's ranking in 2020: 87 out of 153 countries.

This brief seeks to yield a clearer picture of the role of women in the pork value chain in Vietnam and brings more insights on the intersection of food safety interventions and gender equality.

### Vietnam's country gender profile: A short summary

Over the past years, Vietnam has made remarkable progress in gender equality with impressive

achievements in resolving gender disparities in education, employment and health. Women's labour force participation rates in Vietnam are among the highest in the region and the gender gap in earnings is lower than in many other East Asian countries (World Bank 2011). Vietnam has adopted important laws and policies in relation to gender equality including the Law on Gender Equality (2006), the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007), and the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030. Gender equality is also enshrined in many other laws (the Labour Code, Land Law 2013 and Law on Family and Marriage). However, a critical gap has remained between policy and implementation. Prolonged, persistent cultural norms and social expectations emphasize different gender roles for men and women. The primary role of women is still seen as caring for the home and family. Women are often required to put their families first and

expected to defer to male authority. As a result, women often do not enjoy all of the rights afforded to them by law or policy. There are currently various obstacles that hamper women's full development such as unpaid care and domestic work, limited access to resources, poor representation in decision-making positions and agencies, and gender-based violence.

Women are also overrepresented in the agricultural labour force and play an important role in food production. In rural areas of Vietnam, women working in the agriculture sector account for 63.4% of the workforce compared to 57.5% of men (UN Women 2016). However, many constraints still fall upon female farmers. Land use rights are an issue, with slow and ineffective law enforcement that hinders women's access to formal credit. Women have fewer opportunities to access training and field workshops leading to inequalities in access to, and adoption, of new technologies for higher productivity. Women also have less decision-making power at the household and community level compared with their male counterparts.

## Women in the pork value chain

The role of women in the pork value chain is still not well recognized due to limited sex-disaggregated statistics and limited research shedding light on gender issues. However, it is clearly certain that women are major contributors to this sector.

In Vietnam, a gendered division of labour is apparent across all stages of the pork value chain, with men more active in slaughtering and transportation activities and women predominately responsible for processing and retail. The gender differences might result from customary rules that consider certain activities as 'male' or 'female' (FAO 2013). Compared with other countries in the region, Vietnamese women hold certain decision-making power over financial control of their earnings. Vietnamese women are expected to be the 'interior marshal' – the hand to lock the key and open the drawer of treasury for the family (Duong 2001). This power does not necessarily translate into equality when important decision-making power such as land, property and business still lie in the hands of men as the heads of households who owns substantial influence on the household economic conditions.

Earlier research by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) found that women pig producers in Vietnam often face significant challenges in reaching optimal production, such as low access to land ownership and credit (Lapar et al. 2017), therefore, they tend to drop out of more complex value chains that demand greater food safety assurances, missing opportunities from more profitable value chains. Moreover, the visions of men and women differ in terms of income generation opportunities from pig production in remote uplands. The female farmers, for example, wanted to develop local pig production for income, while the men did not see much economic value in local pigs (Huyen and Marshall 2021).

Vietnamese women are also risk managers of food and nutrition at the household level. In compliance with their traditional primary role, women shoulder the majority of housework including food production and preparation for the family. Therefore, women's knowledge and practices around food not only strongly influence household's nutrition conditions but also safety of prepared diets.

Due to these differences in gender roles along the pork value chain, women and men also face differences in risk exposure to foodborne diseases and occupational health risks (Grace et al. 2015), which require critical attention to improve food safety and manage health risks in informal markets. Besides gender-related differences in raising pigs, processing and retailing pork, ILRI research has also shown that male and female pork consumers may face different risks due to variations in consumption habits (Luong et al. 2019).

## SafePORK interventions and findings

The market approach to improving the safety of pork in Vietnam, or SafePORK is a five-year project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to reduce the burden of foodborne disease in informal and niche markets. The project focuses on a range of simple, low-cost and incentive-based interventions to improve food safety along the pork value chain while safeguarding livelihoods of the relevant chain actors.

SafePORK has paid special attention to the intersection between gender and food safety, and understanding the need to analyse local norms in the

division of labour to target food safety interventions. The project adopts a gender-sensitive approach in all of its activities, trying to accommodate women as equitable beneficiaries of its interventions. SafePORK also supports gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data in the food safety sector and contributes to building up the knowledge on the role of women in the pork value chain.



### Key findings on gender in SafePORK

Findings from the gender-sensitive Food Safety Performance Tool (FSPT) have reinforced the evidence on labour division along the pork value chain, in which women dominate in retailing and processing process (Sinh et al. 2016) while men are mostly responsible for slaughtering activities.



Sources: based on KIs (FSPT)-SafePORK.

Surveys by the SafePORK project have confirmed that women often take charge of household nutrition issues and tend to leave behind men in terms of accessing and adopting new methodologies.

### Related publications on gender of SafePORK

Also, women seem more cautious about chemical residues in pork/food and worry more frequently about foodborne diseases than men. They also seem more sceptical than men in interventions related to farm production, certification and tests.

These findings are significant because they influence the project's interventions to better engage with women to meet their needs. For example, training and risks communication events have been organized at times and venues that are more convenient for women to participate. Using these and other measures ensures women are better equipped with new methodologies and new technologies, which could be applied in their production activities and their families' nutrition. The project also builds capacities of rural communities, local women's unions, partners institutions and its own staff on issues around the link between food safety and gender equality. With the current approach, SafePORK seeks to ensure equitable benefits for women and men in the uptake of the project interventions.



### References

- Dang-Xuan, S., H. Nguyen-Viet, T. Meeyam, R. Fries, H. Nguyen-Thanh, P. Pham-Duc, S. Lam, D. Grace and F. Unger (2016). Food Safety Perceptions and Practices among Smallholder Pork Value Chain Actors in Hung Yen Province, Vietnam. *Journal of Food Protection* 79(9): 1490-1497.
- Duong, W. N. 2000. Gender equality and women's issues in Vietnam: The Vietnamese woman-warrior and poet. *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, 10, 191.
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). 2013. *Understanding and integrating gender issues into livestock projects and programs*. (Available from: <http://www.fao.org/3/i3216e/i3216e.pdf>).
- Grace, D., Roesel, K., Kang'ethe, E., Bonfoh, B. and Theis, S. 2015. *Gender roles and food safety in 20 informal livestock and fish value chains*. IFPRI Discussion Paper 1489. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15738coll2/id/129860>

- Luong Nguyen-Thanh et al. 2019. *Serological prevalence of human trichinellosis and cysticercosis in Hoa Binh Province of Northwest Vietnam*. 13<sup>th</sup> Safe Pork Conference, Berlin, Germany, 26–29 Aug. Proceedings. (Available from: [https://www.safepork-conference.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/MAIN-dateien/web\\_safepork.pdf](https://www.safepork-conference.com/fileadmin/user_upload/MAIN-dateien/web_safepork.pdf)).
- Marshall, K. and Le Thi Thanh Huyen. 2016. *Pig breeds and breeding operations in Nghe An province, Vietnam, with a focus on the smallholder pig sector*. ILRI Research Report 41. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI. Pig breeds and breeding operations in Nghe An province, Vietnam, with a focus on the smallholder pig sector.
- Nguyen Thi Thinh, Lapar, M.L. and Galiè, A. 2017. *Emerging gender issues in Vietnam pig value chain*. In: Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Society of Agricultural Economists (ASAE) International Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 11–13 January 2017. Bangkok, Thailand: Kasetsart University: 216-227.
- UN Women. 2016. *Female farmers and inclusive growth in Viet Nam*. (Available from: <https://vietnam.un.org/en/13922-female-farmers-and-inclusive-growth-viet-nam>)
- World Bank. 2011. *Vietnam country gender assessment*. World Bank, Hanoi. (Available from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26745>).

## Exploring gender within the smallholder pork value chain in Southeast Asia through a symposium

Marisa E.V Mitchell<sup>1</sup>, Hegin Khaegui<sup>2</sup>, Vanya Slavchevska<sup>3</sup>, Gomathy Palaniappan<sup>4</sup>, Nicole de Haan<sup>5</sup>, Tamsin Barnes<sup>6</sup> and Fred Unger<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>International Livestock Research Institute, <sup>2</sup>Hanoi University of Public Health, <sup>3</sup>International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, <sup>4</sup>University of Queensland



Exploring gender within smallholder pork value chain in Southeast Asia through a symposium.

### Appendix 11

#### A review of the literature review, gender, food safety and the pork value-chain in Vietnam.

INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK RESEARCH INSTITUTE (ILRI) EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA  
CGIAR RESEARCH PROGRAM ON AGRICULTURE FOR NUTRITION AND HEALTH, **SAFEPORK**  
PROJECT  
MARISA E.V MITCHELL

#### Introduction

Realising the importance of considering gender-based inequities in livestock research and development projects is becoming an increasing priority of research institutes and donor agencies. Gender and gender relations influence the dynamics and interactions women and men engage in and have agency within the pork value chain. By addressing the inequities and tailoring interventions to ameliorate and empower actors' agency, uptake of and the sustainability of the intervention are more likely to be successful.

In Vietnam, strengthening the capacity for pork value-chain actors to produce, prepare and provide safe pork meat is a current development priority for the government. As the country's population income and demand for animal sourced foods increases, as does the demand for pork and pork products rises [1, 2]. The pork value chain in Vietnam is highly complicated and fragmented with majority of pork distributed through informal market chains. Pork sold in traditional or wet markets are supplied by smallholder farmers who make up to 80% of the pork production sector [1]. Pork is one of the most commonly consumed meat in Vietnam where most is sold in traditional markets by female retailers [1, 3]. Women pig producers in Vietnam face considerable challenges in reaching optimal production, including access to land ownership and credit, thus limiting readily available resources for pig production [3].

Foodborne disease is largely associated with animal sourced foods or vegetables sold in traditional markets [4]. Food poisoning outbreaks in Vietnam are drastically underreported with official data from the Ministry of Health reporting outbreak data come from catering centres, schools and festival occasions and not from sporadic community cases [5]. Research by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) has shown that one in ten pork consumers may be infected with *Salmonella* each year [6]. The health risks associated with animal sourced foods, its production and processing differs for men and women working in the value-chain and consumers. Contamination of pork and growth of foodborne

Literature review: gender, food safety and the pork value-chain in Vietnam.



ILRI RESEARCH BRIEF #4  
May 2020

## Food safety performance in key pork value chains in Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Think, Delia Grace, Pham Van Hung, Le Thi Thanh Huyen, Nguyen Viet Hung, Dang Xuan Sinh, Nguyen Thi Duong Nga, Nguyen Thanh Luong, Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, Tran Thi Bich Ngoc, Pham Duc Phuc and Fred Unger

### 1. Introduction

Pig production plays a crucial role in the culture and livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Vietnam, especially in rural areas. Approximately 60% of the national livestock production value and three million jobs were generated annually by this sector (MARD 2017). The pig herd has continuously increased over the past several years, reaching well over 28.2 million heads in 2018. Pork is also the most widely consumed meat accounting for more than 70% of all meat consumed in the country.

As people's income increases and their living standard improves, the safety of pork and food in general is becoming a top concern among Vietnamese consumers. Studies show that most pork sold in Vietnam have unacceptably high levels of hazards and contaminants (Grace 2012; Fahrion 2013; Dang et al. 2019). Consumers also raise major concerns towards inappropriate use of antibiotics and banned veterinary residues, high levels of microbial contamination, and spoiled products. However, these concerns are mainly linked to chemical hazards. Biological hazards, which are much more serious in causing foodborne illnesses are mostly neglected (WHO 2015).

of risk communication strategies adopted by the mass media in Vietnam (Nguyen-Viet et al. 2017).

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), in collaboration with national and international partners, has been implementing the "market-based approaches to improving the safety of pork in Vietnam" project in an attempt at improving risk communication and public health by reducing the burden of foodborne diseases caused by unsafe pork. The project is funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and will last until 2022. Under the project, a range of light-touch and incentive-based interventions will be developed, evaluated and recommended for improving food safety along the pork value chains while safeguarding livelihoods of the relevant chain actors.

In order to provide a solid base for the design of appropriate and feasible interventions under this project, a study was conducted to have a better understanding of food safety perceptions and practices of actors in existing pork value chains. This brief provides selected findings from

*Gender sensitive Food Safety Performance Tool.*

### Authors

Loan Pham and Galie Alessandra work for International Livestock Research Institute. Phuc Pham Duc works for Hanoi University of Public Health. Nguyen Thi Duong Nga works for Vietnam National University of Agriculture. Le Thi Thanh Huyen works for National Institute of Animal Sciences. Jenny-Ann Toribio works for the University of Sydney, Australia.

### Contact

Fred Unger  
ILRI, Vietnam  
[f.unger@cgiar.org](mailto:f.unger@cgiar.org)

### Photo credit

ILRI Vietnam office

ILRI thanks all donors and organizations which globally support its work through their contributions to the [CGIAR Trust Fund](#).



The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) is a non-profit institution helping people in low- and middle-income countries to improve their lives, livelihoods and lands through the animals that remain the backbone of small-scale agriculture and enterprise across the developing world. ILRI belongs to CGIAR, a global research-for-development partnership working for a food-secure future. ILRI's funders, through the CGIAR Trust Fund, and its many partners make ILRI's work possible and its mission a reality. Australian animal scientist and Nobel Laureate Peter Doherty serves as ILRI's patron. You are free to use and share this material under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence

*better lives  
through  
livestock*

[ilri.org](http://ilri.org)