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**AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN GENDER ISSUES:  
A NECESSITY FOR RATIONAL AGRICULTURE**

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## **AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN GENDER ISSUES: NECESSITY FOR RATIONAL AGRICULTURE**

*Mr. rector magnificus, ladies and gentlemen,*

**In the Greek mythology Demetra was the Goddess of Agriculture and her daughter Persefoni symbolized the seasonal nature of agriculture. Thus, the "feminization of agriculture" occurring in developing countries was anticipated by the old Greeks... This early representation of agriculture with goddesses rather than with gods recognizing the crucial role played by women in realizing earth's fecundity has not, however, in recent times helped to officially recognize and assist women farmers around the world. Also Demetra supplied Triptolemus (the son of King Celeus of Eleusis) with seed-corn, a wooden plough, and a chariot drawn by serpents and sent him all over the world to teach mankind the art of agriculture. Thus, the domination of agricultural extension by men has its origin in ancient time...**

**At present, even in regions in which women are the majority of smallholders, their roles remain invisible, agricultural policies, programmes and projects neglect them, and because of this neglect, rational agricultural development is impeded and agricultural productivity suffers. For it is not rational to provide agricultural training, services, and resources only to men when they are not the appropriate target group that can maximize the utility of these services and resources. Similarly, it is not rational agriculture to make agricultural credit conditional to land ownership in countries, provinces, and districts in which men who are the titled owners of land are no longer involved in agricultural production and all agricultural activities and decisions are entirely relegated to women. In these cases, the men who have access to**

agricultural credit, use it not in order to make agricultural investments but in order to finance their business undertakings or in order to buy a car. Thus, agricultural credit is not used to spearhead agricultural growth through the cultivation of additional land and/or through the intensification of agriculture. Agricultural planners and policy makers, programme and project formulators and directors and agricultural educators need to understand gender issues and dynamics in order to be able to rationalize agriculture.

### *Lessons Learned from Agricultural Projects*

For many years the implementation of agricultural projects in developing countries has been providing us with more or less clear lessons since in the Third World the consequences of the neglect of gender-related issues have been more acute than elsewhere. These lessons taught us that agricultural projects suffer serious inefficiencies such as delays that significantly increase their cost because the assumption is made that women's labour is controlled by men and/or because of resource (land, credit) or training misallocations. Because of such misallocations, within the context of some projects women are required to become unpaid labourers for their husbands and to have their incomes and autonomy curtailed. As a result it has been often documented in Africa that women who are organized in groups withdraw their labour and begin to protest collectively. In the happiest situations, the projects eventually make the necessary gender-related corrections that can guarantee project success but even so the cost of the projects has significantly

and unnecessarily increased (*Rural Development Projects: A Retrospective View of Bank Experience in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 1978; *Senegal Settlement Projects in the Terres Neuves Region*, 1984; *The Gambia Agricultural Development Project*, 1984). Sometimes, however, the lessons are not learned before the final project evaluation so that it is too late to correct the mistakes and the level of resulting productivity is lower than expected and possible.

In other cases, inefficiencies in agricultural projects have been due to the fact that the offered resources and services are inappropriate for smallholders and particularly for women smallholders. The available credit, for example, is too large to be suitable to most women farmers' agricultural needs and socio-economic conditions (Karimu and Richards, 1980) or agricultural research has not dealt with and has not solved women farmers' agronomic problems. In the case of several Sahelian countries, for example, women farmers have lower yields than men farmers because they must plant and weed first in their husbands' plots before they can begin to work in their own fields, thus planting and weeding so late in their own fields as to decrease yields. Agricultural research has not dealt with this productivity issue and has not yet developed high yield varieties with the appropriate agronomic characteristics (a short maturity period) that would allow high yields under these conditions.

### *Both Genders Must be Dealt With, Not Only Women*

The lessons from many countries and from all continents have also shown that policies and projects

that focus only on women most often do not significantly benefit women. It is not possible to raise women's income and status when men's income and status are very low. Men who cannot support their families do not accept interventions that will marginalize them even further and they tend, therefore, to boycott women-specific projects or to take them over, if they promise to become profitable (McCormack, et al., 1986; Safilios-Rothschild, 1990). Also women-specific projects have usually limited financial resources and, therefore, cannot attract highly qualified personnel, cannot carry out needed marketing research to guide women's income-generating efforts, and have to limit credit to very small sums that do not allow women to undertake profitable self-employment (Carloni, 1987). As a result women-specific projects most often cannot stimulate genuine development and degenerate to social welfare efforts (Buvinic, 1986).

Similarly, studies that only research women farmers' roles, needs and constraints have a limited usefulness. Both men's and women's roles, needs, problems, and constraints must be studied and understood and solutions must be found that take both men and women into consideration as well as the dynamics of their interrelations. In most cases, men and women smallholders face a number of the same barriers, constraints and problems. In many countries, for example, both men and women smallholders are neglected by agricultural extension agents, are left out of agricultural cooperatives and do not qualify for agricultural credit. It is, therefore, necessary to first understand what are the shared problems of men and women smallholders before investigating whether or not there are gender-

specific barriers and constraints and whether or not women farmers encounter more difficulties in actively participating in and benefitting from agricultural development. In the area of rural credit, for example, a banking concept is needed in the style of the Grameen Bank that makes it possible for groups of rural men and women to borrow without collateral sufficient sums of money that allow them to become involved in profitable agricultural activities that have a growth potential (Hossain, 1984; 1988). Furthermore, studying only women farmers has the inherent danger of viewing them as very different from men farmers and as having special problems that need to be accommodated. Because up to now women farmers have had less access to valued agricultural resources and services than men farmers, they may at present have different sets of needs, interests, and constraints but these different sets are not inherent and unchangeable but only the result of existing gender inequalities due to the inefficiencies of the agricultural institutions. There is considerable evidence that when women have equal access to agricultural resources and services as men farmers, they have equal or greater agricultural productivity than men farmers (Mook, 1976; Rukandema, 1980). Even when women have access to land for cultivation, they usually do not have certainty of tenure because the husband can allocate them a different piece of land in the following year. They are not, therefore, motivated to invest in expensive fertilizers for longterm soil improvement. When, however, women have certainty of tenure, they make significant investments in improved technology (Safilios-Rothschild, 1988a). It is, therefore, important that the *status quo* is not taken for granted as an

unchangeable reality. The fact that at present men and women farmers have different agricultural needs, interests and constraints, does not necessarily imply that different programmes need to be designed for men and women farmers since such gender-specific programmes and projects would most often lead to the perpetuation of gender inequalities at the expense of agricultural productivity.

In many cases, there is a need to redefine the concept of food security or even of agriculture before both men and women smallholders can be considered to be farmers and to be mainstreamed in agricultural programmes and projects. In Bangladesh, for example, the definition of agriculture has been reserved only for rice cultivation and food security has been defined only in terms of aggregate statistics of rice production. All other crops and livestock have been defined as "nonfarm activities" (Safilios-Rothschild and Mahmud, 1988). Due to this definition, some rural men who cultivate other crops than rice and a large number of rural women who only raise livestock or who only cultivate vegetables and fruits are not considered to be farmers, despite the crucial role they have been playing in food security by selling milk and/or meat, vegetables, fruits, poultry and eggs. Similarly, in Zambia men and women have not been considered to be farmers unless they cultivated improved maize and sold it to the cooperatives. In some provinces, however, such as Luapula the majority of smallholders – who are women – cultivate local maize, cassava, and/or millet, and sorghum and because they do not belong to cooperatives, they sell maize and cassava at local markets. Because of these agricultural behaviours that do not fit the official definition,

these women smallholders are viewed as subsistence peasants and do not, therefore, have access to agricultural extension or credit. In such cases, there is first the need to redefine the fundamental concepts of food security and agriculture, thus redefining the very concept of the farmer, before both men and women smallholders can be reached by agricultural services and resources. Only after such redefinitions have taken place, it is possible to examine, assess, and take into consideration existing gender-specific needs and constraints.

### *Gender as a Variable*

In order to rationalize agriculture, it is necessary that gender is treated as a variable in the same way as social class. While the concept of social class has powerful ideological and political connotations, social scientists and increasingly agricultural scientists have come to accept that social class is a critical variable with important technical implications that must be taken in consideration in agricultural research, policies, programmes, and projects. Similarly gender has also strong ideological and even political connotations and overtones. While these gender connotations are important and relevant in other contexts, it is important that within the context of agricultural sciences, gender is used as a variable in quantitative, scientific research. Whether or not men and women farmers with similar salient socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics have the same agricultural needs, interests, constraints, and potential; whether or not they need different agricultural technology; whether or not they have the



same access to crucial agricultural resources and services; whether or not they need different models of service delivery; and whether or not they respond similarly to agricultural macropolicies can and must become empirical questions rather than ideological positions. Using gender as a variable also implies that the technical consequences of gender-specific needs, interests and constraints and of the dynamics of men-women relations are examined so that agricultural research, agricultural technology, agricultural policies, and the design and implementation of agricultural programmes and projects can become rational with regard to these issues. By treating gender as a variable, it becomes possible to collect quantitative data that can allow to test the validity of a number of old and new gender stereotypes regarding men and women farmers and to assess in each specific situation what are their real needs, interests, constraints and potential. Women farmers have been particularly hidden behind multiple veils of stereotypes and biases that seem to persist despite a few in-depth research studies that show the contrary. Furthermore, the Women-in-Development literature has sometimes on the basis of limited evidence inadvertently created new stereotypes that tend to present women farmers in an idealized manner in that they are more interested in family welfare and less in economic gains than men; they spend their income to buy food and to take care of their children; and they cultivate only food crops for family consumption. Reality, of course, is much more complicated and nuanced and it varies tremendously from situation to situation. Up to now Women's Studies have provided valuable insights into the intra-household men-women dynamics. Now the time has

come to build upon these good insights and to collect quantitative data within the context of research studies that examine both men and women farmers as well as within the context of nationwide agricultural statistics collected through farm surveys and agricultural censuses, in order to be able to provide useful guidelines for agricultural professionals and policy makers. There is a need for quantitative data regarding men's and women's key agricultural behaviours and assets such as, marketing behaviour, adoption of improved technology, agricultural investments, size of cultivated land, type of livestock owned and type of farming system. Also in a time that agricultural macropolicies and structural adjustment policies are shaping the agricultural sector in most developing and developed countries, it is crucial that the research in gender issues in agriculture attempts to understand the connections between the macro- and the micro- level and to study the gender differentiated impacts of macropolicies at the household and intra-household levels. The difficulties encountered by agricultural policies, programmes and projects in becoming rational in terms of orienting resources and services to the appropriate target population are largely due to two major factors: a) the persisting conceptualization of farm households as single production units controlled by the male head of the household; and b) the lack of data about women farmers' agricultural assets and behaviours or the poor quality of available data and the reliance of agricultural policy makers and agricultural professionals on existing powerful gender stereotypes.

### *The Conceptualization of the Farm Household*

Women have been so much identified with the family that economists and agronomists have for years used the term "family labour" when referring primarily to women's and less so to children's labour. Western agriculturists and social scientists, and the professionals they have directly or indirectly trained, have been reluctant to conceptualize women as autonomous entities and as active agents, as if by doing so they would endanger family cohesion and welfare. A good example of this reluctance is reflected in the theoretical framework provided by the "New Home Economics Model" that initially conceptualized the household as a homogeneous decision-making unit within which members pool economic resources and have joint utility functions (Becker, 1981). According to this model, farm households have a single production unit that is controlled by individual males who command the resources of all other household members (Fresco, 1985).

All available research evidence indicates, however, that households cannot be conceptualized as monolithic institutions with one production unit. Instead, most often there are at least two production sub-units within the household, one more or less controlled by the husband and one more or less controlled by the wife. These production sub-systems are to different degrees inter-dependent and/or autonomous depending on a number of intrahousehold and social structural factors (Safilios-Rothschild, 1987). While all household members share the common goal of family welfare, each household member responsible for a production subsystem may also

try through exchanges and negotiations with other household members to maximize the benefits from the allocation of their labour and from agricultural investments for their own subsystem (Fapohunda, 1987; 1988). Furthermore, pooling of the resources of household members is not the rule; instead, each household member tends to utilize his/her income differently with often critically different implications for agricultural productivity and family welfare. It is, therefore, crucial that an alternative household model is adopted that conceptualizes the household as consisting of two or more production subunits that can be clearly identified as being controlled by different household members; and as a system based on exchanges, negotiations, bargaining and contracting between the household members responsible for the production subunits (Jones, 1983; Foibre, 1984; Safilios-Rothschild, 1987; Fapohunda, 1987; 1988).

This modified conceptualization of the household and of intra-household dynamics as they impinge and determine agricultural behaviours and productivity is the cornerstone to understanding gender issues and to their relevance for agriculture through farming systems research. Otherwise, as long as farm households are conceptualized and studied as monolithic production units, the factors involved in agricultural production will remain obscure and distorted.

*The Model of Social Change in Developing Countries Complicates the Collection of Valid Gender-Related Agricultural Data*

In most cases, the available data regarding women farmers' agricultural assets and behaviours are either altogether lacking or they are invalid and misleading. This is due to the fact that the collection of these data is complicated by the model of social change prevailing in most developing countries. This model of social change is radically different from that of Western developed countries, whether it is the American conflict type of social change in which the most powerful and vocal group wins or the Scandinavian-Dutch consensus type of social change in which all different groups with opposing views must reach some level of agreement through debate and compromise (Safilios-Rothschild, 1978). According to the American model of social change, those who disagree with the imposed values and behaviours have a choice between either becoming organized and powerful so that they can oppose and challenge the imposed values and behaviours or submitting to these values and behaviours. The assumption is made in this case that since they are obliged to change their behaviours, if they do not change their corresponding values, they will experience intolerable cognitive dissonance that will eventually oblige them to align their values with their behaviours. According to the Scandinavian/Dutch model of social change, on the other hand, the expectations are even more stringent: social change must follow only when people's attitudes and values have changed through a slowly achieved but widely-based consensus. Behavioral change follows

attitudinal change and a high degree of compatibility is assumed between attitudes and behaviours (Safilios-Rothschild, 1978).

The prominent model of social change in developing countries is, however, quite different from either Western model. Available evidence from many developing societies shows that people's behaviours can and do change as societies undergo significant transitions from their traditional pasts to some kind of a "modern" state but their values and attitudes may not necessarily change. They often continue to uphold and respect traditional values that may forbid or in some way sanction negatively their actual behaviours. A number of societal and socio-psychological mechanisms are developed that allow people to maintain their official allegiance to traditional values while they are in the process of behaving without or with little interference from tradition-based restrictions.

This upholding of traditional values is not incompatible with behaviours that are negatively sanctioned by these values but that enhance personal and family survival. Thus, individuals are able to behave in a flexible manner that allows adaptation to changing socio-economic conditions without abrupt and unstabilizing psychosocial turmoil. The apparent incompatibility between the upheld traditional values and the more "modern" behaviour does not create stress because there is a greater degree of tolerance of cognitive dissonance than in Western societies but also because people tend to define this divergence between values and behaviour as "proper" and "normal." The implications of this prevailing divergence between traditional values and emerging behaviour on the part of rural men and women are

serious because often researchers who make village surveys tap only the level of the respected and verbally upheld traditional values and not the behavioral level that can provide useful guidelines for agricultural policies, programmes, and project interventions. The lack of behavioral data concerning men and women farmers hinders the formulation of rational development policies and programmes, especially in the agricultural sector. The tapping, however, of the behavioral level is complicated because one needs to unravel the veil of traditional values that men and women are not yet willing to discard.

Significant divergence between upheld values and actual behaviours is quite frequent in the area of gender issues. This is due to the fact that significant changes in the status and behaviours of women can raise serious questions about the validity of prevailing values and beliefs as well as of existing social structures and institutions based on gender stratification. Through a number of different types of societal and socio-psychological mechanisms that allow important divergence between values and behaviours in this area, developing societies are able to allow significant changes in gender-related behaviours to take place. The cost of these mechanisms, however, is that these gender-related social changes remain invisible and do not lead to needed structural and institutional adaptations and changes. Because traditional values continue to be upheld by men and women farmers and they represent a good fit with the more or less gender stereotypic notions of native and Western agricultural planners, policy makers, agricultural researchers and professionals, the assumption is made

that men's and women's behaviours are influenced by and in agreement with the upheld values. Furthermore, as these assumptions are supported by widely held beliefs, they are not submitted to test or are only examined in the light of insufficient or incorrect information. Because still now in most countries agricultural data and statistics are not gender differentiated, in many cases there are no data regarding the agricultural behaviours of women or when some data are available, they are often insufficient and incorrect. There are no data, for example, regarding agricultural produce sold in local markets where most women sell their produce or about the size of land cultivated by women. The statistics about the economic activity of women in the agricultural sector, on the other hand, have been found to grossly underenumerate women in agriculture because of faulty methodology used in a number of Latin American countries; and some Asian (e.g. Pakistan, Bangladesh) and African countries (e.g. Sudan, Burkina Faso). The methodology used in collecting these data is faulty because it does not take into account the fact that men's and women's adherence to traditional values tends to obscure the accurate reporting of women's active involvement in agriculture and that special techniques are needed to counteract these tendencies.

Even when field research is undertaken, the upholding of traditional gender values often makes it difficult to obtain reliable data about behaviours that diverge from these values. Only when interviewers are trained in techniques that make respondents comfortable to report that their behaviours diverge from traditional values by "normalizing" such behaviours and questions are asked in an appropriate manner that do not



accentuate the divergence, it is possible to obtain reliable data. This does not imply that the research process is unduly complicated. Even rapid rural appraisal methods can be modified so as to obtain reliable data about such divergent behaviours when the researchers are aware of and take care of these considerations.

A number of examples of gender-related social change processes of crucial relevance to agricultural planners, policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and educators can be cited. In many African countries, for example, women whose husbands migrate to urban areas or foreign countries and relegate agriculture to them, usually make all agricultural decisions and are responsible for all needed agricultural labour. When, however, these women are interviewed, especially by foreign researchers, regarding the prevailing agricultural decision-making pattern and the division of labour, they, out of respect for traditional values that prescribe for husbands to be the powerful family members, tend to respond that agricultural decisions are jointly taken with their husbands or that husbands make the important decisions (Mueller, 1977). Carefully undertaken research has, however, shown, that migrant husbands, who visit their families only for a month per year, spend their time relaxing and are not eager to be burdened with responsibilities and work. Agricultural decisions are made by the wives and the husbands are eventually informed about the nature of these decisions (*Characteristics of Farm Household*, 1976; Gordon, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1988). Also although in rural areas of Latin American, Asian and Sub-Saharan African countries, it has been found that in poor rural households women's income usually

represents half or more of the family income, a number of socio-psychological mechanisms are used by both men and women that help diminish the perceived size and importance of women's income (Safilios-Rothschild, 1988b). Finally, in rural Bangladesh where during the last 5-10 years a "quiet revolution" has taken place in women's behaviours in terms of increased participation in field agriculture, live-stock raising, access to credit and control of the income they earn (Safilios-Rothschild and Mahmud, 1989), these women still continue to uphold traditional values that proscribe such behaviours for women and it has been a challenge to make these changed behaviours visible to agricultural policy makers.

### *The Role of the Department of Gender Studies in Agriculture*

Probably the most important function that the Department of Gender Studies in Agriculture and the agricultural professionals it trains can play is to study the ongoing changes in men and women farmers' agricultural behaviours and in the dynamics of men-women relations; to assess the technical, institutional and policy consequences of these changes; and to make these changes and consequences visible to national and international agricultural planners and policy makers. By doing so our Department and the agricultural professionals we train can play a crucial advisor role in agricultural development and food security in the Third World by assisting governments, international organizations and donors to adjust policies, programmes and projects to existing gender-related behavioral

realities in agriculture.

The Department of Gender Studies in Agriculture has been and will attempt to become even more an interdisciplinary department in order to be effective in its collaboration with other agricultural departments and in training agricultural professionals. Our training and research programme tries to combine social and technical aspects of agriculture and is international, stretching out to other European agricultural Universities, particularly Southern European Agricultural Universities, as well as to Agricultural Universities in Asia and Africa. Furthermore, we do not train specialists in gender issues in agriculture. We train agricultural professionals who are able to help rationalize agriculture by using gender as a variable in their work, whether this work is agricultural research, project implementation, policy work, extension, or agricultural training.

Because of its interdisciplinary nature, the success of our mandate lies in close collaboration with the technical agricultural departments of our University. Such close collaboration requires good communication and the development of a common language that bridges the concepts and concerns of the interacting departments. Toward this end, it is necessary that a two-way training process is initiated at the University that at the one hand allows us in the Department of Gender Studies in Agriculture to gain a better understanding of technical agricultural issues and problems and at the other hand, is geared to helping agricultural professionals, researchers and educators to gain good insights into the important gender dimension. In order for such an interdisciplinary training to take place is not sufficient

that a presentation of gender issues and of case studies is made by myself or by one of my colleagues for one or two afternoons in the international Master's of Science courses or that interested students enrol in our courses. These are important first steps representing a good beginning. What is the next more important step is that members of the different agricultural departments through a two-way training process begin to delineate the technical consequences of gender issues in their field of expertise and to raise important technical issues that have gender implications. Only in this way gender issues can eventually become an integral part of all agricultural training. Also within the context of our international Master's of Science programmes, it is important that we give foreign students the chance to be exposed to the new important body of knowledge by making at least one course on Gender Issues in Agriculture obligatory. Otherwise, the complexities of programming and their lack of understanding of the importance of the field often leads to their inability to learn while they are at our University at least some basic concepts about gender issues in agriculture. We are responsible for giving them the best possible agricultural education and this cannot be done if gender issues are entirely neglected. In addition, the integration of gender issues in our international agricultural education programme would give us an edge over similar international Masters' of Science programmes offered by other Agricultural Universities.

We are the only agricultural university in the world that has a department of Gender Studies in Agriculture. It is up to us to take advantage of and to capitalize upon this unique feature. Within the

constraints of limited financial resources, it is important that the University and the Government allocate the scarce resources in promising areas of excellence that can build further the reputation of the University and can attract more financial support from the international community. We here in Wageningen have the spirit of cooperation and we combine not only theoretical and research experience but also practical project experience. I am convinced that we are privileged with a special University context that is conducive to our becoming a Center of Excellence with regard to the integration of gender issues in agricultural education and research and a model for other Universities in Europe and internationally. This is a crucial achievement when agricultural universities around the world are beginning to grope for a model for such integration. I am convinced that our University can achieve such excellence through interdisciplinary collaboration and I am so convinced that I have been able to convince the United Nations Development Fund for Women and some Third World Agricultural Universities of our potential. As a result, in the fall we shall receive two missions for two weeks each, with ten professors from the Agricultural University of Nepal and ten professors from the Bangladesh Agricultural University from a number of different disciplines ranging from animal husbandry, to crop production, horticulture, agricultural engineering and technology, forestry, farming systems, irrigation and soil science, agricultural economics and agricultural extension. The purpose of the mission funded by UNIFEM is, in collaboration with professors from the corresponding agricultural departments of our University, the preparation of a proposal for joint

interdisciplinary research that integrates gender issues in critical agricultural productivity issues and exchanges of students and faculty that increase their competence in gender issues in agriculture. In this way, these two Asian Agricultural Universities will be able to assist other universities in the region to undergo the same transitions. I visited the two Universities in February and the professors there are looking forward to jointly undertake the intellectual challenge with us of developing models for the integration of gender issues in agricultural education and research.

Furthermore, the reorientation of agricultural policies and programmes needed in order to rationalize agriculture with regard to gender also requires the training of agricultural planners and decision-makers as well as the training of programme directors, field workers and agricultural educators in gender issues in agriculture. The Department of Gender Studies in Agriculture can play an important role in this special type of training by developing courses and training seminars in the Policy Implications of Gender Issues in Agriculture and in Gender Methodology for Agricultural Projects. We are already planning a course on Gender Methodology for Agricultural Projects and we plan to collaborate with a number of technical agricultural departments in developing specific methodological modules and case studies. In addition, we have been asked by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to prepare proposals for training workshops for civil servants and agricultural professionals on both the policy implications of gender issues in agriculture and gender methodology for agricultural projects. Finally, we have been asked by the Economic Development

Institute, the training wing the World Bank to assist them in the training of agricultural researchers in gender issues in a training programme for a number of African institutions. All these training activities can have significant impact on the efficiency of agricultural projects, on the rationalization of agricultural policies and on increasing agricultural productivity.

*Colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The Directorate for Development Cooperation made me first aware of the increasing attention paid by the Government of the Netherlands on gender issues in agriculture when for many years they supported my research in this area while I was working for the Population Council in the United States. Then in September 1986, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited me to give the keynote speech at the International Workshop on "Operational Strategies for Reaching Women in Agriculture" held at Kijduin. This invitation played a crucial role because it gave me the opportunity to meet Dutch agricultural policy makers and professionals and to discover a great intellectual affinity and a shared practical view regarding needed actions. This very positive beginning was then followed up by an invitation to serve as a consultant to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and to spend several months in Wageningen preparing training materials and assisting to organize training workshops on Farming Systems and Gender Issues for agriculture course leaders at IAC, Deventer, Barneveld and Onkerk. These

training workshops gave me the chance to meet more agricultural educators and professionals and to round my positive impressions about Netherlands and its people. My presence at this University is very much due to these experiences.

*Rector magnificus and members of the executive board*

I wish to thank you for having placed your confidence on me to shoulder the unique challenge of the development of the department with very scarce resources and for having been very supportive in the upward struggle for excellence.

*Colleagues in the Department of Gender Studies in Agriculture*

You have been persevering through the necessary mutual adjustments and changes and I am sure that we shall overcome!

*Colleagues in other departments*

Thank you for your cooperation and friendship that has made my decision to come to this University a happy one and promising excellent interdisciplinary work.

*Colleagues in IAC, Deventer, Barneveld, and Onkerk Colleges*

I look forward to continue the fruitful collaboration that we started more than two years ago.



*Professors of Women's Studies in all Universities in  
the Netherlands*

I look forward to continuing our discussions and exchanges and in working together for the formulation of educational and research policies regarding Women's Studies.

Thank you.

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