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The potential for Social Protection in the empowerment of women in agriculture and sustainable Development in Namibia

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Abstract

The argument in the existing literature is that fewer females than males are participating as small-scale farmers and there is a need to increase women participation, to increase production and address past injustices. Nevertheless, most of the existing data collected is from men than women reinforcing the notion that women are not farmers or producers. Neglecting gender issues in agriculture can be costly, socially and economically and incorporating social protection functions in order to empower women contributes to reducing the gender gap in agricultural productivity. The purpose of this paper is to explore how social protection programmes advance women's empowerment and tackle gender inequalities within the agricultural sector particularly in Namibia. Most papers in this field tend to use quantitative methodologies which leaves a gap in terms of deeper understanding of the problem. A case study research design is therefore adopted in this paper using a qualitative methodological approach and three data sources were used: desk research (also referred to as desk reviews), secondary data and semi-structured interviews with women in farming in Namibia. Most females derived income from other activities than income from agriculture to allow them to put food on the table. Women lack equal access to inputs, including fertiliser, better seeds, mechanical equipment, and agricultural extension services that would connect them with information about improved agricultural practices due to having to juggle agriculture with household chores. The paper calls for creating an enabling environment for everyone with a passion in participating in agriculture.

Keywords: farming, females, gender, income, resources