

# Gender Differential Roles in Organic Agriculture (OA) Adoption in Selected Municipalities in the Philippines

**Edna Luisa A. Matienzo and Mryna A. Tenorio**

University Researchers  
Agricultural Systems Institute, College of Agriculture and Food Science  
University of the Philippines Los Baños, College, Laguna, Philippines

## ABSTRACT

*The Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 intensified initiatives to promote organic agriculture. Many assume that the Act affects only males because they assume that farmers are males. However, women farmers have also been active food producers and family providers. They may have different capacities, needs and limitations, but they are covered by the Act. Does gender influence the adoption and success of OA?<sup>1</sup> As part of the project assessing the factors influencing organic farming, this paper focuses on gender issues. There are 180 respondents, 90 practitioners and 90 non-practitioners from Sta. Josefa, Agusan Del Sur, Braulio E. Dujali, Davao Del Norte and Victorias City, Negros Occidental. Survey interviews and participatory tools were employed. Data were gender disaggregated and descriptive statistics were used. Access and control of agricultural resources and benefits, decision making, farm labor, technological constraints and demands, and awareness and perception vary by gender. Female farmers benefit from paid work, participation in projects and credit program. However, male farmers control most resources and benefits. For male farmers, farming activities are not joint decisions. Only female practitioners are involved in backyard production. Both genders share farm labor for commercial production. Female practitioners are more vulnerable to climate change though. Nevertheless, ensuring gender balance is crucial for sustainable adoption and inclusive development of organic agriculture in the country.*

**Keywords:** gender; differential roles; organic agriculture; adoption; inclusive development

Contact Information: [elamatienzo@gmail.com](mailto:elamatienzo@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

Although numerous studies on the adoption and economic impacts of organic farming in the Philippines have been carried out, very limited studies have focused on the gender dimensions in the adoption of organic farming. Efforts to promote organic agriculture assume that those involved in organic farming are all men. The reality, however, is that women farmers are also key players in agricultural development.

Organic farming (OF) promotes gender equality and empowers women for it improves the socio-economic status of women in developing countries (Subrahmanyeswari and Chander 2011).

However, according to Engel-Di Mauro (undated) and Dolan and Sorby (2003), the OF's impact on gender empowerment and equality will depend on initial gender relations, as reflected in gender-based divisions of labor, decision-making, housework, and intra-household allocation of resources and assets. Control of both genders over important assets to improve their livelihood and well-being should be considered (Meinzen-Dick *et al* 2011). Women mainly control the production and output of the subsistence crops for home consumption; men have more decision-making power over the production and output of the household's cash crops (Doss 2001). Decision-making is a complex process based on a process of negotiation, knowledge of the others' preferences, gender norms, as well as power dynamics (Lope-Alzina 2007).

Kassie *et al.* (2010) recommend the development of gender and age-specific technologies, instead of blanket recommendations of technologies, regardless of the characteristics of the farmers, to encourage adoption of sustainable organic agricultural practices. Gender-blind programs tend to increase the gender asset gap. Public policies should take into consideration the influence of gender differences, for these are linked to culture and differential labor demands between sexes, in adoption of different technologies (Kassie *et al* 2010). This paper seeks to ascertain the gender differential roles through the gender dimensions in organic agriculture adoption in selected municipalities in the Philippines.

## Experiments

Project sites were selected based on the following major criteria namely: a) Recipient of ATI trainings on organic farming (2011-2013); b) Participant municipality/province in the 2013 National Organic Agriculture Congress (NOAC) Achievers Awards; c) Membership in an organic farmers' group and d) Preferably, an underprivileged municipality.

**Table 1. Project Sites and the Partner Farmer Organization Per Site**

Project Sites	Name of Partner Farmer Organizations
Victorias City, Negros Occidental	Victorias Organic Farmers Association (VOFA)
Braulio E. Dujali, Davao del Norte	Braulio E. Dujali Organic Practitioners Association (BEDOPA)
Sta. Josefa, Agusan del Sur	Sta. Josefa Integrated Organic Farmers Association (SJIOFA)



Two sets of survey forms, one for the OF practitioner, and another for the non-practitioner were prepared in English and pre-tested. One of the seven major parts of the survey instrument deals with gender considerations in OF adoption.

Farmer respondents consisted of 30 practitioners and 30 non-practitioners per site, or a total of 180 respondents. The criteria for the selection of practitioners were: a) Active membership in a partner organic farmers' group; b) Attendance at ATI trainings on Organic Farming conducted from 2011-2013; c) Practice of diversified/integrated organic farming system; d) Willingness to be interviewed and e) Attendance at the pre-testing of the survey form. The criteria for the selection of non-practitioners were: a) Attendance at ATI trainings on Organic Farming conducted from 2011-2013, but did not practice organic farming (if applicable); b) Preferably, similarity of farming system with that of the practitioner; c) Practice of diversified farming system; d) Preferably a neighboring farm of the OF practitioner; e) Willingness to be interviewed; and f) attendance at the e-testing of survey form.

Survey interview and case study methods were employed. The data obtained were gender disaggregated with the use of descriptive statistics.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Gender Profile**

The farmer respondents are composed of 40% females and 60% males, with ages ranging from 39 to 49 years old. The majority are married, regardless of gender. Most of them completed secondary education. The female (28%) practitioners have had 16-26 years of farming experience; the male practitioners have had a wider range of farming experience, from 6-37 years (25%). Female non-practitioners have had a longer farming experience, consisting of 27-37 years (25%). For organic farming experience, both genders have less than 5 years of experience (55% female, 66% male) followed by 6-15 years (27% female, 18% male). Moreover, regardless of their gender, majority of the farmers are landowners, whether they are practitioners or non-practitioners.

### **Gender Dimensions in OF**

There are more male farmer respondents than female respondents. Both genders were engaged in crop production, namely, rice, fruit trees, coconut, vegetables, and root crops among others. They also raise livestock, like cattle, carabaos, swine, and goats. Both male and female non-practitioners intend to convert to organic farming, with more female non-practitioners converting sooner than their male counterparts. Most female farmers plant short duration crops in small areas that are easier to convert to organic farms; on the other hand, the male farmers plant rice in bigger farm areas. The decision to convert a big farm area to organic farming is dependent on the farmers' assessment of its implications on the probable yield of a major crop like rice. However, both genders have similar reasons for converting to OF, like market demand for practitioners and health benefits for non-practitioners. They envisioned success in practicing organic farming in the future though.

In terms of familiarity with organic farming, more female practitioners (30%) indicated that they have little knowledge of OF; hence, suggesting the need to give the set female farmers priority in the planning and implementation of training programs on OF.

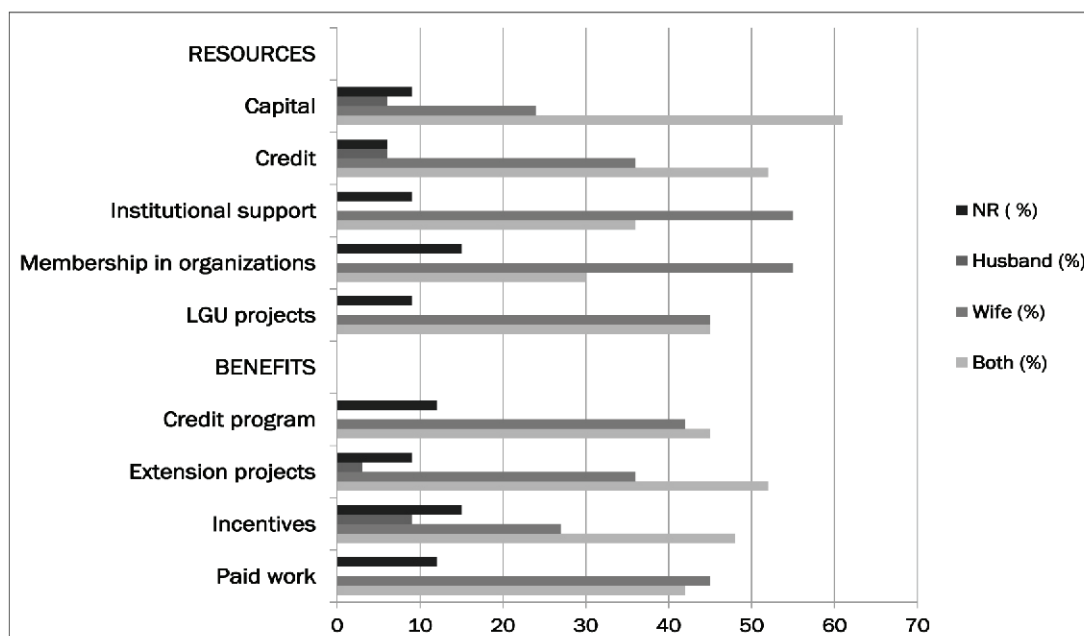
Meanwhile, more female non-practitioners are using some organic farming methods along the principles of organic farming in maintaining biodiversity and pest management, like intercropping, diversification, crop rotation, planting attractant and repellant crops, mulching, and the like. This interesting observation indicates that investing in capacity development for female farmers may also facilitate the adoption of organic farming.

### Access and Control of Agricultural Resources and Benefits

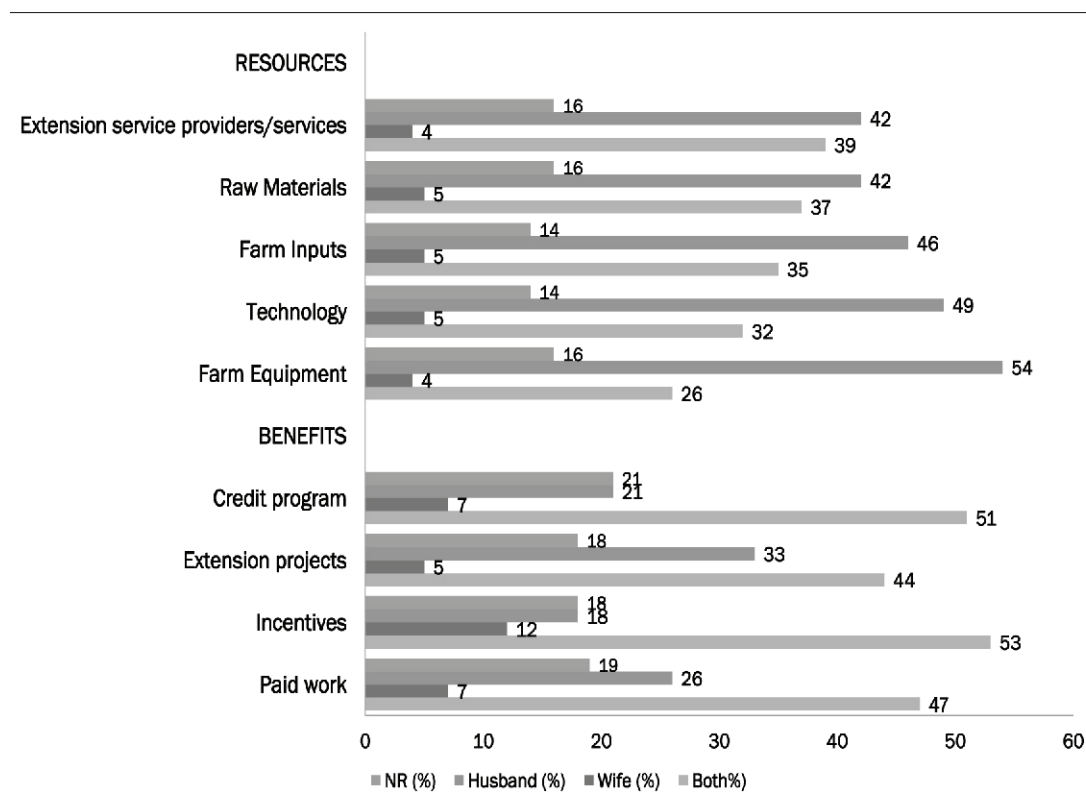
Female farmers had access to agricultural resources and benefits through the support of LGUs, government agencies like the Department of Agriculture (DA), the DA-ATI, and the Provincial Agriculture.

Office and NGOs/private organizations promoting OF in the project sites, organic agriculture has provided an opportunity for female farmers to benefit from paid work, with incentives for additional work, with chances to participate in extension projects and credit program (Figure 1a). However, when it comes to control of resources and benefits, the male farmer has the lead role (Figure 1b). He influences who control and who benefit from the agricultural resources. The sharing of this influence and control by both genders would facilitate adoption of OF. For male and female farmers perceive differently how the other gender access and control agricultural resources and benefits. Hence, understanding their different roles in terms of accessment and control of resources and benefits can guide policy makers and program planners in reviewing how the resources and services, more importantly the benefits, truly and equally support farmers sustain their OF adoption/in their conversion process.

**Figure 1a. Female Practitioners' Access to Agricultural Resources and Benefits**



**Figure 1b. Male Practitioners' Control of Agricultural Resources and Benefits**



## Decision Making

Male and female farmers differ in their view as to who should make the decisions regarding activities in crop production, animal production, marketing, and social aspects. For the female farmers, these processes should involve mainly a joint decision of both husband and wife but for the male farmers, decisions should be done solely by the husband. Where the female farmers feel that they ought to be part of the decision-making process then, the more they should be involved in consultation meetings, dialogues or any venue for inclusive participation in the OF adoption agenda.

## Farm labor

For the female practitioner, farm labor for rice production should be a joint undertaking of the husband and wife. But for male practitioners, majority of the farm activities were done by the husband. With organic farming, however, the female farmer was given an additional farm activity like the preparation of organic concoctions. For backyard vegetable production, only the female practitioner was involved. For commercial production though, both husband and wife share farm labor. Family labor was employed in vegetable production, specifically in the preparation of organic concoctions, organic fertilizers and botanical pesticides. Thus, organic farming promotes family bonding and reduces cost of hiring additional labor.

### **Technological Constraints on OF**

Common problems encountered in crop production are pest and diseases as well as lack of water supply. More female practitioners cite drought and natural calamities as problems in rice farming; they imply that they are the more vulnerable gender as far as climate change is concerned. Other problems mentioned include the lack of quality organic vegetable seeds and low production, among others. The fact that the practitioners did not mention lack of capital as a constraint, means that they derive good income from organic rice farming. Lack of knowledge and skills in organic agriculture are considered constraints for practitioners. Moreover, male farmers are discouraged by the low/fluctuating market price, just as the female farmers find problems with the lack of a regular market and lack of information regarding markets.

### **Technology Demands/Needs of OF**

Farmers would like to learn new technologies for pest and disease management and control, like the preparation and use of botanical pesticides. If male farmers suggest the need for easily available botanical pesticides, female farmers want a training and demo on the preparation of botanical pesticides. More female farmers would also want more training on planting resistant varieties. These distinctions reflect that technology demands and needs on organic agriculture vary between genders; hence, these should be addressed accordingly.

### **Case Study on Awareness and Perception of Gender Issues in OF**

The awareness level of the male and female farmers with regard to gender issues slightly differ. Farmers need to be gender sensitized to the different roles and contribution of each group in organic farming. Gender issues should be integrated in designing training courses for farmers and gender balance should be ensured in inviting training participants.

The perception level of farmers depends on their basic understanding of gender issues. Female farmers perceive that both genders participate actively in organic farming activities and equally in decision-making regarding major activities in organic farming. On the other hand, male farmers believe that "Men not the women should have control over the agricultural resources like land, credit training, technology, inputs among others;" in other words, they want dominance in the use of agricultural resources. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, that both genders recognize the contribution of women farmers to agriculture. This positive perception of male farmers should be built upon in order for female farmers to have a complementary role in the promotion and development of organic agriculture in the different municipalities.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regular and participatory capacity building should prioritize training needs by gender in order to enhance knowledge base and create positive perceptions. Inasmuch as views regarding access and control of agricultural resources and benefits differ by gender, these differences should be considered in the design and implementation of OF programs. This gender-sensitivity in planning and implementation of the OF programs will ensure a level playing field for both genders; hence, facilitating and sustaining the adoption of organic agriculture.

Inclusive development then would mean the effective participation of female farmers in decision-making, and the recognition of the complementary role of female farmers in promoting OF in their municipalities. Thus, development of organic agriculture should not only be sustainable but also inclusive to ensure that men and women farmers equally benefit from and have access to resources.

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