

Analysis and Assessment of the Levels of Women's Involvement and Gender Equality in Agribusiness in the Republic of Armenia

Tsovinar Karapetyan¹, Arpenik Muradyan², Vanine Yeranosyan³, Michael Navasardyan⁴

Abstract. Women's participation in agribusiness is increasingly recognized as an important determinant of inclusive rural development and sustainable economic growth. Nevertheless, official statistical data in the Republic of Armenia provide only limited opportunities for evaluating the structural characteristics of women's participation, particularly at the regional and agribusiness subsector levels. To address this gap, this study combines evidence from a nationwide sociological survey with the application of the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) to assess the concentration of women's participation across agribusiness subsectors and regions. The empirical analysis is based on original survey data collected from 780 women representing all marzes of the Republic of Armenia during 2022–2023. The findings reveal that women's entrepreneurial activity is unevenly distributed and remains highly concentrated in a narrow group of traditional agribusiness subsectors, primarily crop and animal husbandry and related activities, while their participation in higher value-added fields remains comparatively limited. A comparison with official statistical indicators further demonstrates that aggregate gender statistics do not adequately capture these structural disparities. By adapting the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index to the analysis of women's participation in agribusiness, the study offers a methodological framework for assessing concentration patterns that are not observable through conventional participation indicators. The findings provide evidence that may support the development of more targeted gender-sensitive policies, including improvements in gender-disaggregated statistics, vocational training, institutional support for women entrepreneurs, and measures encouraging participation in more diversified agribusiness activities.

Keywords: women's participation, agribusiness, gender equality, Herfindahl–Hirschman Index, concentration analysis.

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¹Tsovinar Karapetyan, Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan, Republic of Armenia.

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5927-7213.

E-mail: karapetyantsovinar@yahoo.com

²Arpenik Muradyan, West Ukrainian National University Yerevan Education and Research Institute, Republic of Armenia (Corresponding author).

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8382-8185.

E-mail: arphikmuradyan@yahoo.com

³Vanine Yeranosyan, Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan, Republic of Armenia.

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7338-1463.

E-mail: vanymany@yahoo.com

⁴Michael Navasardyan, "Volo" Software Development Company, Yerevan, Republic of Armenia.

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5474-6401.

E-mail: navasardianmichael@gmail.com

Аналіз та оцінка рівня залученості жінок та гендерної рівності в аграрному бізнесі в Республіці Вірменія

Цовінар Карапетян¹, Арпенік Мурадян², Ваніне Єраносян¹, Майкл Навасардян³

¹Вірменський державний економічний університет, Єреван, Республіка Вірменія.

²Західноукраїнський національний університет, Єреванський навчально-науковий інститут, Республіка Вірменія.

³Компанія з розробки програмного забезпечення «Volo», Єреван, Республіка Вірменія.

Анотація: Участь жінок в агробізнесі дедалі більше визнається одним із ключових чинників інклюзивного розвитку сільських територій та сталого економічного зростання. Водночас офіційні статистичні дані Республіки Вірменія надають лише обмежені можливості для оцінювання структурних характеристик участі жінок, особливо на регіональному рівні та на рівні підгалузей агробізнесу. З метою подолання цієї прогалини у дослідженні поєднано результати загальнонаціонального соціологічного опитування із застосуванням індексу Герфіндаля–Гіршмана (HHI) для оцінювання рівня концентрації участі жінок у підгалузях агробізнесу та регіонах країни. Емпіричний аналіз ґрунтується на авторських даних соціологічного опитування, проведеного у 2022–2023 роках серед 780 жінок, які представляють усі марзи Республіки Вірменія. Результати дослідження засвідчили, що підприємницька активність жінок розподілена нерівномірно й характеризується високою концентрацією у вузькому колі традиційних підгалузей агробізнесу, насамперед у рослинництві, тваринництві та пов'язаних із ними видах діяльності. Водночас їхня участь у сферах із вищою доданою вартістю залишається порівняно обмеженою. Порівняння з офіційними статистичними показниками також свідчить, що агреговані гендерні статистичні дані не дають змоги повною мірою відобразити наявні структурні диспропорції. Адаптація індексу Герфіндаля – Гіршмана до аналізу участі жінок в агробізнесі дала змогу запропонувати методологічний підхід до оцінювання концентраційних процесів, які не можуть бути виявлені за допомогою традиційних показників участі. Отримані результати можуть слугувати науковим підґрунтям для розроблення більш адресної гендерно чутливої державної політики, зокрема щодо вдосконалення гендерно дезагрегованої статистики, розвитку професійної підготовки, інституційної підтримки жінок-підприємниць та стимулювання їхньої участі в більш диверсифікованих напрямках агробізнесу.

Ключові слова: участь жінок, агробізнес, гендерна рівність, індекс Герфіндаля – Гіршмана (HHI), аналіз концентрації.

Statement of the problem. Ensuring gender equality has become one of the central priorities of sustainable economic development and public policy worldwide. In agribusiness, women's participation extends beyond employment, contributing to entrepreneurship, rural development, food security, and the diversification of local economies. Despite the increasing recognition of women's economic role, significant disparities continue to exist in their access to entrepreneurial opportunities, productive resources, financial services, and participation in higher value-added agribusiness activities.

The assessment of women's participation in agribusiness presents important methodological challenges. Existing statistical indicators primarily measure overall employment or entrepreneurship rates but provide limited information regarding the structural distribution of women's participation across agribusiness subsectors and territorial units. Consequently, substantial disparities may remain hidden behind aggregate indicators, limiting the effectiveness of evidence-based policy interventions. This limitation is particularly evident in the Republic of Armenia, where official statistical information is insufficient for assessing women's participation at the regional and agribusiness subsector

levels. Although national statistics provide general indicators of employment by economic activity, they do not adequately reveal the concentration of women's entrepreneurial activity within specific agribusiness sectors or across different regions. Addressing this methodological gap requires analytical approaches capable of evaluating not only the level but also the concentration of women's participation. Against this background, the present study applies the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index to assess the structural distribution of women's participation in agribusiness across the regions and subsectors of the Republic of Armenia. The proposed approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of existing structural disparities and supports the development of more targeted gender-sensitive policies.

Literature Review. Research on women's participation in agriculture and agribusiness has expanded considerably over the past two decades, reflecting the growing recognition of gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable rural development and inclusive economic growth. Existing studies consistently demonstrate that increasing women's participation in agricultural production, entrepreneurship, and value chains contributes to higher productivity, improved household welfare, and stronger food security. Nevertheless, women continue to encounter structural constraints that restrict their economic opportunities, including unequal access to productive resources, financial services, technology, markets, and decision-making processes [2].

The development of women's entrepreneurship is also strongly influenced by the broader socio-economic and institutional environment. Welsh [3] argues that the relationship between women's entrepreneurial performance and economic development is mutually reinforcing, while Khamurduddin and Sripathi [4] emphasize that entrepreneurial success depends on the existence of an enabling ecosystem that combines education, institutional support, mentoring, and access to finance. Similarly, Gasic [5] highlights the importance of continuous professional development and identifies insufficient public support, limited childcare services, restricted financial opportunities, and weak information networks as persistent barriers limiting women's entrepreneurial activity. Previous empirical research has assessed women's economic participation primarily through indicators such as employment, business ownership, managerial representation, access to productive assets, and income generation [6]. Although these measures provide valuable information about the overall scale of participation, they reveal relatively little about its internal structure. In particular, they do not explain whether women are distributed evenly across agribusiness activities or concentrated in a limited number of subsectors characterized by lower profitability and reduced opportunities for business expansion.

To address issues of structural concentration, economic research has widely employed the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI), traditionally used to measure market concentration and competition in industrial organization, banking, and regional economics [7; 8; 9]. More recently, scholars have demonstrated that concentration indices can also be applied to the analysis of labor markets, agricultural value chains, and the distribution of socio-economic resources [10; 11; 12]. These studies illustrate that the analytical value of the HHI extends beyond competition policy and can support the assessment of structural inequalities within broader economic systems. Despite the growing body of literature on women's entrepreneurship in agriculture, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to measuring the concentration of women's participation across agribusiness subsectors and territorial units [13; 14; 15]. Consequently, situations in which women are heavily represented in only a few, relatively low-value-added activities may remain concealed behind aggregate participation indicators. This methodological gap is particularly relevant for countries where detailed gender-disaggregated statistics are limited. Against this background, the present study adapts the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index to evaluate the concentration of women's participation in agribusiness across the regions and subsectors of the Republic of Armenia. Unlike conventional gender indicators that primarily quantify participation levels, this approach makes it

possible to identify structural imbalances in the distribution of women's entrepreneurial activity and to compare concentration patterns across different territorial and sectoral dimensions. In doing so, the study extends the methodological application of concentration analysis to gender-sensitive agribusiness research and provides additional evidence for the development of more targeted public policy measures.

Recent international studies further reinforce the relevance of this research direction. Vuciterna et al. [16] demonstrate the rapidly increasing scholarly interest in women's entrepreneurship in agriculture, particularly regarding innovation, market integration, and enterprise development. At the same time, recent evidence confirms that substantial gender disparities continue to exist throughout agrifood systems with respect to productivity, employment opportunities, income generation, and access to productive resources [17; 18]. These findings further justify the need for analytical approaches capable of identifying not only the scale but also the structural characteristics of women's participation in agribusiness.

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to assess the level and structural distribution of women's participation in the agribusiness sector of the Republic of Armenia by applying concentration analysis across agribusiness subsectors and regions. The research also aims to compare the findings obtained from a nationwide sociological survey with official statistical data in order to identify existing information gaps, evaluate the extent to which official indicators reflect actual patterns of women's participation, and determine the agribusiness subsectors and regions where the concentration of women's entrepreneurial activity is the highest. Based on the empirical findings, the study proposes policy directions aimed at reducing structural gender disparities and promoting a more balanced participation of women across agribusiness activities.

Results. The research employs an integrated methodological framework that combines quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative interpretation in order to examine the structural characteristics of women's participation in agribusiness in the Republic of Armenia. The analytical framework incorporates sociological survey data, comparative statistical analysis, concentration measurement, and graphical interpretation to provide a comprehensive assessment of women's participation across agribusiness subsectors and regions. The empirical analysis draws upon both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary information consists of official statistical data describing employment and economic activity in Armenia. However, because official statistics do not provide sufficiently detailed gender-disaggregated information at the regional and agribusiness subsector levels, the principal empirical basis of the study is an original sociological survey conducted by the authors between December 2022 and January 2023. The survey covered all marzes of the Republic of Armenia and included 780 female respondents selected through proportional sampling to ensure adequate territorial representation. The sample structure reflected regional differences in population, employment characteristics, and women's economic activity. The survey targeted economically active women aged 18 years and above who permanently resided in the selected communities. Eligible participants included employed women, entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals, and women engaged in agricultural and agribusiness-related economic activities. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire contained structured questions addressing employment, entrepreneurial activity, and involvement in agribusiness. The collected data were processed using Microsoft Excel and complementary statistical analysis techniques. Descriptive statistics, comparative evaluation, graphical presentation, and concentration analysis were subsequently applied to identify regional differences and structural patterns in women's participation across agribusiness activities.

To measure the concentration of women's participation across agribusiness subsectors, the study employed the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI), a widely recognized measure of concentration in

economic and market structure analysis [7, 20]. The index was calculated according to the following formula 1:

$$HHI = \sum S_i^2, i = 1 \text{ to } n \quad (1)$$

Where: n denotes the number of observed units and S_i represents the share of the i -th unit within the total structure under analysis. The squaring of individual shares gives greater weight to larger shares, thereby increasing the sensitivity of the index to concentration patterns.

Because the shares in this study were expressed in fractional rather than percentage form, the HHI values range from 0 to 1. Accordingly, the conventional threshold values were proportionally adjusted: an HHI value above 0.25 indicates a high level of concentration, values between 0.15 and 0.25 indicate moderate concentration, and values below 0.15 indicate a relatively unconcentrated structure.

This methodological framework made it possible to assess not only the overall level of women's participation in agribusiness, but also the degree to which that participation is concentrated in particular subsectors and regions of the Republic of Armenia. A statistical analysis was conducted based on the collected data, the results of which are summarized in the Figure 1.

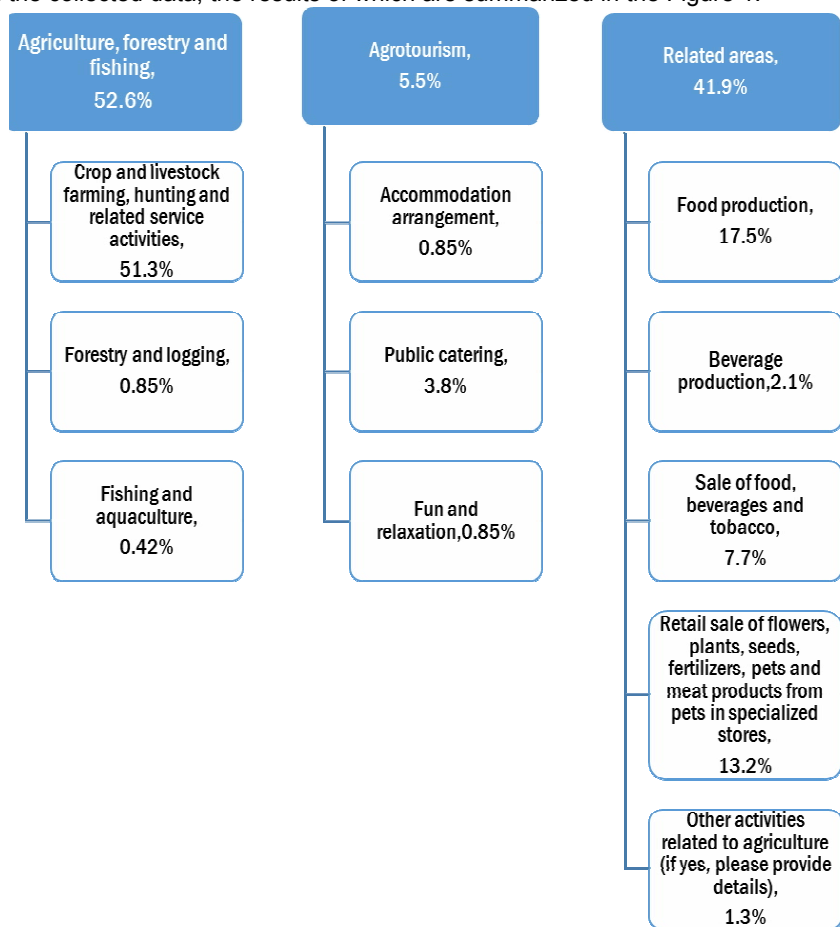


Fig. 1. Distribution of Women Entrepreneurs Across Armenian Regions by Agribusiness Subsectors.

Source: Results of the 2022-2023 sociological survey in which the author participated.

When evaluating the concentration of women's participation in agribusiness using the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index, the first stage of the analysis focused on the three major agribusiness groups identified in the survey questionnaire. These groups comprise: (1) Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, (2) Agrotourism, and (3) Related Sectors.

The calculated HHI value for the overall distribution equals **0.45**, indicating a high degree of concentration. According to the adopted interpretation criteria, values exceeding **0.25** reflect a highly concentrated structure. This result suggests that women's entrepreneurial activity in agribusiness is distributed unevenly across the major groups rather than being balanced among them.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the high concentration is primarily explained by the dominant share of respondents engaged in the **Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing** group (52.6%), followed by the **Related Sectors** group (41.9%). In contrast, the proportion of women participating in agrotourism-related activities remains comparatively small. These findings indicate that women entrepreneurs in Armenia continue to concentrate predominantly in traditional agribusiness activities, while participation in more diversified business fields remains limited.

Table 1

Classification of Possible Answers to the Question “Is This Business
 Related to Any of the Presented
 Areas of Agro-Entrepreneurial Activity?”

No	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
A1.2.1	Crop and animal husbandry, hunting and related service activities
A1.2.2	Forestry and logging
A1.2.3	Fishing and aquaculture
	Agrotourism
A1.2.4	Accommodation
A1.2.5	Catering
A1.2.6	Entertainment and recreation
	Related sectors
A1.2.7	Food production
A1.2.8	Beverage production
A1.2.9	Sale of food, beverages and tobacco
A1.2.10	Retail sale of flowers, plants, seeds, fertilizers, pets and meat products from pets in specialized stores
A1.2.11	Other activities related to agriculture (if yes, please specify)

Source: proprietary development.

In the second stage of the analysis, concentration indices were calculated separately for each agribusiness group in order to identify the internal distribution of women's entrepreneurial activity. The results reveal substantial differences among subsectors. Within the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing group, the concentration level is particularly high because more than half of all surveyed women entrepreneurs (51.3%) are engaged in Crop and Animal Husbandry, Hunting and Related Service Activities. This finding confirms that women's entrepreneurial participation is concentrated primarily in traditional agricultural activities, whereas their representation in forestry, fishing, and other specialized subsectors remains relatively limited.

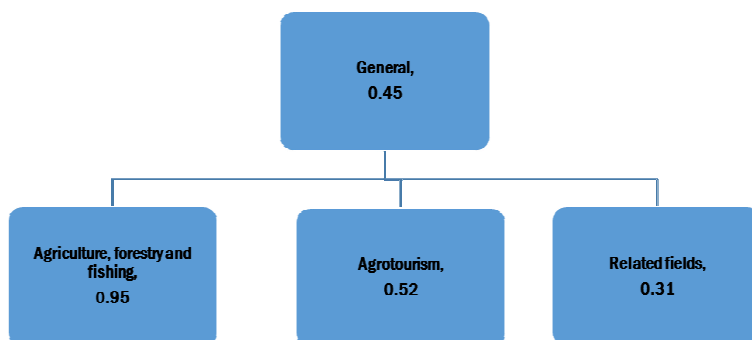


Fig. 2. Concentration of Women's Participation across Agribusiness Sectors and Subsectors
Based on the Survey Results.

Source: Results of the 2022-2023 sociological survey in which the author participated.

The analysis was subsequently extended to the regional dimension in order to evaluate whether women's participation in agribusiness demonstrates similar concentration patterns across the marzes of the RA.

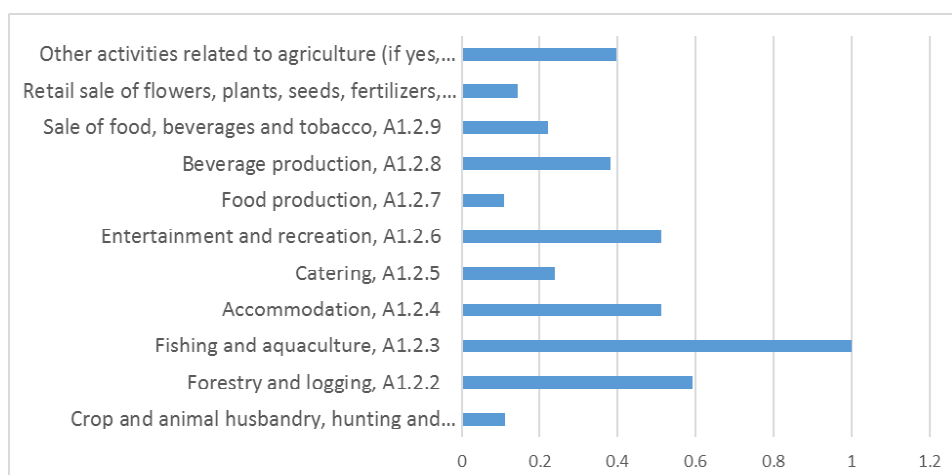


Fig. 3. Sectoral Concentration Levels of Women Entrepreneurs across the
Regions of the Republic of Armenia.

Source: Results of the 2022-2023 sociological survey in which the author participated.

The regional concentration analysis demonstrates that the distribution of women's entrepreneurial activity differs substantially across agribusiness subsectors. Figure 3 illustrates the corresponding HHI values calculated for each activity by region. Higher HHI values indicate that participation is concentrated in a relatively small number of regions, whereas lower values suggest a more even territorial distribution. For example, Forestry and Logging exhibits one of the highest concentration levels (HHI ≈ 0.59), reflecting the fact that surveyed women engaged in this activity were identified almost exclusively in the Shirak and Armavir regions. By contrast, women involved in crop and animal husbandry are distributed across a considerably larger number of regions, resulting in a lower concentration level. These findings demonstrate that regional disparities differ considerably across

agribusiness activities and should therefore be taken into account when designing policies aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship in rural areas.

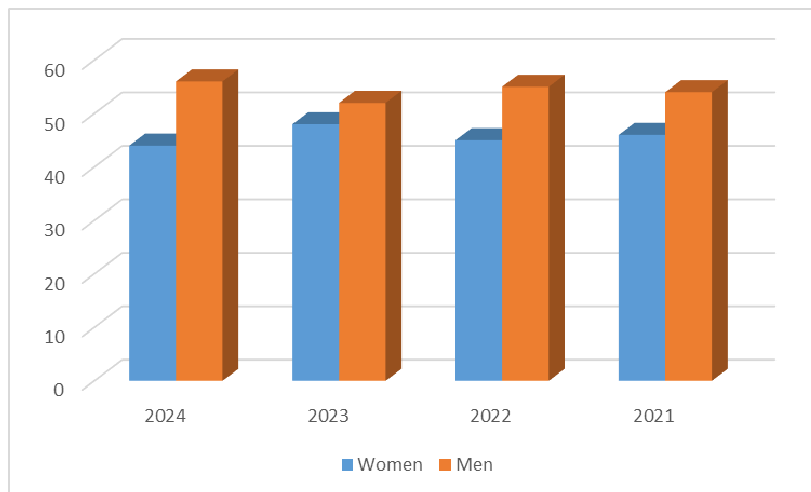


Fig. 4. Dynamics of the Female-to-Male Employment Ratio in Agribusiness in the Republic of Armenia, 2021–2024 (%).

Figure was compiled by the authors. Source: Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, Women and Men of Armenia, Statistical Collection, 2022–2025 [19, pp.72–92].

The results presented in Figure 4 indicate that, according to official statistics published by the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, the gender gap in employment within the agribusiness sector appears relatively modest during the period under review, although a slight deterioration is observed in 2024. At first glance, these data may suggest a comparatively balanced level of women's participation in agribusiness.

However, a more detailed examination reveals that this conclusion should be interpreted with caution. The official statistics also include women's economic activity on household agricultural plots, which substantially increases the reported level of female participation in agriculture. Consequently, aggregate employment indicators do not fully reflect the actual distribution of women across agribusiness subsectors or the qualitative characteristics of their entrepreneurial involvement. The findings of the sociological survey presented in this study provide a considerably more detailed picture. Unlike official statistical indicators, the survey data make it possible to examine women's participation at the regional and subsectoral levels and to evaluate the concentration of entrepreneurial activity using the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index. This comparison demonstrates that relatively balanced aggregate gender indicators may conceal significant structural disparities in women's participation across agribusiness activities.

These results underline the importance of complementing official statistical information with empirical survey data when assessing gender equality in agribusiness. A combined analytical approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the structural characteristics of women's entrepreneurial participation and provides a stronger empirical basis for evidence-based policy formulation.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The findings of this study indicate that women's participation in the agribusiness sector of the Republic of Armenia remains unevenly distributed across both agribusiness subsectors and regions. The calculated Herfindahl–Hirschman Index demonstrates a high level of concentration, revealing that women continue to be engaged

predominantly in traditional agricultural activities, particularly crop and animal husbandry, hunting, and related service activities, whereas their participation in higher value-added agribusiness subsectors remains comparatively limited.

One of the principal contributions of this research is the adaptation of the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index to the evaluating women's participation in agribusiness. Unlike conventional gender indicators that primarily measure overall participation rates, the proposed approach makes it possible to identify structural concentration patterns and to evaluate the extent to which women's entrepreneurial activity is distributed across different agribusiness subsectors and territorial units. This methodological perspective provides additional analytical value for studies of gender inequality in agriculture and rural development.

The comparative analysis of sociological survey findings and official statistical data further demonstrates that aggregate national indicators alone are insufficient for assessing the structural dimensions of gender equality in agribusiness. While official statistics suggest a relatively moderate gender gap, they do not adequately capture the concentration of women's entrepreneurial activity or the differences that exist among individual agribusiness subsectors and regions. The results therefore highlight the importance of improving gender-disaggregated statistical reporting at both the regional and subsectoral levels.

From a policy perspective, reducing the excessive concentration of women's participation requires a comprehensive set of coordinated measures. These include expanding vocational education and training opportunities, strengthening institutional and financial support for women entrepreneurs, encouraging self-employment, creating incentives for employers to promote women's participation in underrepresented agribusiness activities, and improving access to innovative and higher value-added sectors of agribusiness.

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Owing to the limited availability of official statistical information disaggregated by agribusiness subsector and region, the empirical analysis relies primarily on data obtained through a nationwide sociological survey. Future research may extend the proposed methodological framework by incorporating longitudinal datasets, conducting comparative international analyses, and examining the socio-economic determinants that influence women's participation across different agribusiness activities.

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Література

1. Уряд Республіки Вірменія. Стратегія реалізації гендерної політики в Республіці Вірменія на 2025–2028 роки та план заходів щодо її реалізації: Рішення № 482-Л від 23 квітня 2024 р. URL: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=206364>.
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