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**NARVOS** NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR REGENERATIVE VEG OIL SECTOR

# Working Group Meeting Advancing Gender Inclusiveness in Regenerative Agriculture Value chain

13<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



## 1. Background

The expert Group Meeting on “Advancing Gender Inclusiveness in Regenerative Vegetable Oil Value Chain”, being organized under the EU–India funded project “Promotion of Regenerative Agriculture Practices for a Food Secure and Climate Resilient Future”, implemented through the National Alliance for Regenerative Vegetable Oil Sector (NARVOS). NARVOS is a multistakeholder platform developed and co-initiated by Solidaridad, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB), and Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD). NARVOS is a voluntary, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder platform committed to accelerating the adoption of regenerative agriculture across the vegetable oil value chain in India.

The major objectives of the meeting are:

- To gather experts' inputs and perspectives on women's role in regenerative agriculture.
- To recognize/identify practical pathways to scale women-led regenerative practices in vegetable oil sector and beyond
- To map actionable policy and programmatic recommendations to strengthen gender inclusiveness in agricultural activities.

This is the second working group meeting, the first meeting was organized on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2025. To extend the research this meeting was organised to improve the white paper.

### 1.1. Introduction

This report presents consolidated insights and recommendations emerging from in-depth discussions with gender experts on advancing women's inclusion and empowerment in agriculture and allied sectors. While women play a critical role across farming systems and agricultural value chains—as cultivators, labourers, entrepreneurs, and caretakers of natural resources—their contributions remain largely undervalued and under-recognized. Persistent structural, cultural, and institutional barriers continue to restrict women's access to productive resources such as land, finance, technology, extension services, markets, and leadership opportunities.

The discussions highlighted that existing gender commitments often remain symbolic and fail to translate into meaningful outcomes on the ground. Experts emphasized the urgent need for gender-responsive strategies that are embedded within programme design, implementation, and monitoring frameworks, rather than treated as standalone or add-on components. Key priorities identified include strengthening women's agency and decision-

making power, addressing unpaid care burdens, promoting equitable access to inputs and markets, and fostering women-led enterprises and producer groups.

Furthermore, the experts underscored the importance of intersectional approaches that recognize the diverse realities of women across caste, class, geography, and livelihood contexts. Moving forward, policy and programme interventions must adopt clearly defined, operational, and measurable actions, supported by adequate budgets, institutional accountability, and robust gender-disaggregated data systems, to ensure sustainable and inclusive agricultural transformation.

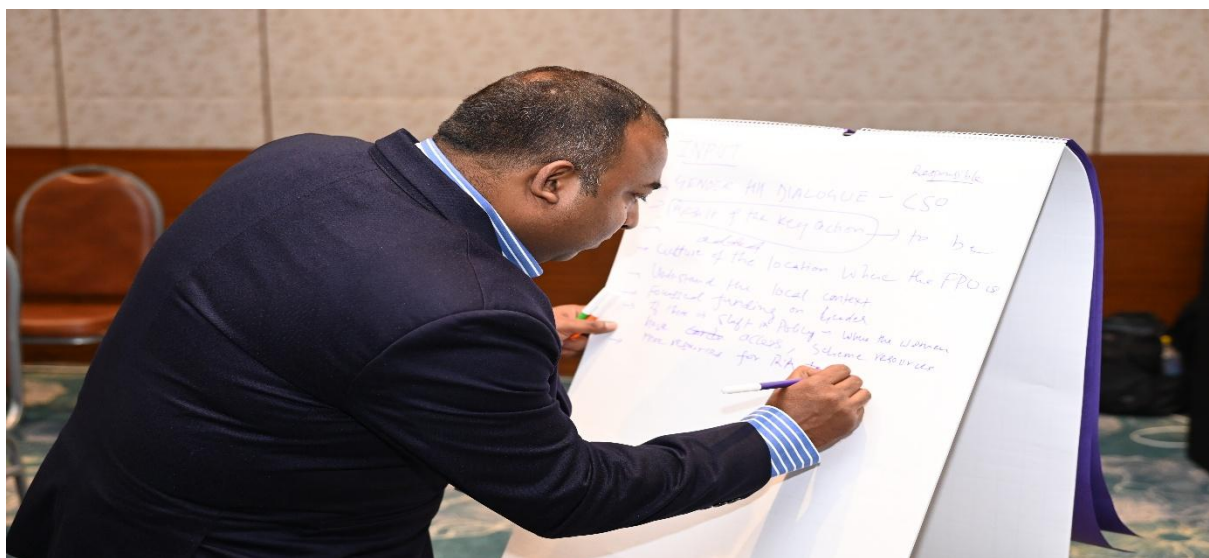


Figure 1: Documentation of the key points of discussion

## 2. Key Recommendations from the discussion

1. **Gender household dialogue:** the expert suggested that to mainstreaming women in agriculture, it is required to have gender household dialogue whose responsibility lies with the CSOs. Gender-sensitive dialogue will improve cooperation, and helps identify barriers faced by women. It promotes shared responsibilities, strengthens household harmony, and leads to better economic and social outcomes.
2. **Understanding the local culture and culture:** Understanding local culture is essential for promoting the inclusiveness of women in agriculture. Cultural norms shape who controls land, makes decisions, and accesses resources. Like in NE of India there is matriarchal society while in rest of India is patriarchal. women's roles are limited by traditions that restrict their mobility, participation, or ownership rights. By understanding these cultural practices, programmes can design approaches that respect local values while gradually encouraging gender-equitable behaviours.
3. **Focussed funding for women:** Women often face barriers such as limited land ownership, low access to credit, and minimal training opportunities. Dedicated funding ensures they receive targeted support—inputs, technology, capacity building, and market linkages. When resources are allocated specifically for women, projects achieve better outcomes, reduce

gender gaps, and enhance household resilience. Focused investment also encourages policy reforms and builds inclusive, equitable agricultural systems.

4. **Women should have space in policies:** in policies the presence of women is generic there is no operationally defined. Everyone perceives as its will. Clearly indication and definition about women rights and access in the policies will better reflect real needs related to land rights, access to credit, training, technology, and markets. Inclusive policies help remove structural barriers that limit women's participation and decision-making. They also promote equal opportunities, improve productivity, and strengthen livelihoods.
5. **Involving women in policy drafts :** It is essential for creating inclusive, practical, and equitable policies. Women bring unique perspectives based on their roles in agriculture, household management, and community work, helping policymakers understand ground-level challenges. When women contribute to policy drafting, the resulting policies become more relevant, effective, and widely accepted. It also strengthens women's leadership, promotes accountability, and ensures that development initiatives benefit everyone.
6. **Blending of schemes :** Blending of schemes refers to the strategic integration of multiple government programmes, resources, and interventions to achieve stronger and more comprehensive development outcomes. By combining schemes—such as agriculture, livelihood, credit, skill development, and social welfare—projects can reduce duplication, fill gaps, and provide holistic support to communities.
7. **Sensitizing the corporate partners:** Sensitizing corporate partners to create special projects for women is essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable development. Many women face barriers in skills, finance, technology, and market access, which corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives can effectively address. By raising awareness about gender gaps, showcasing successful models, and highlighting the economic and social benefits of investing in women, corporates become more responsive and committed. Sensitized partners are more likely to design projects that build women's skills
8. **Unpacking of policies should be actual:** policies must be clearly interpreted, simplified, and translated into practical actions at the ground level. Many well-intentioned policies fail because communities, frontline workers, and local institutions do not fully understand their provisions or gender commitments. Actual unpacking ensures that rules, benefits, and procedures are explained in simple language and adapted to local contexts. It helps women access entitlements, resources, and opportunities without confusion or barriers. When policies are properly unpacked, implementation becomes more transparent, accountable, and inclusive, ensuring that the intended benefits truly reach women.
9. **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can act as guarantors:** To provide credit to help women and marginalized groups access formal financial services. Many women lack collateral, documents, or credit history, which makes banks hesitant to lend. When CSOs provide guarantee support, they reduce the perceived risk for financial institutions and build confidence in community borrowers.
10. **Lease agreements with women :** This can be an effective way to increase their access to land, resources, and economic opportunities, especially in agriculture. Women contribute significantly to farming but lack ownership or control over land, limiting their ability to invest, access credit, or adopt new technologies. Lease agreements also strengthen women's

bargaining power, promote gender equality, and support inclusion in government schemes, markets, and financial services.

11. **Supporting a conducive environment and providing infrastructure:** Conducive environment and infrastructure is crucial for enabling women's meaningful participation in agriculture, livelihoods, and community activities. Many women struggle to balance childcare with work, limiting their mobility, productivity, and access to training or markets. Establishing crèches, safe spaces, drinking water, sanitation facilities, and rest areas reduces this burden and creates supportive conditions for women to engage fully in economic activities. Such infrastructure promotes safety, dignity, and comfort while building confidence among families to allow women to participate. A supportive environment ultimately strengthens women's empowerment, enhances productivity, and contributes to inclusive and sustainable development.
12. **provision of social safeguard:** Social safeguards ensure that interventions do not harm women and instead promote safety, dignity, and fair access to resources. This includes safeguards against displacement, discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion, along with mechanisms for grievance redressal and accountability. By integrating social safeguards, programmes create a more secure and empowering environment for women, allowing them to participate confidently and benefit fully from development initiatives.
13. **High Carbon credit for women highly involved:** Projects with high women involvement should receive higher carbon credits because women play a crucial role in adopting sustainable, climate-friendly practices in agriculture, forestry, and natural resource management. Prioritizing such projects with higher carbon credits creates incentives for gender-inclusive climate action, promotes equitable benefit-sharing, and strengthens both environmental and social outcomes, making climate programmes more effective and profitable for farmers.
14. **Access to income and control by women farmers:** When women can independently access, manage, and decide how to use income, it enhances their bargaining power, financial security, and ability to invest in better seeds, equipment, or nutrition for their families. Yet many women face barriers due to social norms, lack of land titles, and limited access to markets or banking services. Ensuring equal wages, fair market linkages, digital payments, and financial literacy helps women gain real control over their income.
15. **Women centric pilot projects:** women centric pilots should be compared with general projects using clear indicators like income, yield improvement, leadership roles, asset ownership, adoption of climate-smart practices, and decision-making power. Such evidence helps highlight the added value of investing in women, showcasing measurable differences and convincing policymakers, donors, and partners to scale gender-responsive approaches across larger programmes.
16. **Technology review considering women:** Technology review considering women is essential to ensure that agricultural tools and machinery—such as tractors, seeders, sprayers, and harvesters—are suitable, safe, and accessible for women farmers. Many existing technologies are designed for men, making them heavy, complex, or difficult for women to operate. A gender-sensitive technology review evaluates size, weight, cost, ergonomics, safety features, and ease of use. It also identifies women-friendly innovations like lightweight equipment, mini-tractors, battery-operated tools, and digital advisory apps. By adapting technology to

women's needs, programmes improve efficiency, reduce drudgery, and enable greater participation of women in modern, mechanized agriculture.

17. Women owning Custom Hiring Centers (CHCs) : This can transform their economic position and enhance agricultural services in rural areas. CHCs provide access to machinery such as tractors, tillers, planters, and harvesters, which small farmers often cannot afford individually. When women manage or own CHCs, they gain a strong foothold in the agricultural value chain, build leadership skills, and generate steady income.
18. **exploring new wealth opportunities for women outside agriculture: the new arena for wealth for women can be identified such as in value chain or microenterprises.** These activities require lower capital, offer flexible work hours, and provide steady market demand. By supporting women with skills training, branding, credit access, and market linkages, microenterprises can grow into sustainable businesses. Diversifying income beyond farming reduces vulnerability to climate or crop risks and empowers women to become entrepreneurs, job creators, and active contributors to local economic development. This requires focussed training for women on leadership, financial literacy, strategy etc.
19. **Courses for women at local colleges/ universities:** dedicated courses for women at local colleges and universities is essential for expanding their skills, knowledge, and economic opportunities. These courses can focus on agriculture, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, food processing, climate-smart practices, financial management, and leadership development. Local institutions make learning accessible, especially for rural women who may face mobility or time constraints. Such programmes build confidence, enhance employability, and support women in starting microenterprises or taking leadership roles in community organizations.
20. **Honoring the women farmers with traceability and story telling:** Honoring women farmers through traceability and storytelling helps recognize their contributions and strengthen their visibility in agricultural value chains. Traceability systems link farm produce to the women who grow it, allowing consumers and markets to appreciate their hard work, sustainable practices, and commitment to quality. Storytelling captures their journeys, challenges, and achievements, giving them identity and dignity beyond traditional roles. Such recognition builds confidence, enhances market value, and motivates women to adopt better practices.
21. **Link investment to policies against social indicator:** By aligning investments with indicators such as women's participation, income control, workload reduction, decision-making power, and safety, programmes become more accountable and impactful. This approach ensures that policies are not only written but actively implemented through targeted financial support.
22. Legend business women/champions to motivate other women
23. **convergence of departments for women's empowerment:** each govt department have project and policies for women farmers which are is segregated form. Since they work in silos which makes the project sub optimal with limited impact. Convergence reduces duplication, improves efficiency, and strengthens delivery at the community level. Joint planning, shared indicators, and collaborative monitoring ensure that empowerment efforts are consistent and sustainable. By working together, departments create an enabling ecosystem where women can participate fully, access opportunities, and progress socially and economically.
24. **use of ai in women training:** Using AI in women's training can make learning easier, faster, and more accessible. Simple tools like QR codes can link women to videos, audio guides, market prices, or step-by-step instructions in their own language. AI-powered apps can teach

farming practices, financial literacy, or digital skills through voice commands, making them useful even **for women with low literacy**.

25. **Cluster based approach:** women gain stronger bargaining power, reduce input costs, and increase production efficiency. It enables collective access to credit, machinery, storage, and processing facilities. Clusters also make it easier for government departments, NGOs, and companies to deliver targeted support and link women to value chains. This approach builds solidarity, encourages peer learning, and creates sustainable, large-scale impact by strengthening women-led enterprises and promoting inclusive rural development.



*Figure 2: Working Group meeting in discussion*

## **11. Conclusion**

The discussions underscored that advancing women's empowerment in agriculture requires a holistic, system-wide approach that moves beyond isolated interventions. Gender household dialogue, led by CSOs, is critical to addressing intra-household barriers, while culturally informed strategies are essential to ensure locally appropriate and sustainable change. Focused funding, clearly defined policy provisions for women, and their direct involvement in policy drafting can translate intent into action. Convergence of government schemes, effective unpacking of policies at the grassroots, and the role of CSOs as guarantors can significantly improve women's access to land, credit, and entitlements. Creating enabling infrastructure, social safeguards, and secure lease arrangements strengthens women's participation and dignity. Market-linked incentives—such as certification, traceability, higher carbon credits, and income control—further enhance economic empowerment. Technology reviews, women-owned CHCs, AI-enabled training, cluster-based approaches, and women-centric pilots demonstrate scalable pathways for impact. Together, these measures form an integrated framework for inclusive, resilient, and gender-transformative agricultural development.

## Annexure

### List of participants

S. no	Name	Position	Company
1	Yashasvi Chaurasia	Delhi school of economics, University of Delhi	Phd scholar
2	Muralidhar Adhikari	JAIVIKSRI farmers producer company limited	CEO
3	Ajay Singh	Techwys Services & Sols Pvt. Ltd.	Operations & Admin Executive
4	Phyu Thar Tin aung	Nalanda University	MBA student
5	Manghku Sin Ram	Nalanda University	MBA student
6	Deepak Sharma	EQUALITY EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION	Director
7	Riti Mehrotra	Hershey	Team Lead - Responsible Sourcing
8	Mukesh A.A	Ecocert India Pvt. Ltd	Director
9	Yasudha Sunwar	Nalanda University	Student
10	Aman Kumar	Nalanda University	Student
11	Abhishek Kumar	Nalanda University	Student
12	Archana Kumari	Saakar Welfare Foundation	Founder
13	Lavanya Sharma	The Secretariat	Producer
14	Shalini Kumar	Yuvabe	Programme Director
15	Ranu Kulshrestha	Bridgestone.India	Head, CSR
16	Claireshelmith Macharia	Nalanda University	MBA student
17	Saanvi Magod	Ashoka University	Student
18	Y K JAIN	E4U Tech Pvt Ltd	DIRECTOR
19	Prakash Mali	Kheti Buddy	Crop Consultant

20	Bishan Rajwar	Danpur Himalyan Rural And Agriculture Society	General secretary
21	A Mannan Choudhury	India	Free lancer consultant Agroecological practices
22	Sakshi Grover	Ecolife Foundation	Senior Manager
23	Divyanka Pawar	CRB	Graphic design intern
24	Chelsia Raj	CRB	Senior Officer
25	Pratishtha Nirvan	IPU	Student
26	Manjul Kumar	lic	Individual contributor
27	Pooja Bedi	Hersheys	Regional Program Manager
28	Saurabh Rai	CPI	
29	Bidyut Dutta	Akriti Creations Pvt. Ltd.	Corp. Head- HR & Compliance
30	Jignesh Bhalala	Materra	Director
31	Girish Ahuja	Crystal Crop Protection Limited	General Manager - Corporate Affairs
32	Dolly Bhasin	SPH Consultancy and Eservices Pvt.Ltd	MD
33	Sandeep Sharma	CottonConnect South Asia Pvt Ltd	Associate Director
34	Harita Yadav	Change Alliance Pvt. Ltd.	Research Manager
35	Ashwani Kumar	Aviagen India	Senior Vice President
36	Sri Chandrasekaran	IEEE India	Country Head
37	Richa Joshi	Landstack	
38	Avinash Kumar	Earthood Services Ltd	President
39	VAIBHAV RAGHUVANSHI	FELICITAS ANALYTICAL SERVICES PVT LTD	CEO
40	Prabeen Singh	Bestseller	Program Manager - Sustaibility
41	Hassan Beg	TERI	Student
42	Mr. Padmakar Pandey	Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited	Vice President
43	Bhavya Paryani	Dreamcast	Dream Cast
44	Ravi Sawlani	Ministry of Health & FW	Finance Controller
45	Saikat Mookherjee	Society for Human and Organizational Development in Harmony	Director - Research
46	Aashutosh Mukherjee	Dun & Bradstreet	ESG Intern

47	Saanvi Chaudhary	Kachanar : a green initiative	Proprietor
48	Vanee Adleena Tandon	WASSAN India	CoFTI (Research) Fellow
49	Anushka Sharma	InCorp Advisory Services Private Limited	ESG-Business Analyst
50	Nikhil .	People's Resouce Centre (PRC)	Research Associate
51	Prabhat Labh	PRARABDH Food and Future Private Limited.	Managing Director
52	Dinesh Sharma	top surveying india pvt ltd (Non-Member)	Managing Director
53	ASTHA CHANDRA	Council on Energy, Environment and Water	Programme Associate
54	Maarico baruah	Climate Group	Policy Manager
55	EAMANI SIVASURYA TEJA	Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)	Programme Associate
56	Dr.Sanjeevan Bajaj	Forum for Sustainability through Life Cycle Innovation	Executive Committee Vice Chair
57	Chitranka Banerjee	Change Alliance Private Limited	Manager - Gender, Diversity & Inclusion (GDI)
58	Madhuri Nigam	University of Delhi, Lady Irwin College	Associate Professor
59	Madhuri Nanda	Self	Independent Expert
60	Kushal	Aryabhata college, university of delhi	Executive member
61	Suhani Chauhan	University of Delhi	Student
62	Tushar Gupta	University of Delhi	College student
63	Ritesh Baro	University of Delhi	Student
64	Krish Jain	Passing Gifts - Heifer International	Business Development & Partnership Consultant
65	Chandra Shekhar Joshi	PSL infotec	Sales manager
66	JAYENDRA MISHRA	Sonalika	Dgm
67	Ravi Gupta	TNC	
68	Nidhi	Sr. Programme Officer	CRB

Some glimpses of working group meeting





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## **NARVOS** NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR REGENERATIVE VEG OIL SECTOR

**Aditya Petwal**  
Senior Consultant  
Centre for Responsible Business  
Email : [aditya@c4rb.in](mailto:aditya@c4rb.in)  
Phone: 9324796025  
Website: [www.c4rb.org](http://www.c4rb.org)

**Amit Singh**  
Senior Programme Manager  
Centre for Responsible Business  
Email : [amit.s@c4rb.in](mailto:amit.s@c4rb.in)  
Phone: 8989440475  
Website: [www.c4rb.org](http://www.c4rb.org)

