



Determinants of land tenure security among women agricultural producers in Senegal

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KEY MESSAGES

- This paper uses Integrated Agricultural Survey (AGRIS) data from 2018, 2019 and 2020 to examine patterns in women's access to documentation of land rights in Senegal.
- In Senegal, women have a low level of access to land with a proportion of female farmers around 15%. Women have smaller plots on average than men and face high levels of land insecurity: less than 4% of women landholders hold a document of ownership of the land they manage.
- Findings suggest older, more educated women and household heads are more likely to hold a land title.
- The land status of women varies according to agro-ecological zone, likely reflecting customary practices.
- In multivariate models, agro-ecological zone and training in agriculture are factors that explain the possession of a title deed among both male and female land managers.
- Age, marital status and educational level are positively associated with ownership of a title deed among women land managers.
- The effect of the number of plots cultivated, the presence of a sustainable land management improvements (e.g., irrigation, erosion controls) and the practice of market gardening are also significantly associated with ownership of a title deed, but only among men.

INTRODUCTION

Like the member countries of the United Nations, Senegal adopted the 2030 Agenda in September 2015. This program includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 160 targets and 232 indicators. These global goals cover a myriad of sustainable development challenges, including agriculture and land issues. Target 5a of objective 5 on gender equality aims to endow women with the same rights to economic resources as men, including access to ownership and control of land. Thus women's access to land has come to occupy a prominent place within the 2030 Development Program.

Land in Senegal is governed by a variety of traditional possession systems ("customary tenure") used by rural communities for land management. In parallel with these traditional tenure systems, the Government of Senegal has drawn up several laws on land – including claiming the vast majority of land to be in the "national domain." In practice, however, most of the land in Senegal is still managed under customary systems and is passed on by

inheritance or other mechanisms, with social recognition in many cases the only guarantee of tenure security.

Despite the clear goal of policy reforms aimed at improving land management and ensuring tenure security, challenges and constraints persist. The application of the law on the national domain has encountered reluctance and sometimes resistance among communities to a law perceived as a dispossession of land, and undermining their traditions. All these factors have led to a situation of uncertainty and insecurity for the



beneficiaries of land allocations, whether they are small-scale farmers or private developers investing in land. This uncertainty may particularly affect women whose access to land was already compromised by substantial social constraints (Doss & Meizen-Dick, 2020).

Is the possession of a title deed synonymous with security of tenure?

For some authors, the formalization of land leads to positive results for owners (Diop, 2020). Improving tenure security through the establishment of official title deeds allows farmers to use land as collateral when trying to apply for credit, and to increase long-term investments (Diop, 2020; Ballantyne et al., 2000; Abdulai et al., 2011). Thus secure land tenure can influence farmers' willingness and ability to invest in land improvements and conservation measures.

Other authors argue that possession of a property document is not the only factor that determines security of tenure (Broegaard, 2005; Coles-Coghi, 1993; Roquas, 2002; Jansen, 1998; Wachter, 1997). Lavigne-Delville (2017) conclude that "it is possible to have a land title and be in insecurity". Other studies have shown that "registration can create rather than reduce uncertainty and conflict over land rights" (Atwood, 1990).

Constraints related to land tenure security among women

Socioeconomic status and norms. Ethnicity, religion, tradition, and socioeconomic status are all factors that can shape women's rights to land. In Senegal, land remains essentially an appropriate heritage and managed at the domestic level. However, in the majority, it is the men who are at the head of these domestic units. Only 6.6% of women are heads of households in rural areas - limiting their access to and control over land (UGB-GESTES, 2008). Women's land security also depends on their socio-demographic characteristics, including income as well as education. Women on average have less formal education than men, which may create barriers in completing the application and registration processes necessary to obtain a land certificate. The process of socialization may further reinforce gendered constraints: men and women themselves may find inequality between men and women vis-à-vis the land to be normal. Barriers to women's land access can thus be culturally rooted (Enda Pronat, 2011).

The low level of representativeness in decision-making bodies. Women are also largely absent from deliberative bodies and from peasant organizations; creating further

barriers to land equity and possibly reinforcing social norms impeding women's land ownership (UGB-GESTES, 2008). This is some evidence to suggest women who engage in local politics through grassroots organizations or rural councils are more likely to have secure access to land (UGB-GESTES, 2008)

Administrative barriers. The process of securing land can sometimes be an obstacle itself. In Senegal, the majority of women do not know the procedures for securing land, and even if they are aware of the process, low rates of literacy and education may not allow them to write a request addressed to a municipal council to legally obtain a land title (IPAR, 2019). In addition, obtaining a land title can be expensive: many women may be unable to register their rights due to time, cost, corruption or the need to have an identity card (IPAR, 2019).

METHODS

This study draws on data on farmer landholdings in Senegal drawn from DAPSA's Integrated Agricultural Survey (AGRIS) from 2018, 2019 and 2020. AGRIS is a modular multi-year agricultural survey program developed by FAO as part of the global strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics.

The study begins with a description of the profile of women landowners in Senegal in 2018, 2019, and 2020. This is followed by an econometric analysis of the factors associated with land tenure security in the 2020 data, as measured by the possession of a legally recognized document of ownership.

The specification of the model is as follows:

$$p_i = \text{prob}(y_i = 1|x_i) = F(x_i\beta)$$

Where p_i is the probability of holding a land title.

y_i is the dependent variable, i.e., the possession of a land title document.

β is a vector of model parameters and F denotes a distribution function.

x_i is a vector of variables potentially associated with holding a land title document, including gender, age, relationship with the head of household, education, marital status, training in agriculture, number of plots cultivated, existence of land improvements on the plot, the practice of cash crops, the practice of market gardening, and the agro-ecological zone of residence.

The 2020 survey includes data on 12,605 owned plots of which 11,098 are operated by men and 1,507 by women. There are 6,010 unique operators of these plots, of which 5,015 are men and 995 are women.

RESULTS

Profile of women landowners in Senegal: 2018- 2020

The results show that the majority of plot owners in all three survey years are men. In 2020, 16.2% of plot owners are women as compared to 15.8% in 2019 (with no significant difference in these proportions).

Figure 1: Distribution of cultivated plots according to the sex of the producer

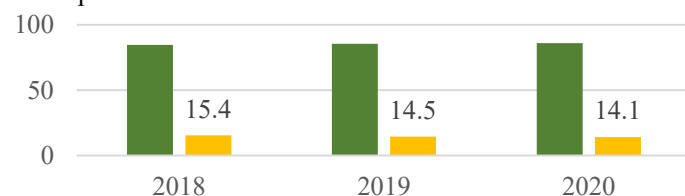
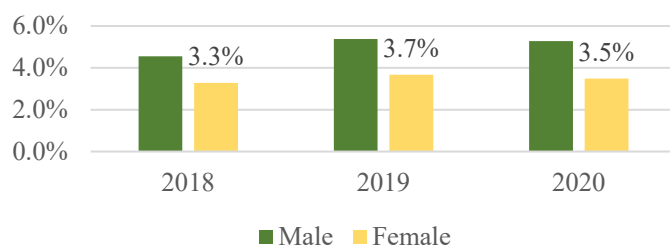


Figure 2: Proportion of producers holding an ownership document



Bivariate analyses of the profiles of women with and without land title revealed:

- Women landholders with documents are older and more likely to be heads of households compared to women owners without documents who are younger, and mostly married to heads of households.
- Women with documents have a higher level of education, are more literate, and have benefited more from specialized training in agriculture, but on average manage smaller parcels than those without documents.
- The land status of women varies by agro-ecological zones, likely reflecting local customary practices. Women landholders with documents are more prevalent in the Senegal River Valley and in the Niayes area.

Determinants of land tenure security

The results of the multivariate analysis show that:

- Participation in formal training in agriculture (which may reflect access to Extension services) as well as the agro-ecological zone of residence (linked to local social norms around women's land ownership) are both strongly associated with the likelihood of holding a formal title deed among both women and men. Among

male owners, the fact of residing in Niayes or Casamance rather than in the Groundnut Basin is positive associated with holding a title deed. Producers in the Senegal River valley, regardless of gender, are more likely to hold a property document than those in the Groundnut Basin. Similarly, landholders in Eastern Senegal and in the Sylvopastoral Zone are less likely to hold a title deed.

- Certain socio-demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, and level of education are associated with the possession of a property document only among women. A female landholder over 40 years old is more likely to have a document of ownership than younger women. Widows are less likely to have a property document than married women. And more educated women are more likely to hold a title document – with the effect of secondary education stronger than the effect of elementary education alone.
- On the other hand, among male owners, in addition to training in agriculture and agro-ecological zone, factors associated with possession of a land title include the number of plots operated, the presence of a land improvement on the plot (e.g., irrigation, erosion control), and the practice of market gardening. Managing a larger number of plots is negatively associated with having a land title – this reflects many producers having some titled plots and other untitled plots. Meanwhile, the practice of market gardening and investments in land improvements on plots are positively associated with holding of a title deed (but only among men).

Recommendations

In the light of the results of this study, a number of measures could facilitate women's access to land and the formalization of land rights.

- Provide information to women on the importance of having legal rights and involve women more in the decision-making process. This necessarily involves improving access to education and enhancing women's knowledge of legal issues. At the same time, officials issuing land titles should also be sensitized on the importance of women's land rights.
- Strengthen the technical capacity of women already working in the agricultural sector and set up specialized training in agriculture while facilitating access for new entrants.
- Facilitate the transformation of customary rights into legal rights. This must be accompanied by a reduction in the administrative procedures and the costs associated with formalization.

- Allocate funding to women to help them access market opportunities. The present commercialization of agriculture risks further excluding women from land, because it reinforces the concentration of land tenure among men who are heads of agricultural households.

Any such measures must be accompanied by efforts to ensure that women also have the capacity to use land effectively. Efforts to improve access to other resources, such as financial, technological and extension services as well as markets, are therefore important complements to any reform program.

Study contributions

In Senegal, access to land and land ownership is mainly governed by customary tenure systems. Even though land legislation advocates equal access to land between women and men, custom often only recognizes secondary

land use rights for women, acquired through a spouse or partner, or other male relative or household member.

Developing laws and policies that bring formal and customary land tenure law closer requires an inclusive process. A participatory approach must be adopted to first make the actors aware of the marginalization of women in land tenure security and then put in place reforms to facilitate access and registration of customary rights as legal rights – while recognizing that some customary systems have also historically included barriers to women's land access and ownership.

Findings of this study underscore enduring disparities in women's ownership of land titles, but also variation in the factors most strongly associated with obtaining titles among women (education, literacy) and men (market access, land holdings), and across geographies in Senegal (in part reflecting variation in social norms).

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¹This note summarizes the results of a study conducted under the 50x2030 Initiative. This research was financially supported by the 50x2030 Initiative through the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). To learn more about the scientific research methods and findings, read the full document.