ACADEMIC PAPER

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE PROGRAMME PLANT THE FUTURE

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UN WOMEN

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Geostat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GIA	Gender Impact Assessment
GoG	Government of Georgia
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISET-PI	ISET Policy Institute
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEPA	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
RDA	Rural Development Agency
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMEs	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UAP	Unified Agro Project
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

FOREWORD

Throughout the globe, gender analysis is increasingly being used in a range of policy and project assessment settings and is an established tool in international development assistance. In the current political and economic realities, where resources are limited and the desired scope of change demands an extremely wide coverage, gender analysis helps enhance the final impact of all interventions by seeking to determine the differential impacts of policies, programmes and development options on people, based on their gender identity and other intersecting factors. Gender analysis considers the intersection of gender and other identity factors that can contribute to the social and economic situations within which people live, and it therefore helps identify and mitigate the potential impacts of development on different groups of people, such as women, men, gender-diverse individuals and other marginalized groups. Consequently, while the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) is a great equality tool that requires technical knowledge and resource allocation to enhance government capacities to create gender-responsive and equitable programmes, it is also a "good governance" tool that aims to support public institutions in effective governance overall.

The commitment made by the Government of Georgia towards gender equality is being highlighted more and more as a key requirement in the continued cooperation between donors and the Government. The Government is no longer allowed to merely pay lip service to gender mainstreaming; rather, it is required to show its commitment to gender through policymaking decisions informed and based on evidence collected specifically through these gender impact analyses. Light GIAs, such as the one implemented for the Plant the Future programme of the Rural Development Agency (RDA), are needed not only to introduce the gender mainstreaming work but also to help the Government tackle economic and social development by addressing gender through stand-alone programmes. The transparency, accountability and responsiveness of programmes are enhanced by implementing and utilizing the findings of a GIA; in turn, this helps enhance the Government's ability to coordinate donor funding with more respect for including gender equal rights. Gender mainstreaming within the public administration reports – by utilizing tools like the GIA, among others – makes the entire process of governance in Georgia far more attractive to donors and opens up venues for more and varied funding from both the EU and non-EU member states.

This report describes specifically the gender analysis of the agricultural programme of the RDA titled "Plant the Future", its origins and development, frameworks and methods for the practice of gender analysis in this type of impact assessment. Aside from the actual analysis of the data regarding the programme itself, this report highlights implementation approaches and challenges as there is increasing interest in applying the GIA methodology to other sectors. The lessons learned from this analysis will certainly be relevant for future work as it is evident that through the use of gender analysis tools – both alongside and integrated into overall regulatory impact assessment processes – the impacts of development on diverse groups can be identified and mitigated, while also empowering marginalized groups through better and more inclusive participation and their involvement in decision-making.

Moreover, this type of equality impact assessment provides a mechanism to build equality considerations into policymaking and decision-making, providing a clear and structured way to consider evidence about the needs of protected groups. Under the public sector's duty to foster equality, public authorities in the GoG are required to carry out these impact assessments. More and more, this means that all institutions and sectors of governance in the Government of Georgia must assess the impact of applying new, revised or existing policy or practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) of the programme Plant the Future was conducted by the ISET Policy Institute (ISET-PI) as part of its collaboration with UN Women within the scope of the project "Regulatory Impact Assessment and Gender Impact Assessment for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia". This study represents an ex-ante GIA of the programme Plant the Future initiated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA) and implemented by the Ministry's Rural Development Agency (RDA). The programme was introduced by the MEPA in 2015 and runs in almost every region of the country. Plant the Future supports the development of nursery and perennial gardens in the regions and currently offers financial support/subsidies for three separate components: (1) perennial gardens; (2) nursery gardens; and (3) the installation of anti-hail systems and/or the arrangement of wells or borehole pumping stations.

One of the first findings of this GIA revealed that the Plant the Future programme's objectives were, by and large, very general ones and, more often than not, lacked specifically defined gender objectives. Outcomes, outputs and indicators for this programme were also not gender-specific. The analysis also points to the fact that the policymakers perceive this programme (and those like it) to be gender-neutral and non-discriminatory as it allows the participation of everyone regardless of their sex and is, in their view, accessible for all of the target population groups and, at first glance, does not create deliberate barriers for potential participants.

However, taking into account the existing gender differences in resources (e.g. land and real estate ownership, the lack of financial resources, limited access to credit for women, etc.), the programme, after being carefully reviewed from a gender equality angle, could actually be considered to be gender-blind as it often ignores the different roles, capabilities, existing inequalities, basic needs and context of the competing priorities of women and men. The absence of any mitigating actions or the inclusion of a larger number of affirmative measures that would support a greater number of women and increase their participation rates, is an example of the tendency of public institutions to perceive gender issues only lightly – in terms of headcount. It could also be symptomatic of the Government's own capacities to address gender equality in a comprehensive way, being that many agencies are still in the early stages of the gender mainstreaming process.

Within the scope of this study, a baseline analysis of the programme was conducted, gender equality gaps were identified, and ways to increase the programme's gender-transformative power were provided and evaluated.

Overall, the programme was assessed successfully in terms of its fulfilment of the key objective of addressing and supporting small landowners' participation in rural development and agriculture in Georgia. Certainly, even though the programme offers a slightly higher co-financing rate for agricultural cooperatives, the majority of the programme beneficiaries tend to be individuals. However, when it comes to addressing gender gaps and the overall gender division of programme participants, the differences arise in several dimensions, especially with respect to intersectionality as well as depending on variables such as land size, crop choice, programme subcomponent and region. Specific gender equality issues are highlighted as follows:

- The gender distribution of the programme participants is biased towards male beneficiaries.
- The average subsidy and the pattern of the amount of financing received by male and female beneficiaries are not dramatically different from each other; however, the preconditions favour men as they do not take into consideration the many cultural obstacles in place that female beneficiaries need to overcome to be able to partake in the programme.
- The average land size for men is higher than for women.

- Given the current context and economic trends, women are less likely to choose capital-intensive production.
- The gap between female and male participation differs across subcomponents of the programme. Specifically, the gender difference is quite high for the garden component; women's participation is notably higher for the berry subcomponent considering that berry production allows farmers to produce on a smaller area of land and, usually, consumes fewer resources.
- The regional distribution in terms of women's participation is not uniform. Although the vast majority of beneficiaries are from Kakheti and Shida Kartli regions, Mtskheta-Mtianeti region has the highest female to male ratio.

The GIA implementation was indeed time-limited and was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of face-to-face interviews with the programme's beneficiaries. However, in-depth analysis of statistical data available and a review of secondary sources did help identify some of the reasons behind the low level of female participation in the programme, which included limitations imposed by existing gender norms, unequal access to knowledge, unequal gender distribution of land, lack of collateral and unequal access to finance. Some of those limitations are as follows:

- The co-financing component of the programme requires land ownership or a long-term lease, which does create a barrier considering that women are less likely to be registered as property owners, leaving them in an unequal position compared to men to attain necessary financial resources.
- Women mostly own smaller land plots and have limited access to finance.
- Farmers do not have equal access to irrigation benefits, and usually women's needs and interests are neglected in irrigation system design and provision.
- Despite the fact that Plant the Future offers financial support to landowners, subsidies have limits; therefore, participants might still need to find some additional financial resources to undertake the project.
- Agricultural cooperatives, which used to own, on average, larger land plots compared to individual beneficiaries, are not actively involved in the programme and are mostly represented by men.

Based on the above-identified challenges and taking into consideration the overall impacts of all considered and proposed options undertaken by the team as part of the analysis, the GIA team decided to examine the two most cost-effective options for potential changes to the programme and evaluate their gender impact compared to the status quo.[1]

The options considered under this GIA were as follows:

Policy Option 0: Status quo – Programme design is not changed, and the current trends continue

Policy Option 1: Introducing gender-responsive/ sensitive criteria for the Plant the Future programme based on comprehensive gender analyses and developing the gender equality and analytical capacity of the Government's institutions

Option 1.1: Traditional subsistence farming – The RDA could choose to reduce the participation gap between women and men who own smaller land plots and who therefore choose to follow tradition subsistence production.[2]

1 In the status quo scenario, it is assumed that the RDA continues to not use a gender-sensitive approach while targeting the programme beneficiaries, and the participation rate of women and men is assumed to follow the existing trend.

2 The success of this option highly depends on the access to resources such as land; for example, easing the land registry for landowners who have a plot equal to or smaller than 1.25 hectares in valley regions and 5 hectares in mountain regions would make this possible. Extension centres can play a role by making sure that potential beneficiaries know their rights in terms of land ownership and that they engage actively in land registry reform.

This option was associated with the following opportunities:

- Enhancing the overall inclusion of gender by increasing women's participation and closing the economic gaps in agriculture
- Increased gender sensitivity and building knowledge among key involved parties/ stakeholders
- Greater focus on gender impact and profitability assessments
- Increased efficiency of the programme through more efficient programme budget allocation and better information-sharing

Option 1.2: Commercialization of production[3] – The RDA could focus on closing the gender gaps regarding programme participation in all crop choices and associated funding. Compared to Option 1.1, this option would have far greater impact in transforming the programme's success in terms of meeting the objective of supporting and contributing to the commercialization of the sector and, in turn, contributing to economic growth from rural development.

This option was associated with the following opportunities:

- Enhancing the overall inclusion of gender by increasing women's participation
- Increasing the gender responsiveness of the programmes of all key involved parties/ stakeholders
- Increasing the transformative power of the programme
- Detailed focus on gender impact and profitability assessments
- Increased efficiency of the programme through more efficient programme budget allocation, better information-sharing and affirmative measures
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment within the rural development sector
- Increasing data availability for evidence-based policymaking
- Strengthening women's equal access to the programme, knowledge, resources, financial resources and grants, compared to men

In proposing and recommending changes in the programme and future steps in mainstreaming gender in this and other similar programmes, the team took into consideration the ongoing public finance processes and distribution of funds as several activities in both options might require additional new funds and/or additional human resources allocation. However, an overall recommendation is to focus on generally improving the targeting and reallocation of existing funds and resources rather than asking for a new, higher allocation of funds.

3 Commercialization could initially lead to a further increase in the already existing gender gap; however, this would mainly depend on the willingness of programmes like this one to include in its implementation interventions that would address already existing unresolved tensions over gender roles within the sector. The RDA would need to put in place other support mechanisms that would not only ensure increased female participation in commercial farming but also enhance their capacities for increased profitability. The RDA will need to start identifying all key variables that are currently limiting the development of the programme towards more commercialized farming practices. The RDA will need to improve its overall capacity in terms of understanding the importance of gender and equality in the agriculture sector and commence working on collecting more comprehensive and complete data in order to understand the underlying processes influencing the participation, output and productivity of this programme.

1 CONTEXT OF THE GIA

PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The lack of women's participation in the economy is likely hurting economic growth. Some research suggests that **enhancing women's economic empowerment by improving entrepreneurship and leadership contributes to economic growth, job creation and prosperity.**[4] In the region, the World Bank has estimated that women's lower levels of economic engagement depresses GDP by 12 per cent in Georgia and 14 per cent in Armenia.[5] Other research suggests that economies and firms become more efficient as women's economic engagement increases.[6] Moreover, barriers to women's economic participation are likely to slow innovation since the best talent is not efficiently allocated. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, this issue is likely to be particularly problematic as women attain levels of education equal to that of their male peers.

Besides the purely economic impact, women's economic activity is also associated with several other positive development outcomes. In general, gender equality is associated with human development indicators. A substantial body of evidence suggests that when women control a larger share of household income, spending shifts to the benefit of children; importantly, although women's economic activity does not necessarily correlate with control over resources, it has the potential to increase women's bargaining power within the household. This includes benefits to children's nutrition as well as education, which has positive long-run benefits for the economy.

For women in developing countries, the **informal labour economy**, or grey economy, is often their main source of income. Informal work can include those who are self-employed, such as street vendors, petty traders and subsistence farmers, as well as waged workers in domestic or seasonal agricultural work. This type of work is considered informal, as it lacks the protection of labour laws and regulations. As a result, such workers are vulnerable to low pay and unsafe working conditions and are excluded from social benefits, such as pensions, sick leave and health insurance. Women involved in informal work may also face intersectional forms of discrimination and violence in the workplace.[7] The overall rates of vulnerable employment in the South Caucasus are high. According to the World Bank, the percentage of women's employment categorized as vulnerable in[8] 2017 constituted 42 per cent in Armenia, 61 per cent in Azerbaijan and 57 per cent in Georgia.[9]

4 OECD, *Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship and Business Leadership in OECD Countries* (2014). Available at http://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment_Fin_1_Oct_2014.pdf.

5 Mercy Tembon, *Beyond celebrating—Removing barriers for women in the South Caucasus* (World Bank, 2017). Available at http://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/beyond-celebrating-removing-barriers-women-south-caucasus.

6 Rachel Heath, "Women's Access to Labor Market Opportunities, Control of Household Resources, and Domestic Violence", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6149 (World Bank, 2012). Available at http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11987.

7 UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016.* Available at http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/. See also: Report of the Secretary-General, Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work (E/CN.6/2017/3, December 2016). Available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2017/3.

8 Vulnerable employment is a percentage of contributing family workers and own-account workers out of total employment. A high proportion of wage and salaried workers in a country can signify advanced economic development. If the proportion of own-account workers (self-employed without hired employees) is sizeable, it may be an indication of a large agriculture sector and low growth in the formal economy. A high proportion of contributing family workers – generally unpaid, although compensation might come indirectly in the form of family income – may indicate weak development, little job growth and often a large rural economy. Each status group faces different economic risks, and contributing family workers and own-account workers are the most vulnerable and, therefore, the most likely to fall into poverty. They are the least likely to have formal work arrangements, are the least likely to have social protection and safety nets to guard against economic shocks and often are incapable of generating sufficient savings to offset these shocks. Source: World Bank, available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.EMP.VULN.FE.ZS.

9 The rates are from 2017 World Bank Open Data. Available at http://data.worldbank.org.

One of the most vulnerable forms of informal employment is contributing to family work. Globally, women comprise 63 per cent of these workers, who are employed without direct pay in family businesses or farms. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, own-account farmers and contributing family workers represent a large share of agricultural employment; and many of these workers are women, indicating that women in all three countries are often found in vulnerable forms of work in the agricultural sector.[10]

Gender inequalities in the region are often most acute in rural areas.[11] The CEDAW Committee noted in General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women (2016) that globally, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men on every gender and development indicator and that they disproportionately experience poverty and exclusion. In addition to facing systemic discrimination in accessing land and natural resources, the Committee reported that even when rural women are formally employed, they are more often engaged in work that is insecure, hazardous, poorly paid and not covered by social protection.

In Georgia, the agricultural sector is of a subsistence nature and is characterized by low productivity and low competitiveness. While nearly half of the population derives most of their income from agriculture, the sector contributes less than 10 per cent to GDP, and exports only account for about one third of agricultural imports.[12] Improved agriculture productivity and commercialization can play an important role in poverty alleviation, the reduction of gender inequalities and social development. This requires improvements to producers' skills and increased participation of small farmers in the markets. However, small farmers, especially women, often are not able to access available services and apply poor production practices as a result of limited exposure to proper farming methods. At the same time, research has shown that closing the gender gap in agriculture could increase the national agricultural output by several percentage points.[13]

The European Commission defines Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) as "the process of comparing and assessing, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy. [...] Gender impact assessment is the estimation of the different effects (positive, negative or neutral) of any policy or activity implemented to specific items in terms of gender equality."[14] Since the GIA methodology is not well-established in Georgia, UN Women, in partnership with the ISET-PI, has attempted to adapt the GIA methodology according to the policy design and evaluation process in national institutions and conduct at least one GIA of a programme or a strategy – starting with the agriculture sector first.

The Plant the Future programme, initiated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA) and implemented by the Ministry's Rural Development Agency (RDA), is the first pilot project on which the pilot GIA is conducted. This study represents an ex-ante GIA. Within the scope of this GIA, a baseline analysis of the programme was conducted, gender equality gaps were identified, and ways to increase the programme's gender-transformative power were provided and evaluated.

10 UNDP, *Regional Human Development Report, Progress at Risk: Inequalities and Human Development in Eastern Europe, Turkey and Central Asia* (2016).

11 According to the World Bank database, in 2015, those living in rural areas included 37 per cent of Armenia's population, 45 per cent of Azerbaijan's population and 46 per cent of Georgia's population. Available at http://data.worldbank.org.

12 GEOSTAT. Available at www.geostat.ge.

13 FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture – Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2011). Available at http://www.fao.org/3/i2050e/i2050e.pdf.

14 EIGE, "What is Gender Impact Assessment", 2019. Available at https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-impact-assessment/what-gender-impact-assessment.

1.1. Methodology

A GIA like this one is aimed to support policymakers in incorporating a gender perspective into programmes and policies that take account of the different needs, characteristics and behaviours of the users at whom they are aimed. Ideally, the GIA should be done at an early stage in the decision-making process so that policies can be changed – or even discontinued – if necessary. However, in this case it was decided, together with partners and relevant stakeholders, that doing a GIA on an ongoing programme would be beneficial in terms of supporting the Government by both identifying gaps and highlighting areas of policy and programme design that could be further improved. At the same time, the initiative itself aims to test and ultimately provide a methodology for policymakers to assess whether their policies will deliver equality of opportunity across the board, as well as to help challenge policymakers to question the assumption that policies and services affect everyone in the same way.

The GIA of Plant the Future aimed to highlight key questions for relevant stakeholders to help them see the impact of the programme in terms of its success vis-à-vis the integration of gender equality and gender mainstreaming at each stage of the programme's design, implementation and evaluation processes. Consequently, this GIA analysed success and the level of integration of gender overall within the project, including specifically within the following processes:

- Defining issues and goals:
  - ✔ Defining what the programme is trying to achieve in terms of overall gender equality (both within the programme as well as within the overarching strategies)
  - ✔ Understanding different gender-relevant problems and concerns
  - ✔ Assessing the level of the programme's ability to enable equal contribution
- Collecting data:
  - ✔ Gathering gender, age, race and disability disaggregated statistics
  - ✔ Consulting experts, women and men, minority ethnic and disability groups
  - ✔ Interpreting existing data from different perspectives
- Developing (alternative/more gender-sensitive) options:
  - ✔ Determining the impact/implications for different groups
  - ✔ Offering choices for the enhancement of gender equality within the programme
  - ✔ Removing stereotyped perceptions and proposing transformative actions
- Communication:
  - ✔ Integrating programme results with equality commitments when reporting to the public, the Government and donors
  - ✔ Using inclusive language
  - ✔ Ensuring that key perspectives are included
- Monitoring and evaluation:
  - ✔ Monitoring the gender impact of different programme element (e.g. capacity-building, grants, infrastructure support, etc.), conducted by internal and external stakeholders
  - ✔ Developing gender-specific indicators
  - ✔ Examining the differential impacts
  - ✔ Achieving equality of opportunity and equal outcomes
  - ✔ Learning lessons regarding gender mainstreaming in the programme/sector
  - ✔ Capturing and disseminating best practices

The GIA study was conducted from May to October 2020 and was undertaken in different phases:

a) Preparatory work – During this phase, the GIA team conducted an initial meeting with the UN Women and RDA representatives. The aim of this meeting was to present the concept of GIAs to the agency and to choose a relevant programme for the first pilot exercise.

b) Desk research – The second phase involved desk research to gather information on national-level policies and mechanisms, international experience and the gender-transformative power of similar agricultural programmes.

Additionally, during this phase, all background data about the programme were provided by the RDA, and the gender relevance of Plant the Future was assessed. International experience was studied based on relevant literature and journal articles in the field of agriculture, horticulture and gender analysis, and numerous GIA reviews and reports (conducted by such organizations as UN Women, the World Bank Group, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the European Commission, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Asian Development Bank) were used to scrutinize gender-relevant challenges in agriculture and similar policies in other developing and developed nations. Furthermore, in order to present official national strategic goals and objectives regarding agricultural development and gender equality, all major strategic and policy documents of Georgia were analysed, including both general and sector-specific ones.

c) Qualitative and quantitative research – The GIA team used desk research, analyses of secondary data, in-depth interviews, stakeholder consultations, and the combined results of the qualitative and quantitative research methods during this stage.

In terms of quantitative analysis, the GIA team used three main sources of information:

- Data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat): Principally, this included data about different macroeconomic and agricultural indicators.
- Data about Plant the Future programme beneficiaries from the RDA: These data were used to conduct a gender analysis of the programme beneficiaries according to their crop choice, land size and the amount of co-financing received from the agency.
- Data from the FAO: These data provided comparative information on the yield and productivity of different crops both for Georgia and globally.

In terms of qualitative analysis, the GIA team used in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders to access programme implementation on the national as well as regional levels. Within the scope of the project, the GIA team conducted four in-depth online interviews with RDA representatives (from the Project Operations Department, the Project Development Department, the Cooperatives Development and Management Department, and the Reporting and Budgeting Unit of the Finance Department), the Georgian Farmers' Association and the Agricultural and Rural Policy Research Center of the ISET-PI. A total of 14 phone interviews were also conducted – with three soil analysis laboratories, 10 regional division representatives of the RDA and one NGO working on agricultural issues, the TASO Foundation (see Annex 9).

d) Gender impact and equality assessment and writing the report – All information gathered during previous stages was analysed in a gender context.

The GIA was conducted using the following criteria: (1) norms and values – identifying gender roles, division of labour, attitudes and behaviours of women and men, inequalities in the value attached to men and women, existing gender stereotypes; (2) participation – gender composition of programme beneficiaries, representation of women and men in decision-making positions; (3) resources – distribution of crucial resources (time, land, information, financial resources, economic power, training, etc.); and (4) rights – existing gender discrimination. In the next stage, weighting of the gender impacts took place, and changes to improve the gender impact of the Plant the Future programme were recommended.

The study has had some limitations. These limitations were partly due to the fact that gender assessments and relevant gender mainstreaming tools are still new to the country, as well as due to gaps in the approaches towards monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and the lack of gender in those M&E plans at the initial stages of the programmes, which would serve as a basis for impact assessments in the future.

Specifically, significant limitations were due to the following:

- Non-existence of the initial benchmark/baseline study: As Plant the Future was initiated without an initial baseline analysis, it was hard for the GIA team to identify impacts of the programme properly.
- Lack of possibility to conduct a counterfactual analysis: The RDA did not store information about applicants who were denied a grant within the scope of Plant the Future. As such, it was impossible for the GIA team to attribute cause and effect between interventions and outcomes of the programme. The "counterfactual analysis", in this case, means measuring what would have happened to beneficiaries in the absence of the intervention; the impact could then be estimated by comparing the outcomes of two groups as observed under the intervention: of those who have become beneficiaries of the programme and of those who have applied but were denied a grant.
- Lack of access to gender-disaggregated data stemming from fragmented data ownership: The Reporting and Budgeting Unit of the Finance Department at the RDA possessed data about individual beneficiaries by gender but with insufficient detail. Additionally, information on the members of agricultural cooperatives is stored by the Cooperatives Development and Management Department of the RDA. However, gender-disaggregated data of cooperative representatives are not available. Although the GIA team has requested cooperative data from the Cooperatives Development and Management Department, the team has never received it from them.
- Limited or lack of examples of gender goals/outcomes within strategic planning cycles: This is particularly true for gender equality in the agriculture sector, as well as the non-existence of relevant frameworks that could guide gender work in this sector. The study pointed out to need for more gender expertise in the public policy institutions, with specific thematic knowledge needed for specific sectors.
- Limited gender expertise in the agricultural sector of Georgia: The literature review process (see Annex 5) and the stakeholder consultations (see Annex 9) revealed that the country lacks both experience and gender experts specialized in agriculture. Indeed, the limited number of studies conducted on this subject, the low demand for gender-disaggregated data from academia, and the overall low level of expertise in the sector meant that this GIA was not as in-depth as it would have been had all of the above conditions, including this one, been in place. As such, in addition to implementing the GIA, one of the aims of this pilot initiative was to test the GIA methodology, developed by the ISET-PI in coordination with the international GIA expert, in order to prepare pilot GIA works in the Georgian context and highlight the main challenges and how they can be overcome.

1.2. Role of agriculture in the economic development of Georgia

Georgian academics and public figures share the same opinion with regard to the importance of agriculture in the economic development of the country. They are unanimous when it comes to defining the appropriate level of agriculture sector development and the need for its commercialization, since agriculture and food production comprise one of the most important engines of growth and poverty reduction in the country.[15] Although the significance of the agriculture sector is recognized by all, the pace of agricultural development in Georgia is still slow, with the numerous small-scale farmers – the sector's backbone – not always being able to ensure its high efficiency. Additionally, Georgian farmers face a variety of problems, including cheap imports flooding the country, underdeveloped agriculture infrastructure, insufficient knowledge and qualifications, lack of new technologies and other necessary resources and inefficient work by both the private and public sectors. All of these obstacles

15 European Initiative - Liberal Academy Tbilisi, *Agriculture Transformation in Georgia: 20 Years of Independence* (2012).

hinder the strategic development of agriculture in this country.

Although many researchers mention that the development of agriculture depends on the success of small-scale farming, there is considerable speculation about the ability of small-scale farmers to become integral parts of the trade liberalization and globalization processes in order to confront increasing global competition and meet the market demand. What is obvious is that farmers in remote locations, who are unable to market their products due to the unfavourable local infrastructure, have no potential to succeed without proper state support. Indeed, the previous focus of state support was on large-scale farming; on this basis, it sounds reasonable to direct investment to large-scale farming activities and commerce-oriented farmers. However, currently there is also considerable support and effort to "save small farms" as they require lower profit margins on their products and are more sensitive and flexible in terms of transaction costs than large-scale farms. In addition, when the low cost of labour and other external factors are taken into account, the efficiency of small-scale farmers is in no way inferior to that of large-scale farmers.[16] Although large-scale farms can produce more commodities than cooperatives of small-scale farmers, the latter generate more profit than the large ones. Thus, small-scale farming is evidently more efficient, but food safety and quality issues are of primary importance in the open market. This considerably affects the development potential of the small farmers.

Choosing the best and the most efficient way to support rural development and agriculture is crucial as the agriculture sector[17] still accounts for 38.2 per cent of the country's total employment, and 99 per cent of workers employed in agriculture were considered as self-employed in 2019 (Geostat). Despite the fact that more than a third of the country's labour force is employed in agriculture, this sector contributes to only 7.4 per cent of the real GDP. The fact that the contribution of agriculture represents such a tiny share of the real GDP is due to a low-productivity, subsistence style of agriculture. Indeed, 45 per cent of employed people in agriculture are unpaid family workers,[18] indicating that almost half of the agricultural workforce is involved in subsistence farming. In spite of the fact that the productivity of the agricultural sector measured by produced real GDP per employed person doubled between 2010 and 2019, the sector remains six times less productive than the average and 14.3 and 8.3 times less productive than the industry[19] and service[20] sectors respectively.

It is crucial to consider regional diversity when designing programmes and strategies for agriculture in Georgia, particularly when reviewing the impact of those programmes. As agricultural activity rates are quite high in Georgian regions, the potential of such programmes and strategies for regional development is very high. The regional distribution of the share of the labour force working in agriculture varies between 30 per cent and 58 per cent (not including Tbilisi). The highest share of employment in the agricultural sector is concentrated in the regions of Guria (61 per cent),[21] Kakheti (58 per cent) and Samtskhe-Javakheti (58 per cent) – regions with good potential for agricultural development – while the lowest share is concentrated in Adjara (30 per cent). Notably lower concentrations of agriculture employment in different regions can be explain by different factors, which were all taken into consideration during the GIA of the programme. For example, the lower participation rate overall in Adjara compared to the other regions can be explained by the following factors: (1) Adjara is an urbanized region, where about 55.4 per cent of the population lives in the urban areas (e.g. Batumi, the central city of Adjara region, is the second largest

16 Ibid.
17 The agriculture sector includes agriculture, forestry and fishing.
18 Geostat, *Labour Force Survey 2019.*
19 Industry includes mining and quarrying and manufacturing.
20 The service sector includes all of the sectors excluding agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining and quarrying, and manufacturing.
21 Guria is a small, rural region where people are mostly involved in small farming.

city in the country in terms of population size);[22] (2) the region is characterized by difficult terrain, as a large part of the region is mountainous with a limited amount of arable land and consequently, with smaller land plots in ownership;[23] and (3) the population living in this region is mostly involved in tourism and construction activities (e.g. Batumi and Kobuleti are two of the most popular resort areas in the country).

In addition, the share of females and males working in agriculture is quite close to each other in the vast majority of the regions. For all of the regions except small, mountainous Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, the share of agriculture employment is higher for females than males (this partially is related to the low level of formal employment of women in the non-agriculture sector). The widest gap between shares in favour of females is observed in the region of Kvemo Kartli (with a difference of 12 percentage points), which has the third highest employment in agriculture among all of the regions and has a high share of the ethnic minority population compared to the total population.

Table 1:
Share of labour force working in agriculture, by gender, 2019

	Employed in agriculture		Share of labour working in agriculture[a]	Share of females working in agriculture[b]	Share of males working in agriculture[c]
	Female	Male			
Tbilisi	528	2,724	1%	0%	1%
Adjara	28,178	24,963	30%	34%	26%
Guria	20,284	20,936	61%	62%	60%
Imereti	59,114	59,061	41%	44%	39%
Kakheti	50,166	51,237	58%	60%	56%
Kvemo Kartli	48,190	43,632	40%	47%	35%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	11,456	11,496	40%	44%	37%
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	5,696	5,726	57%	55%	58%
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	44,565	45,093	51%	53%	48%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	27,254	30,139	58%	60%	56%
Shida Kartli	24,340	30,114	40%	42%	40%
Total	**319,769**	**325,120**	**34%**	**36%**	**32%**

Source: Authors' calculations based on Geostat data.
[a] Total employment in agriculture over total labour force.
[b] Total female employment in agriculture over total female labour force.
[c] Total male employment in agriculture over total male labour force.

22 See "Agriculture Development Strategy of Adjara 2017-2020". Available at http://adjara.gov.ge/uploads/Docs/644f050424b74b899c9e1709ff03.pdf.

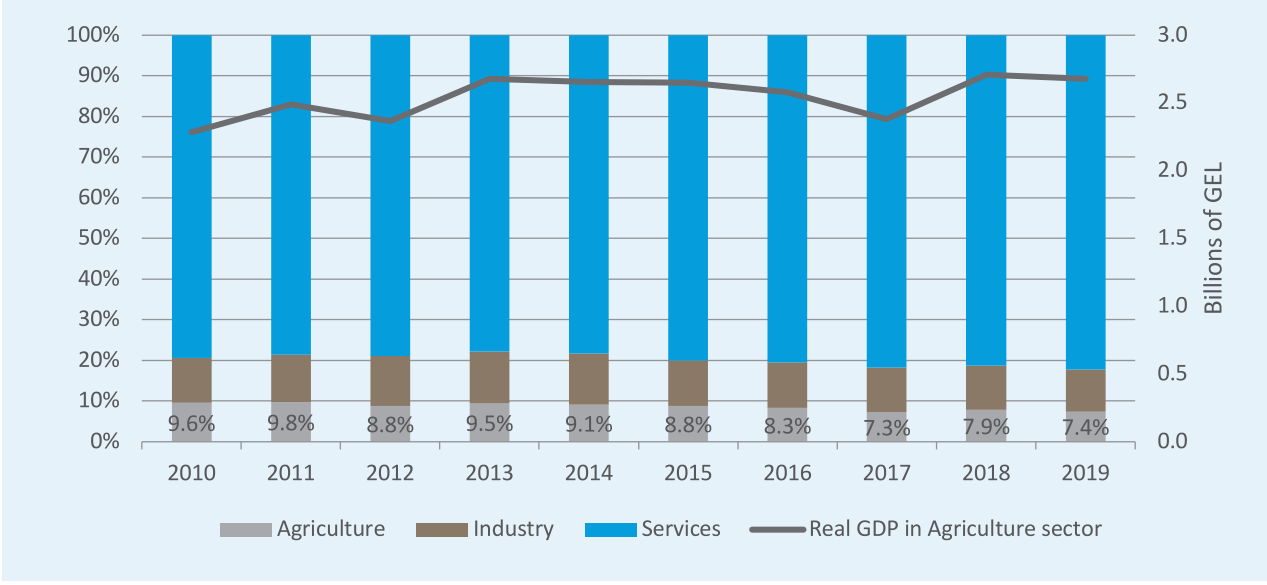
23 See "The difficult relief of Adjara and the high level of segregation hinder agro-development", 2015. Available at https://bpi.ge/acharis-reliefis-rtuli-khasiati-da-danaw-evrebis-maghali-done-agroganvitarebas-aferkhebs/.

The share of the agriculture sector in real GDP has declined over the past decade: from 9.6 per cent (in 2010) to 7.4 per cent (in 2019). Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that agricultural production has also fallen. Indeed, compared to 2010, the agricultural GDP in constant prices increased by 17.3 per cent in 2019, while output in current prices (including intermediate production) produced in the agriculture sector increased by 1.67 times during the same period. Actually, what this decline in the share of agriculture in total GDP shows is that this decreasing trend is because of the higher growth rate in other sectors compared to that in the agriculture sector. Low productivity mostly results in low profitability. The issue of the sector employing many people in subsistence farming – producing only the minor part of the GDP – should be addressed, not only for the sake of economic growth but indeed in terms of introducing transformative measures that will improve the lives of women and men in rural areas equally.

This study therefore further assesses the role of gender in future government support, which should be aimed at initiating a positive structural transformation – shifting the labour force from a low-productivity agriculture sector to higher-productivity industrial and service sectors and increasing productivity within the agriculture sector by consolidating land, improving farmers' knowledge and utilizing technologies.

When it comes to the structure of the agricultural production, livestock represents the highest share with 51 per cent, crops and farming take about 42 per cent, while rural and agricultural services hold the remaining 7 per cent.

Figure 1:
GDP sector shares (percentage) and Real GDP in agriculture sector (billions of GEL), 2010-2019



Source: Geostat.

Although agriculture takes a significant place in Georgia's economy, Georgian agricultural products are still **not competitive in international markets** due to the higher unit costs. Furthermore, domestic agricultural products are substituted by cheaper imports, hindering the development of domestic agriculture. The competitiveness of the Georgian agriculture sector is negatively affected by old equipment, technological processes and storage and processing facilities, poor logistics and the lack of finances.[24]

Nevertheless, Georgia also has an untapped agricultural potential. By supporting modernization, increasing access to financial resources, establishing and improving agricultural cooperatives and increasing export opportunities, changes can bring both the economic growth and act as a catalyst for poverty alleviation. It is for this reason that Georgia's agriculture stands high on the Government's list of priority sectors given its social, political and economic significance.

Given the importance of agricultural development for the economy, it is no wonder that further examination of the sector is needed to assess the sector in terms of its impact on addressing gender equality in Georgia. The following sections are indeed an attempt to set the context as well as to depict trends in order to assess the potential of the agricultural sector and, in particular, programmes such as Plant the Future to improve the gender situation in Georgia and close existing gaps in equality, especially among the rural population.

1.3. Agricultural development goals of Georgia with respect to gender equality

Given the importance of agriculture for Georgia's social and economic development, the GIA team has used international and national development frameworks of this sector as a background against which to assess the impact of the state programme Plant the Future, particularly its gender relevance. Below is a short overview of international and national frameworks alike governing this sector and its gender work.

International context

The 2014 **Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States and Georgia**[25] introduced different cooperation forms regarding gender equality within several different frameworks. One of the most significant ones in relation to the implementation of this GIA is the ILO Decent Work Agenda (discussed under Article 239 of the Agreement) and those under Chapter 14 of the Agreement on "Employment, social policy and equal opportunities" (specifically Article 349) and Annex XXX. The former indicates that "the Parties may cooperate in, trade related aspects of the ILO Decent Work Agenda, including on the interlink between trade and full and productive employment, labour market adjustment, core labour standards, labour statistics, human resources development and lifelong learning, social protection and social inclusion, social dialogue and gender equality". The latter framework further adds that "cooperation may cover an issue of... equal opportunities and anti-discrimination, aiming at enhancing gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities between men and women, as well as combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation".

In addition, Chapter 10 of the Agreement on "Agriculture and rural development" and respective Articles 332-334 states that "cooperation between the Parties in the field of agriculture and rural development shall cover... sharing knowledge and best practices of rural development policies to promote economic well-being for rural communities; disseminating knowledge and promoting extension services to agricultural producers". The Association Agreement further includes directives associated

24 Georgia, *The Regional Development Programme of Georgia 2018-2021.*

25 See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830(02).

with equal opportunities and the equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services, and equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security. Within the scope of the Eastern Partnership (EaP)[26] deliverables for 2020 (endorsed in 2017), the cross-cutting issue of gender is aligned along the four key priority areas: (1) stronger economy; (2) stronger governance; (3) stronger connectivity; and (4) stronger society.[27]

The Georgian Government committed to aligning its national policy with the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in 2015 and linking the SDGs with the core national objectives.[28] There is no separate SDG for agriculture and rural development, although almost half of the total 17 SDGs are particularly important in relation to agriculture and gender equality. Box 1 presents selected SDGs and corresponding targets connected with agriculture and gender equality, as identified by the GIA team.

Goal 5 on gender equality (about setting gender equality targets and objectives in all sectors) and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities (about empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of everyone in society, irrespective of age, sex, etc.) are directly linked to our topics of interest. Some SDGs (especially Goal 1 on eradicating poverty and Goal 2 on ending hunger) unite in themselves issues significant for gender equality in agricultural and rural development. In addition, other targets within Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) include, among others, aspects important for gender equality issues in agriculture and rural development.

The latest Voluntary National Review of Georgia emphasizes the importance of the Plant the Future programme and its objectives in promoting the goal of ending hunger, enhancing food security and expanding agricultural productivity. However, challenges regarding land fragmentation and registration are emphasized as "one of the main causes of [the] poor performance of agriculture". According to the report, "by 2030, [the] country aims to increase the proportion of [the] total adult population with secured legal rights to land to 80% and the number of women with land registration by 10-15%. Since 2015, Georgia has made significant progress in this process as [the] share of [the] total adult population with registered lands has increased from 50% to 59%, while the share of registered land owned by women increased from 35% to 38%".[29]

26 The joint policy initiative launched in 2009. It aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU, its member states and its six eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

27 See EaP 20 Deliverables for 2020: Bringing tangible results for citizens. Available at https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20_deliverables_for_2020.pdf.

28 See http://sdg.gov.ge/main.

29 Secretariat of the SDGs, *Voluntary National Review Georgia / VNR 2020 – Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development* (Administration of the Government of Georgia, Interagency Council of Georgia, 2020). Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26389VNR_2020_Georgia_Report.pdf.

Box 1. Georgia and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: SDGs in relation to Agriculture and Gender Equality

Goal 1: No Poverty

Target 1.2. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Target 1.4. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Target 2.3. By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

Target 2.4. By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

Target 2.5. By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

Target 2.A. Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Target 4.3. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Target 5.1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

Target 5.2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Target 5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Target 5.5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.

Target 5.6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programed of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Target 5.A. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

Target 5.B. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Target 8.5. By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Target 8.8. Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Target 10.2. By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Target 10.3. Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

Target 10.4. Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Target 16.7. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

Target 16.10. Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Target 16.B. Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

National context

Gender is mentioned in several strategic documents governing sectoral work, thus pointing to the Government's recognition of the importance of addressing inequalities identified in relevant sectors through a gender lens. Consequently, the impact of the programme and its gender relevance were also assessed against the existing national context. The desk review of international and national strategic documents was carried out and revealed the following: while the international frameworks provide a comprehensive gender perspective and guide the country towards more gender equality, the national framework of agricultural development still lacks a gender prism. First and foremost, the national framework to guide the gender work is still deficient, and although there is a visible effort to highlight gender issues in different sectors, the simple inclusion of generic gender references is just not enough. These strategic national documents are needing comprehensive inclusion of gender analysis; evidence is not being analysed with gender in mind, and data are not being utilized, even in the cases where gender-disaggregated data exists. This in turn hinders proper targeting and resource allocation to reduce existing gender inequality in the field. Without fully integrating gender analysis into all stages of policymaking, and in particular in the action plans and budgets of responsible ministries and institutions, any significant development in gender mainstreaming and addressing/closing gender gaps will not be achieved. Agricultural programmes, such as Plant the Future, will continue to be perceived mostly as gender-neutral[30] in reducing strategies' potential of gender-transformative power. Table 2 summarizes the results.

30 Gender-neutral: a policy, programme or situation that has no differential positive or negative impact in terms of gender relations or equality between women and men. See https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1190.

Table 2:
Gender assessment of the national strategic documents

Strategic document (adoption year)	Gender assessment results
Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia, "Georgia 2020"[31] (adopted in 2014)	It envisages aspects of agriculture and rural development. According to it, the main directions in agriculture are to increase productivity, competitiveness and investments in the sector: • "In order to increase the competitiveness of agriculture, the Government of Georgia shall ensure the development of agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation and drainage systems". • "To increase both productivity and competitiveness of agriculture, the development of agricultural processing/storage infrastructure will be promoted, including by attracting investment, which will meet both local demand and increase export potential". • "Promote increased access to investment resources for businesses operating in the agricultural sector". It is interesting to note that gender criteria are not mentioned in this strategy at all.
Government Program 2019-2020[32] (adopted in 2019)	It sets separate goals in the areas of agriculture and gender equality but does not address together the gender challenges in agriculture and rural development: • "Roads of domestic sovereign importance will be rehabilitated for the development of regions, agriculture and tourism in the country". • "Support the development of cooperatives, the development of a market system for cattle milk and meat, creating value added in the full cycle; irrigation and drainage systems; degraded soil studies will be performed; legal framework will be created for windshield management and development; modern and flexible system of extension will be established". • "Measures will be taken to protect gender equality in every area of social life. Rapid and effective response will be ensured to deal with every instance of gender inequality and gender-based violence".

31 Available at http://www.economy.ge/uploads/ecopolitic/2020/saqartvelo_2020.pdf and https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2373855?publication=0.

32 Available at http://gov.ge/files/41_73525_555908_GovernmentProgram2019-2020.pdf.

Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of Georgia 2021-2027[33] (adopted in 2019)	This is the core official long-term strategy document for the agriculture and rural development sector of the country. This document consists of three main parts: a description of the current situation and achievements for the 2015-2020 period, a SWOT analysis[34] of the agricultural sector and the future strategy (listing goals and objectives). From a gender perspective, this strategy's SWOT analysis has some interesting findings: • The "strengths" part acknowledges that the "state policy documents on gender equality recognize the special needs of rural women in terms of their economic empowerment". • The "weaknesses" part highlights that rural women in Georgia have relatively high unemployment and poverty rates and an increased risk of social vulnerability. It also states that high self-employment rates in low-productivity sectors are widespread in the rural areas of the country, especially among women, as well as gender pay gaps and unpaid labour for women. In addition, the document points out the "limited access of women to information, modern technologies and agricultural resources, compared to men", the "limited access of women to agricultural land, other real estate and finance", the "low access of [the] rural population to vocational education and training, especially in the case of rural women", and the "unequal distribution of household chores between women and men, as well as women's limited access to social infrastructure and services (health care, kindergarten, nursing homes, etc.)" and the lack of "gender-segregated data". • The "opportunities" part acknowledges that there is an opportunity to "increase access of [the] rural population to long-term educational programs (including entrepreneurial and vocational) especially for rural women who are not represented in managerial positions in technical fields", to "promote employment and economic empowerment of young people (including women)" and to "strengthen the involvement of local people, including women, in the decision-making process". The Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of Georgia 2021-2027 is more specific than the above-mentioned documents and provides directions for future change – goals, objectives (general and specific) and indicators (target and baseline). The main goals of the strategy are the following: • Competitive agricultural and non-agricultural sectors • Sustainable use of natural resources, conservation of ecosystems, adaptation to climate change • Effective systems of food/animal feed safety, veterinary and plant protection However, it has to be mentioned that none of the goals, corresponding objectives or indicators are gender-specific, despite all of the gender-related weaknesses described in the SWOT analysis. Only at the end, the monitoring and evaluation part of the strategy highlights that gender-segregated data collection and processing will begin step by step.

33 Available at https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/PublicInformation/20395.

34 SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020[35] (adopted in 2015)	This document represents another official strategy and policy document of the agricultural development of the country. Regarding gender issues, it highlights the importance of gender-disaggregated information for more inclusive policymaking and the importance of female participation in agriculture. In particular: • "Gender-disaggregated information will be collected for the purpose of its substantive analysis and subsequent inclusion in the policy measures targeted at [the] promotion of female participation in agriculture and agribusiness. Particular issues will be addressed in relation to gender, minority, elderly, rural youth, remote regions and disadvantaged groups in program development and service delivery" (p. 37). • "Development of cooperation improves involvement of vulnerable groups, women and young farmers in economic activities" (p. 22).
Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2017-2020[36] (adopted in 2016)	It highlights the importance of supporting "women and youth cooperation" as it "will facilitate their involvement in economic activities and will have a positive impact on income generation and increase incentive for living in rural areas" (p. 103). The strategy sets two respective objectives under the priority area of social conditions and living standards: • "Raising awareness in innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition, the promotion of cooperation through contributing to the skills development and employment issues (especially for young people and women)". • "Local population engagement. Increase the involvement of [the] rural population (especially youth and women) in the identification of local needs and the determination of solutions to these needs" (p. 121).
Regional Development Programme of Georgia 2018-2021[37] (adopted in 2018)	This is an overarching document setting out the main goals in Georgia's regional development and determining priorities and measures for the medium-term period 2018–2021. The programme provides a framework for public and private investments promoting regional development, enabling all stakeholders to concentrate resources along a single, common strategy in order to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions. The programme addresses agriculture and provides an objective for its development during the 2018-2021 period: "Support [the] modernization of agriculture and improvement of the quality of agricultural products" (p. 100).[38] In order to achieve this objective, the document notes the following activities: • Supporting agriculture production, the creation of new enterprises in the agriculture sector and the expansion of existing ones through cheap and affordable financing, leasing, co-financing of interest rates, collateral of loans and agro-insurance. • Supporting agriculture cooperatives • Supporting wine production • Developing/diversifying other agricultural production sectors In terms of human capital development, there is a separate objective about supporting scientists in agriculture.

35 Available at https://mepa.gov.ge/En/PublicInformation/30.
36 Available at https://mepa.gov.ge/En/PublicInformation/6346.
37 Available at https://mrdi.gov.ge/pdf/5d11c43dcd7cc.pdf/2018-2021%20Regional%20Development%20Programme%20of%20Georgia%20%28Unofficial%20translation%29.pdf.
38 Priority 2: "Support to SMEs, growth-oriented sectors of economy and export promotion". Measure 2.4: "Support to strategic sectors: Agriculture".

SME Development Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020[39] (adopted in 2015)	This is a policy strategy document that is important to analyse when it comes to the gender aspect in agriculture, as SMEs play an important role in the development of the agricultural sector, contributing significantly to sustainable and inclusive growth. This strategy states the role of women in inclusive growth: "To promote inclusive growth, it is important to reinforce female entrepreneurship. Women are less active in entrepreneurial activities … than men so it is important to develop specific mechanisms to stimulate deeper involvement of women in entrepreneurial and economic activities" (p. 24). It has a separate priority, the **encouragement of female entrepreneurship** (Priority Action 3.9), which says that: "In order to foster entrepreneurship and [the] involvement of women in business activities, gap assessments and needs analyses of women's involvement in entrepreneurial activities will be conducted. Based on the results, a specific approach to promote women entrepreneurship will be developed. In addition, a platform for cooperation with women in business, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, will be established which will facilitate women's involvement in entrepreneurial activities" (p. 26).

1.4. Programmes managed by the RDA – from a gender perspective

The RDA, formerly named the Agricultural Project Management Agency (APMA), was established in 2012 by the then Ministry of Agriculture in order to promote rural development in Georgia.[40] The aim of the RDA is to create a competitive environment, encourage higher and sustainable production of high-quality goods and introduce international food safety standards in the agriculture sector.

Mission:

- To promote rural development in Georgia

Main purpose:

- To implement and manage a variety of projects initiated by the MEPA
- To manage subordinate agricultural companies

A review and quick gender assessment of the programmes managed by the RDA was carried out in order to assess the overall gender mainstreaming of the agency, as well as to capture the equality context in which the GIA of Plant the Future was carried out. The RDA's programming is highly significant as, according to the budgetary priorities of Georgia,[41] agriculture ranks as the tenth highest priority. On average, annually 2 per cent to 3 per cent of the total state budget is assigned to the MEPA. Overall, MEPA financing reached GEL 358 million in 2019 and was planned for GEL 353 million in 2020; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was later changed to GEL 477 million. The RDA manages 12 different agricultural programmes and represents around 28 per cent of the total MEPA budget allocation. The programmes managed by the RDA are presented in Table 3. As the table shows, Plant the Future is the second largest programme managed by the RDA, accounting for about 10 per cent of total RDA financing.

39 Available at http://www.economy.ge/uploads/files/2017/ek__politika/sme_strategy_2016_2020_eng.pdf.

40 From 2013, the APMA had been implementing large-scale projects to facilitate further development of the agriculture sector. In 2019, to reflect the expansion of its mandate, the organization was restructured as the RDA.

41 See Ministry of Finance of Georgia, available at https://mof.ge/5261.

Table 3.
Programmes managed by the RDA, 2020

	Name	2020 budget financing (thousands of GEL)	Share of programme financing in all RDA programmes
Total state budget for the MEPA		**476,860**	**-**
Programmes managed by the RDA:		**131,995**	**-**
1	Preferential agro-credits	74,000	56%
2	Plant the Future	13,000	10%
3	Co-financing of agricultural processing enterprises	12,000	9%
4	Management of agricultural programmes	9,295	7%
5	Agricultural insurance	9,000	7%
6	Harvesting equipment co-financing project	5,000	4%
7	Infrastructure development of agricultural cooperatives	4,500	3%
8	Grant component of the agricultural modernization, market access and sustainability project (GEF, IFAD)	2,800	2%
9	Project technical support programme	1,500	1%
10	Georgian tea	500	0%
11	Farm/farmer registration project	300	0%
12	Support for beekeeping agricultural cooperatives	100	0%
Share of programmes managed by the RDA in total MEPA financing: 28%			

Source: Ministry of Finance of Georgia.

In 2019, the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia conducted a thematic review of women's participation in state economic programmes, including programmes managed by the RDA. According to this report, RDA projects are open to all citizens and do not envisage any special conditions on the basis of gender. Even so, some programmes have had gender quotas in the past, which have since been abolished due to low participation; one such programme was the state Agricultural Modernization, Market Access and Resilience programme, which had a gender quota in 2018 stipulating that 30 per cent of the budget had to be allocated to women and to youth under 30 years old. However, this quota was abolished in 2019 because, due to the low activity of female participants, the budget was not spent, and it was decided to increase the share of men. The only programme that has specifically outlined gender criteria currently is the Supporting Young Entrepreneurs in Villages programme, which defines the eligibility age groups for the participants – for men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-40. Here, the widened age bracket was introduced as a measure to increase female participation rates.[42]

42 Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia, Women's Participation in State Economic Programmes (2019).

The total gender balance of all of the programmes implemented by the RDA in 2018 was as follows: 23 per cent female (15,400 beneficiaries, amounting to GEL 25,031,000 of co-financing[43]) and 77 per cent male (52,100 beneficiaries, amounting to GEL 152,562,000 of co-financing[44]). Unfortunately, the Plant the Future programme has been running for several years now, and the agency cannot manage effectively the data on declined applicants mainly because of the sheer amount of data and the fact that the data are created and collected from various channels (both online and physical applications); therefore, extracting and analysing the information on rejected applicants from these different sources would be a time- and resource-consuming process for the agency. The RDA only analyses information on awarded applications but does so without going into sufficient detail, including gender disaggregation of all important variables. Consequently, it is difficult to determine how actively women were involved in the initial application process and whether there may be a larger number of women's applications that are not successful, which would warrant further technical assistance to women to overcome this barrier.[45]

Already, an analysis of beneficiary data shows that women are mostly participating in projects that require low co-financing. For example, according to 2018 data, women's participation was the highest in the Agro-Insurance programme, which had the lowest co-financing requirement. On the other hand, in order to participate in the Agro-Credit programme (which is the largest one managed by the RDA), and where the applicant is expected to have a large mortgage property, the number of women is extremely low as such a programme is usually not accessible for women, and they cannot easily fulfil the programme requirements. Indeed, although the real estate ownership data across the country show that 56.1 per cent of all registered real estate is owned by men and the rest, 43.9 per cent, is owned by females (between 2010 and 2015), the regional distribution of real estate ownership across different regions is more uneven[46] and highlights the gender gap in particular in more rural areas. It is evident that this initial inequality will be reflected later when it comes to access to agricultural credits and programmes.

The Plant the Future programme, the focus of this GIA, has a co-financing component as well as a requirement of land ownership or a long-term lease, which does present a particular barrier to rural areas, where the ownership percentages are significantly lower. This is evident in the lower rate of participation of women in this programme. According to 2019 data provided by the RDA, women's participation in this programme was 22 per cent. This fact is not surprising as women have difficulties obtaining the necessary finances and as land ownership patterns are biased towards men. The share of landowner men (61.6 per cent) was significantly higher than that of women (38.4 per cent) in 2019.[47] Moreover, the distribution of the agricultural area operated by holdings (including leased land) once again highlights the uneven distribution of land operated between women and men – in 2018, for example, 19 per cent of the total area was operated by women, while 81 per cent was operated by men.[48]

Additionally, Plant the Future (as well as some other RDA programmes) finances not only individuals but also cooperatives. According to the latest figures, currently there are 1,093 cooperatives in Georgia, with a total number of 10,964 shareholders. It is worth mentioning that of these shareholders, only 24 per cent are women, of whom only 5 per cent serve as the chairperson of their cooperative. However, according to the RDA, cooperatives

43 This amounted to 14.1 per cent of total co-financing in 2018.

44 This amounted to 85.9 per cent of total co-financing in 2018.

45 Gender Equality Council, *Women's Participation in State Economic Programmes.*

46 According to the National Agency of Public Registry, women lag behind men in almost every region in terms of property registration. In some municipalities, this share of women goes below 40 per cent – for example, in Bolnisi (29 per cent), Dmanisi (34 per cent), Gurjaani (37 per cent), Marneuli (35 per cent) and Oni (39 per cent).

47 Source: National Agency of Public Registry.

48 Source: Geostat.

managed by females are more successful based on the projects implemented.[49] Despite the fact that women's involvement and economic empowerment is seen as a priority of the Government mainly for rural and agricultural purposes, the share of women shareholders in cooperatives is four times lower than that of men. Low female participation might be a result of unequal access to credit and financial resources, as well as uneven land ownership.[50]

Overall, programmes managed by the RDA do not explicitly discriminate against women and are meant to be gender-neutral. However, due to the fact that the design and implementation of the programmes was not fully informed by gender inequalities in this sector, there are several issues that are still present that limit both the access to and distribution of funding from these programmes in a way that would improve equality and close the gender gaps. In particular, in looking at the eligibility criteria for agricultural programmes and comparing them with the gender distribution of resources in the country, it is evident that female participation in these programmes will be lower. The land or real estate ownership, lack of financial resources and limited access to credit and other resources might restrict women's participation in agricultural projects and hinder their economic empowerment, thereby further contributing to gender inequality in the agriculture sector. Thus, while the programmes are not explicitly discriminatory in nature, the analysis points to the ineffectiveness of the programmes to close the gap and therefore ensure balanced and equal rural development in the future. What is more, the existing institutional and societal values and norms regarding gender roles shape the way that programming is done. Without considering the position of women in rural Georgia, where men are believed to be the head of the household and the main decision makers, the gender neutrality of these programmes can actually further strengthen gender stereotypes. Thus, by not explicitly integrating gender equality into their policy and programme design, the RDA and its local extension centres may unintentionally reinforce the existing social status quo and widen gender gaps.

PART 2: PLANT THE FUTURE – THE PROGRAMME'S PURPOSE THROUGH A GENDER LENS

As previously mentioned, the focus of this GIA is on the specific state programme Plant the Future, introduced in 2015 by the MEPA.[51] This programme was chosen in consultation with the RDA because of its coverage and scale. Plant the Future runs in almost every region of the country and has the largest share of beneficiaries compared to other programmes undertaken by the RDA. Additionally, this programme includes a variety of target groups, and its beneficiaries include socially vulnerable groups; this variety adds to the analysis, as it enables further analysis of intersectionality – the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a programme's beneficiaries (individual or group) and how they can be regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

The programme is implemented by the RDA and regulated by a resolution of the Government of Georgia.[52] Since 2015, a number of provisions in the resolution have been amended and/or modified, but the main **goals and objectives** of the programme

49 Gender Equality Council, *Women's Participation in State Economic Programmes.*

50 UNDP, Government of Sweden and Union Sapari, *Women's economic empowerment in Georgia: Analysis of current policies and initiatives* (2017). Available at http://parliament.ge/uploads/other/86/86670.pdf.

51 See https://mepa.gov.ge/En/.

52 Georgia, Resolution No. 56 on the approval of the state programme Plant the Future (12 February 2015). Available at https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2729265?publication=0.

have remained unchanged. According to the resolution, the programme covers every region of Georgia[53] and has **two major goals:**

- **Encourage the effective use of the agricultural land in Georgia through the cultivation of perennial crops,** hence support agriculture's contribution to GDP by substituting imports and increasing exports of the agricultural raw materials and improve the socioeconomic situation of the rural population
- **Support the production of locally produced, high-quality phytosanitary clean planting materials (seedlings),** which will make it possible to offer cheaper planting materials (compared to imported materials) to those interested in cultivating modern, intensive gardens. This, in turn, will contribute to the cultivation of new gardens in Georgia and the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the fruit-growing sector.

In order to achieve these goals, the programme is supporting the development of nursery and perennial gardens in the regions. The programme specifically concentrates on the fruit sector, mainly **on drupe (stone) fruits, berries, subtropical and citrus fruits, pome (core) fruits, nuts and grapes.** Hence, the Plant the Future programme offers financial support/subsidies for three separate components:[54]

- Perennial gardens
- Nursery gardens
- The installation of anti-hail systems and/or the arrangement of wells or borehole pumping stations

Until 2020, the programme offered financial support only for the first two components: perennial and nursery gardens. However, in March 2020, the RDA introduced subsidies for the installation of anti-hail systems and/or the arrangement of wells or borehole pumping stations. For detailed information on the financial support/subsidies of each component of the programme, see Annex 8.

In line with the diversification strategy for the fruit sector, which aims at supporting the substitution of low-income periodic fruit production with high-income perennial gardens, the RDA introduced the financial support plan of the berry subcomponent of the perennial garden in May 2018.

In terms of the programme's eligibility, in order to obtain the financial and/or technical support under the Plant the Future programme, the beneficiary must:

- Be an adult who is a citizen of Georgia or be an enterprise[55] that operates in Georgia
- Own a registered agricultural plot of land or have a long-term[56] lease from the state/local government body (under the garden component, the land area can be as small as 0.5 hectares and as large as 50 ha); in addition, the land plot, which is intended for gardens, must not be under a lien and must be supplied with a permanent water source[57]

During the first stage of the application process, applicants must provide a laboratory analysis of their soil samples to the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture, in order to ensure the compliance of the land plot quality with the plants that are planned to be grown in this land plot within the programme. In cases of compliance, the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture issues a notice on programme eligibility, and their representatives visit the plot of

53 Except the following five self-governing cities: Batumi, Kutaisi, Poti, Rustavi and Tbilisi.

54 Annexes to Resolution No. 56 define which crops will be funded in which region as well as other technical and financing details.

55 Enterprises in which the State directly or indirectly owns shares or stocks are not eligible to participate in the programme.

56 The remaining period of the lease must be at least 10 years.

57 This means the existence of a lake, river or river channel within a maximum of 500 metres from the external perimeter of the land or the existence of a well or a borehole on the territory of the land plot.

land to check the compliance of the cultivation of the land and its water supply sources with the criteria predetermined by the Georgian Government's resolution. Then, for the final stage of the process, the applicant must fill out the standard application form and submit it to the RDA. After scrutinizing the application form and all the attached documents, the RDA will approve or disapprove the request. If the application is approved, the co-financing agreement will be finalized.

The main information-sharing channels of the Plant the Future programme are its extension centres, which provide information to potential beneficiaries at the local levels in particular. According to the findings of a series of in-depth interviews with extension centres, the following main channels of communication with potential beneficiaries were identified: distributing programme information booklets in local city halls; cooperating with local municipalities to share information about the programme using municipalities' existing information-sharing channels; and making door-to-door visits in the villages. In addition, detailed information on Plant the Future could be found on the RDA's website, which is quite easy to navigate, user-friendly and interactive – providing all the necessary information. Nevertheless, the only promotional video available on the RDA's website[58] uses gender stereotypes and reinforces existing gender norms in society (depicting the story of two men who inherit land and ask for advice from other men); in general, it does not incentivize women's participation in the programme as during the whole video (1.5 minutes), not one woman appears on screen.

The screening of municipalities' websites revealed that there is room for further cooperation between extension centres and municipalities, as municipality websites include limited or no information about the Plant the Future programme, or in cases where it is mentioned, the provided information is often incomplete and/or outdated.

Overall, the objectives of the Plant the Future programme are, by and large, very general ones; indeed, they are non-discriminatory and therefore allow for the participation of everyone regardless of their sex. As such, there are no specifically defined gender objectives. Outcomes, outputs and indicators for this programme are also not gender-specific as the programme is seen as open to everyone and thus not needing any gender targeting specifically, nor does it provide additional social inclusion mechanisms to increase the participation of women.

Based on interviews conducted by the GIA team, it is evident that policymakers perceive this programme as gender-neutral – if not even gender-sensitive in some cases – as it is accessible for all of the target population groups and, according to them, does not create any barriers for potential participants. However, if one takes into consideration existing gender differences in the resources discussed above, the programme could actually be considered as gender-blind,[59] ignoring the different roles, capabilities, existing inequalities, basic needs and priorities of women and men. The absence of any mitigating actions or the inclusion of a larger number of affirmative measures in this and similar programmes to level the playing field that would support a greater number of women and increase their participation rates is an example of the tendency of public institutions to perceive gender issues only lightly (in terms of headcount) and point to government agencies still in the early stages of the gender mainstreaming process.

58 See http://rda.gov.ge/projects/read/plant_future/2:parent.

59 Gender blindness: failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of women/girls and men/boys are ascribed to, or imposed upon, them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. See https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1157.

Changes in norms and perceptions require time. Thus, for policymakers, it is important to identify existing challenges and direct attention to their eradication. GIAs can be a very useful tool for Georgian policymakers in this regard.

Indeed, the potential impact of stand-alone gender-responsive programmes, which Plant the Future could become if gender is integrated properly, is multifold. First and foremost, these programmes are very much in line with the EU's agenda on gender equality. Secondly, these types of assessments strengthen targeting and enhance accountability in terms of budgetary allocation. Finally, they serve to enhance transparency and are in line with reforms initiated within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. The overall framework guiding relations between the EU and its six eastern partners is provided by the relevant **bilateral agreements**, such as the Association Agreements, as well as the Association Agendas, the Partnership Priorities and the ***EaP 20 Deliverables for 2020*** aligned along the four key priority areas: (1) stronger economy; (2) stronger governance; (3) stronger connectivity; and (4) stronger society, together with targets for the cross-cutting issues of gender, civil society and strategic communication.

PART 3: GENDER RELEVANCE OF THE PLANT THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

Considering its aim and scale, the state programme Plant the Future has the potential to take on a multifaceted role in terms of its contribution to gender equality:

1. On the one hand, it has the potential to impact the **practical gender needs**, as by participating in this programme, women can support themselves and their households on a daily basis.
2. On the other hand, it can contribute to the **strategic gender needs**, as programme participation can serve as a great opportunity for the long-term social and economic empowerment of women through its impact on women's economic activity and the changing social norms (for more information on the importance of gender analysis in agricultural policy, see Annex 5).

However, to utilize this potential, the programme needs to consider its gender implications by bearing in mind the programme eligibility gap, income-generation gap and existing social system of the country.

As stated in the programme's purpose, one of the main participation criteria was **to own the registered agricultural land** or have a long-term lease from the State. However, the analysis of the data showed how the perceived neutrality of the programme's preferred access-to-land criterion (owning preference versus renting preference) is actually unintentionally excluding a large portion of women from participating.

The gender difference is very high if one considers agricultural land ownership. According to the 2014 National Agricultural Census,[60] agricultural land in Georgia amounts to 788,000 hectares, of which 87 per cent (681,100 hectares) is operated by household holdings and only 13 per cent (106,600 hectares) by private companies. Moreover, there is a high level of land fragmentation as the majority of holdings (77 per cent) operate on land smaller than 1 hectare and only possess 21.5 per cent of the total agricultural land. The average size of agricultural land owned by household holdings and private companies amounts to 1.2 and 49.2 hectares, respectively. As for the gender distribution of agricultural land areas owned

60 See http://enpard.ge/ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AG-Census-Release.pdf.

by household holdings, on average 82 per cent of the total area of land (including leases) is owed by men.[61] The share of women among landowners in 2019 was 38.4 per cent.[62]

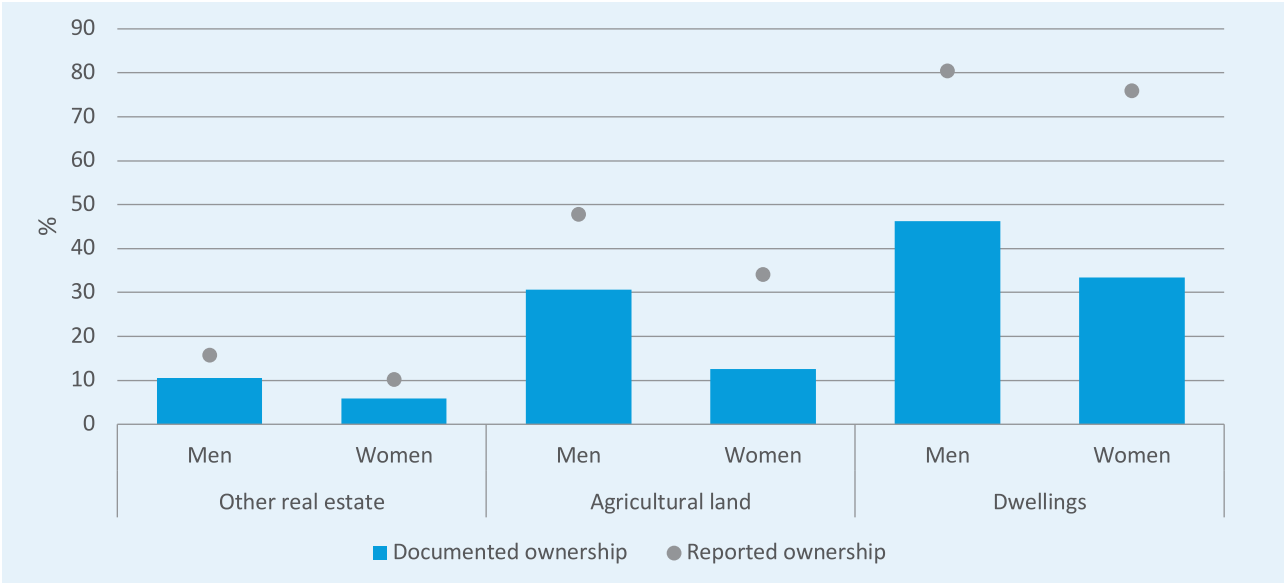
When it comes to land ownership rights, although the Constitution of Georgia (Article 21) states that men and women have the same inheritance and property rights within marriage and divorce, the Civil Code of Georgia (Article 1161) states that property owed or inherited/given to a spouse before marriage is the separate property of that spouse. Considering that social practice still strongly favours sons regarding inheritance and legal ownership of land, that women rarely claim any right to inheritance of their family's land, and that they have limited or no rights over the land that their husbands owed before the marriage, women are left in an unequal position in terms of programme eligibility.

Another problem is land registry. Georgia is still undergoing land registry reform. At this stage, less than 30 per cent of the agricultural land is registered,[63] meaning that many farmers still operate on lands for which they do not own all the necessary documentation or only have old documentation in which the physical description and boundaries of the land do not align with the actual land on which they operate. Due to the existing social norms, there also is a visible gender trend in terms of gender roles within the land registry practice; even if women own the land, it is rarely registered in their name. Consequently, the lack of registration usually minimizes the chance for women to be eligible for different government subsidies. Nevertheless, since 2019, land registry reform has ensured the possibility of the co-registration of land between spouses. Already, looking at the list of programme participants, we can see that around 2 per cent represent co-owners (male and female) of the agricultural land among beneficiaries (i.e. individual entrepreneurs and physical persons).

In 2018, Geostat's Pilot Survey on Measuring Asset Ownership and Entrepreneurship from a Gender Perspective[64] revealed two significant facts: (1) there is a clear gender gap in asset ownership in almost every type of asset in preference of men; and (2) the ownership rates are higher for reported ownership than in *documented* ownership.[65] These two conclusions show that, first of all, there is a problem in actual (not necessarily legal) ownership rights for women, which is also a sign of gender stereotypes in both culture and society. And secondly, there is still a problem in the official registry of all real estate. Thus, people may report their ownership of a property, but the same property may not be officially registered as their own.

61 Geostat, "Statistics Database".
62 Source: National Agency of Public Registry.
63 FAO, *Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia – Country Gender Assessment Serie*s (Rome, 2018). Available at http://www.fao.org/3/ca0577en/CA0577EN.pdf.
64 See https://www.geostat.ge/en/single-archive/3212.
65 A person is considered to be a Reported Owner if at least one respondent within the household reports that person as an owner of a specific asset, and a Documented Owner if the name of the person is listed on the ownership document (official registry). See Geostat, Pilot *Survey on Measuring Asset Ownership and Entrepreneurship from a Gender Perspective* (Tbilisi, 2018). Available at https://www.geostat.ge/media/21027/EDGE-Report-ENG-Final.pdf.

Figure 2.
Incidence of ownership of immovable assets, by sex and type of ownership (percentage)



Source: Geostat.

As Figure 2 shows, the highest rates of ownership for both men and women are in dwelling ownership. Moreover, the highest gap (by percentage points) in dwellings is in reported and documented ownership as well (80 per cent reported versus 46 per cent documented for men; and 76 per cent reported versus 33 per cent documented for women). In the case of agricultural lands, women's documented ownership is almost three times lower than their reported ownership (13 per cent versus 34 per cent) of the same asset; about 48 per cent of men report to own agricultural land, of whom only about 31 per cent have documented ownership. Ownership in other real estate[66] is quite low as compared to dwellings and agricultural land. The study shows that, generally, the gender disparity is more pronounced in rural areas. There is no significant difference in the "dwelling" or "other real estate" ownership categories in rural and urban areas; however, the ownership of agricultural land is overall higher in rural areas as agriculture is the main economic activity for the people in these locales.

According to the Geostat study, analysing the reported owners of immovable assets by sex and sociodemographic characteristic (marital status, education level, employment status and age group) showed some interesting facts as well:

1. For all types of assets (dwellings, agricultural land, other real estate), the highest share of ownership comes from married people, both for men and women. But, after that, a large proportion of women (between 17 per cent and 28 per cent) who own all these assets is "widowed, separated or divorced", and similarly

66 The category "other real estate" refers to residential and non-residential buildings other than dwellings and non-agricultural land. See Geostat (2018), *Pilot Survey on Measuring Asset Ownership and Entrepreneurship from a Gender Perspective.* https://www.geostat.ge/en/single-archive/3212

a large share of men (between 17 per cent and 21 per cent) who own the assets is single ("never married"). This implies that marriage is an important factor in asset ownership for women but not for men.

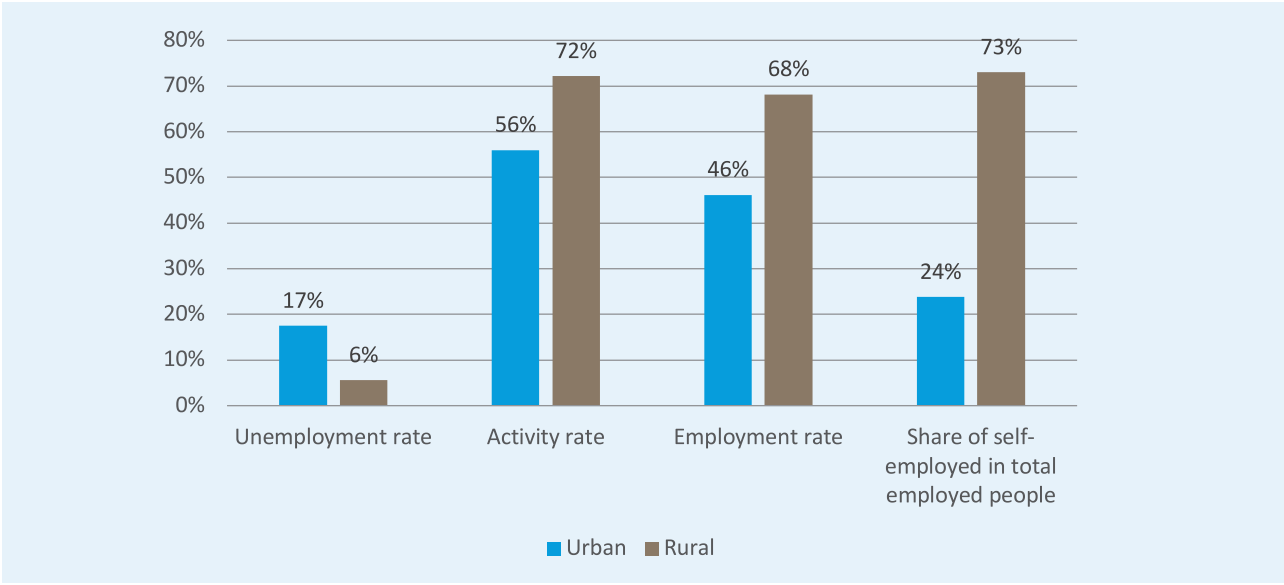
2. There is no sizeable gender gap in terms of asset ownership by education level. There is a very small share (less than 4 per cent) of people with primary or lower education who also own assets. For dwelling and agricultural land ownership, most men and women tend to have a secondary level of education. In the "other real estate" category, most women and men (over 50 per cent) tend to have tertiary education or above.
3. The majority of asset owners are employed. However, a still high proportion – between 38 per cent and 52 per cent – of women who own various types of assets is not engaged in economic activity; for men, this ranges between 23 per cent and 34 per cent.
4. There is also no sizeable gender gap in an age group comparison of asset ownership, but it still shows some interesting results. Around 30 per cent to 36 per cent of both women and men who own all these categories of assets are aged 30-49, and around 25 per cent to 37 per cent of them are aged 60 or older. Especially in the case of agricultural land ownership, the share of ownership by the "60+" age category even surpasses that of all other age groups. This in fact implies that, by far, much of the resources are owned (and likely not used) by both men and women in their less productive years (in terms of economic activity).

Another significant result of the Geostat study is that there is a difference in the distribution of the forms of asset ownership, i.e. people tend to report asset ownerships as "joint ownership by all household members" in all asset categories, but the documented ownership is mostly "exclusive male". The gender disparity is bigger in the case of agricultural land in preference of men. In the case of documented ownership of "other real estate", "exclusive female" ownership is highest compared to other asset categories. The study also reveals that the decision to sell or bequeath the asset is in general more consultative (jointly with other family members); however, the exclusive right of men to sell or bequeath the asset is higher in every category than that of women, and this gender gap is wider in agricultural land and large agricultural equipment categories. Furthermore, there are far more women than men who reported "no right" in asset selling and bequeathing. Also worth mentioning are the results of the mode of asset acquisition: the main source of acquisition of all assets for both men and women are "purchases". Furthermore, a significant amount of men owners received their assets through allocation/gifting and inheritance, while women mostly acquired assets through marital law or custom.

In addition, regional data about economic activity[67] are also relevant as a context for programmes such as this. Recent labour data show that the largest proportion of the country's labour force is accumulated in Tbilisi, followed by the regions of Imereti and Kvemo Kartli. In addition, the employment rate is only 43 per cent in Tbilisi. Unlike the capital, however, other regions of Georgia show relatively high activity and employment rates. One of the reasons behind this is that the majority (between 55 per cent and 70 per cent) of the population in the regions are self-employed people (compared to Tbilisi, where this number is only 16 per cent). Self-employed people represent 24 per cent of all employed people in urban areas and 73 per cent of those in rural areas, where agriculture is the main economic activity.

67 See https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/38/dasakmeba-da-umushevroba.

Figure 3.
Economic activity in Georgia, by locale, 2019



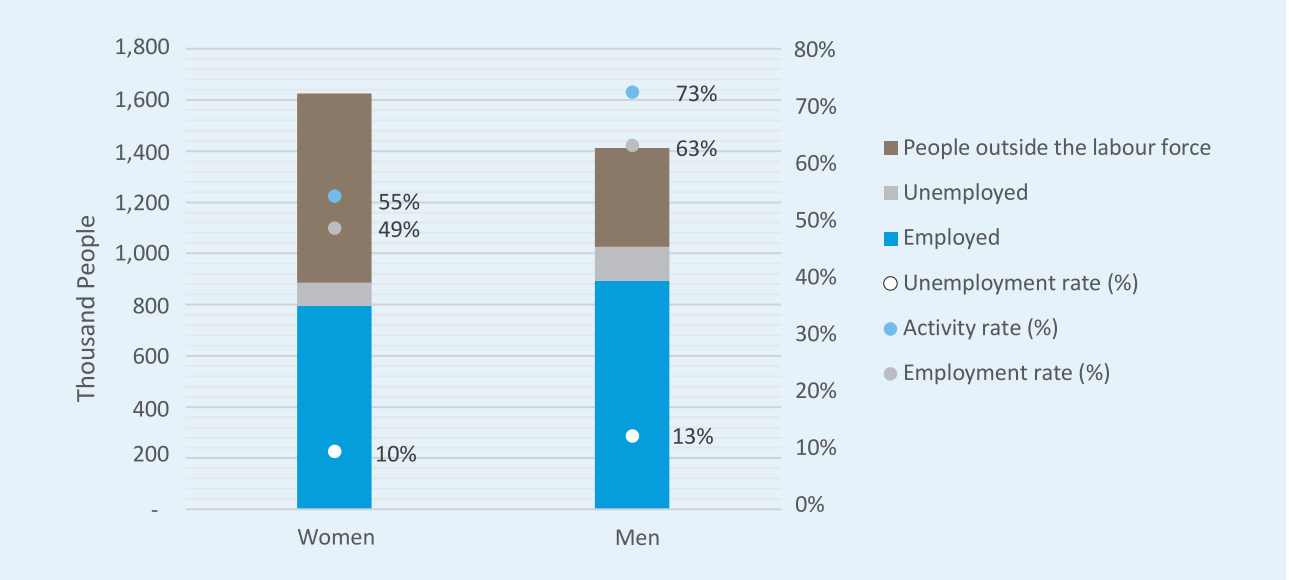
Source: Author's calculations based on Geostat data.

What is particularly interesting is the picture of gender and age segregation with respect to economic activity in the country. On the one hand, the unemployment rate in the country is lower for women (10 per cent) than for men (13 per cent), but on the other hand, both the economic activity rate (55 per cent) and the employment rate (49 per cent) for women are far below those for men (73 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively). The reason behind this is that 66 per cent of all the people outside the labour force in the country are women, so there is an overall significantly lower number of women in the labour force – hence the relatively lower unemployment rate for women compared to men. This, however, does not mean that the situation is better for women than for men as the economic activity rate and employment rate show that there is still a very high number of women outside the labour force, not even looking for jobs or ready to start one. This situation points to the inherently gender-unbalanced labour force and paints a picture where women are an untapped resource in terms of economic development.

Recent labour surveys also show that the unemployment rate decreases sharply with age. As Figure 4 shows, this decrease is steep – starting from age 15 to 65+, the unemployment rate decreases from 30 per cent to 2 per cent as the number of people outside the labour force also increases with age when people get older and retire. The economic activity rate and employment rate reach their maximum (79 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively) for the 35-49 age group. It is also interesting that the share of hired employees[68] among all employed people reaches its maximum (66 per cent) for the 20-34 age group. Then the share of self-employment increases with age, reaching its maximum of 73 per cent in retirement age (65+). This again emphasizes the fact that people in their retirement age still represent quite an important part of both the active population and employed people (13 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively) for the whole country's labour force through their self-employment.

68 A hired employee is a person aged 15 or above who performed a certain type of work during the accounting period in order to generate income or other compensation in cash or in kind. See https://www.geostat.ge/media/28955/samushao-dzalis-gamokvleva-%28eng%29.pdf.

Figure 4.
Economic activity in Georgia, by gender, 2019



Source: Author's calculations based on Geostat data.

All of the above trends are very much informed by existing gender roles that manifested themselves in Georgian society and particularly in rural areas – and therefore in the agriculture sector in Georgia. There are distinct roles in the division of labour within the sector that are perceived either as being "male"[69] or "female".[70] Women in Georgia are mostly engaged in producing subsistence crops grown for household and domestic consumption, while men are responsible for cash crops[71] and export crops – ones mainly produced as raw materials for the manufacturing industries or for exports to international markets.[72] Considering that the goal of the Plant the Future programme is to increase the local agricultural raw materials for manufacturing and to substitute imports, it is clear that inadvertently this key selection criteria is biased towards these "male crops".

Furthermore, due to market competition, cash crops require a higher level of information related to new technologies, input and output prices and other related factors. Networks are also one of the key sources of this information and knowledge transfer. Men usually have better access to information due to stronger networks. According to the literature,

69 For instance, in crop production, men tend to focus on market-oriented or cash crop production, whereas women often work with subsistence crops, minor crops and vegetable gardens. World Bank, FAO and IFAD, *Gender in Agriculture: Sourcebook* (Washington, D.C., The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and The World Bank, 2009). Available at http://www.fao.org/tempref/docrep/fao/011/aj288e/aj288e.pdf.

70 For example, in horticulture, the seed cleaning, preparation of seed and sowing, nursery production and weeding are usually done by women. P. C. Tripathi and others, eds., *Role of Women in Horticulture and women friendly technologies* (Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India, Directorate of Research on Women in Agriculture, 2012). Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303802575_Role_of_Women_in_Horticulture_and_women_friendly_technologies.

71 A cash crop refers to an agricultural crop that is grown to sell for profit. The term is used to differentiate marketed crops from subsistence crops, which are those fed to the producer's own livestock or grown as food for the producer's family.

72 FAO, *Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia; UN Women, The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa: Causes, Costs and Solutions* (2019). Available at https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/un-women-policy-brief-11-the-gender-gap-in-agricultural-productivity-in-sub-saharan-africa-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1943.

women have less extensive or poorer information networks and knowledge transfer.[73] Women, in general, tend to be less informed than men and rarely tend to participate in public, local community meetings or trainings.[74] Thus, low awareness levels and poor networks can be additional barriers to women's participation in the programme; without additional efforts to increase awareness and information-sharing among women, they can stay in this disadvantaged situation. This could be mitigated via trainings and awareness-raising activities, by increasing women's knowledge in marketing and business, learning how to use mechanization (which is often made in a way that women cannot use or is physically very difficult for women to use in practice) and other technologies, and by providing other important agricultural information.

Next, these existing gender roles also impact the type of training and access to training provided. It has to be mentioned that Plant the Future used to offer mandatory trainings for each subcomponent of the programme before 2019 and only for the berry subcomponent after 2019. These trainings were usually conducted on the premises of the agency and mostly in Tbilisi; therefore, poor transport and physical proximity could have been important factors limiting women's access to trainings. Likewise, these trainings failed to take into consideration the different knowledge bases of women and men in this sector and have not been designed with this consideration in mind; therefore, some trainings – although provided to both women and men in equal numbers – did not have an equal impact given this pre-existing gap in knowledge and capacities.

Furthermore, the programme has an irrigation component as proper irrigation is one of the most important factors in agriculture. According to the Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems,[75] limited access to irrigation water was reported by between 35 per cent and almost 50 per cent of the study respondents as one of the main problems affecting land cultivation (however, the regions of Adjara and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti are exceptions in this case). Moreover, improving access to water and the development of irrigation is one of the priorities of Georgia's infrastructural development plan and is implemented by the public service hall with support from the World Bank under the Irrigation and Land Market Development project. However, not all farmers have equal access to irrigation benefits; usually these are women whose needs and interest are neglected in irrigation system design and provision. As the type of crops planted, the area and the location of land owned by women and men beneficiaries differ, their preferences for irrigation technologies can also differ. Considering that men usually own larger plots and have easier access to different sources of potential financial support/investment capital and have more freedom of movement, they have a better opportunity to utilize modern irrigation technologies (e.g. drip irrigation, sprinkler irrigation and/or motor pumps). What is more, considering that women mostly own smaller land plots and have limited access to finance, they are further expected to rely on labour-intensive manual irrigation. Hence, while offering co-financing of the irrigation systems, the programme should take into consideration these gender gaps, which it does not at the moment.

Equally, international literature shows that women-owned farms are as productive as their male counterparts when women have access to the same resources, such as family labour, high-yield crops,[76]

73 UNDP, Government of Sweden and Union Sapari, Women's economic empowerment in Georgia.

74 ACT, UN Women, SCO and ADC, Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems (2018). Available at https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/agri%20and%20local%20dev%20georgia.pdf?la=en&vs=4604.

75 See https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20 office %20georgia/attachments/publications/2016/gender%20 assessment%20of%20agriculture.pdf?la=en&vs=3603.

76 High-yield and high-value crops include cash crops and exported crops, which are typically farmed by men. UN Women, *The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

pesticides and fertilizer, education, improved technologies, credit, land and other resources.[77] However, in Georgia, dealing with machinery, pesticides/fertilizer and irrigation infrastructure is typically believed to be "men's work", considering that they have more freedom of movement and are better connected to local farmers' networks. Therefore, women might have more challenges in accessing irrigation systems, agricultural equipment and other production inputs.[78] Considering that the criterion of having an irrigation system or water source near the land is another requirement for participating in the programme, this is further identified as another unintended, negative gender-discriminating implication of the programme.

Possibly the key variable that influences the participation of women in this programme is the set of existing gender norms. Considering that a patriarchal system is still strongly present in Georgia, especially in rural areas,[79] households are usually male-headed. In 2018, women only represented 31 per cent of households, the majority of whom (around 70 per cent) were more than 60 years old.[80] Such sex and age distribution among female household heads, female longevity and the greater frequency of widowhood indicates that they might be considered as heads mainly after the death of their spouses. In terms of gender roles, women's main responsibility is to take care of the family, while men are considered to be the main decision makers and breadwinners.

Moreover, women are involved in agriculture for more days per year compared to men in all regions of Georgia.[81] On average, women are engaged for 344 days per year, while men only for 264. In addition, women's unpaid work exceeds that of men by 13 times:[82]

- Women are more likely to do non-paid work; for example, women who work in family settings do not consider themselves as farmers or workers but see this work as part of their housework. Around 60 per cent of self-employed women are unpaid workers.[83]
- In family settings, there is a gender-based distribution of tasks: women are more involved in work-intensive activities, while men are more involved in capital-intensive activities.[84]
- Men's activities include managing the machinery; working as shepherds; dealing with transportation and going to the city or large markets; taking care of vineyards, beehives, timberwork and irrigation; and ploughing and working in the field (i.e. work that needs physical strength or is more complex (e.g. management and machinery) is perceived to be men's work).[85]
- Women's activities include taking care of the household, children and/or dependants; manual work in agriculture production and processing; taking care of domestic animals; and collecting fruits and vegetables in the field; however, they are usually also involved in men's activities too.[86]

The unequal distribution of unpaid family work (considering that females are more oriented to subsistence farming – agricultural production for household consumption) also highlights the vulnerability of women in Georgian society and contributes to gender inequality in agricultural activities. Women's role in agriculture mainly rests on the stereotypical assumption that they mostly are caregivers within the household and neglects women's multidimensional involvement in agricultural activities.

77 C. Doss, *If women hold up half the sky, how much of the world's food do they produce?* (FAO, Agricultural Development Economics Division, 2011). Available at http://www.fao.org/3/a-am309e.pdf; UN Women, *The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

78 This was also revealed in interviews conducted by the GIA team.

79 UNFPA, Men and gender relations in Georgia (2014). Available at https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/men-and-gender-relations-georgia.

80 In the case of men, 45 per cent of them fell into the 40-59 age group while 45 per cent of them were more than 60 years old. Source: Geostat.

81 ACT, UN Women, SCO and ADC, *Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.*

82 Ibid.

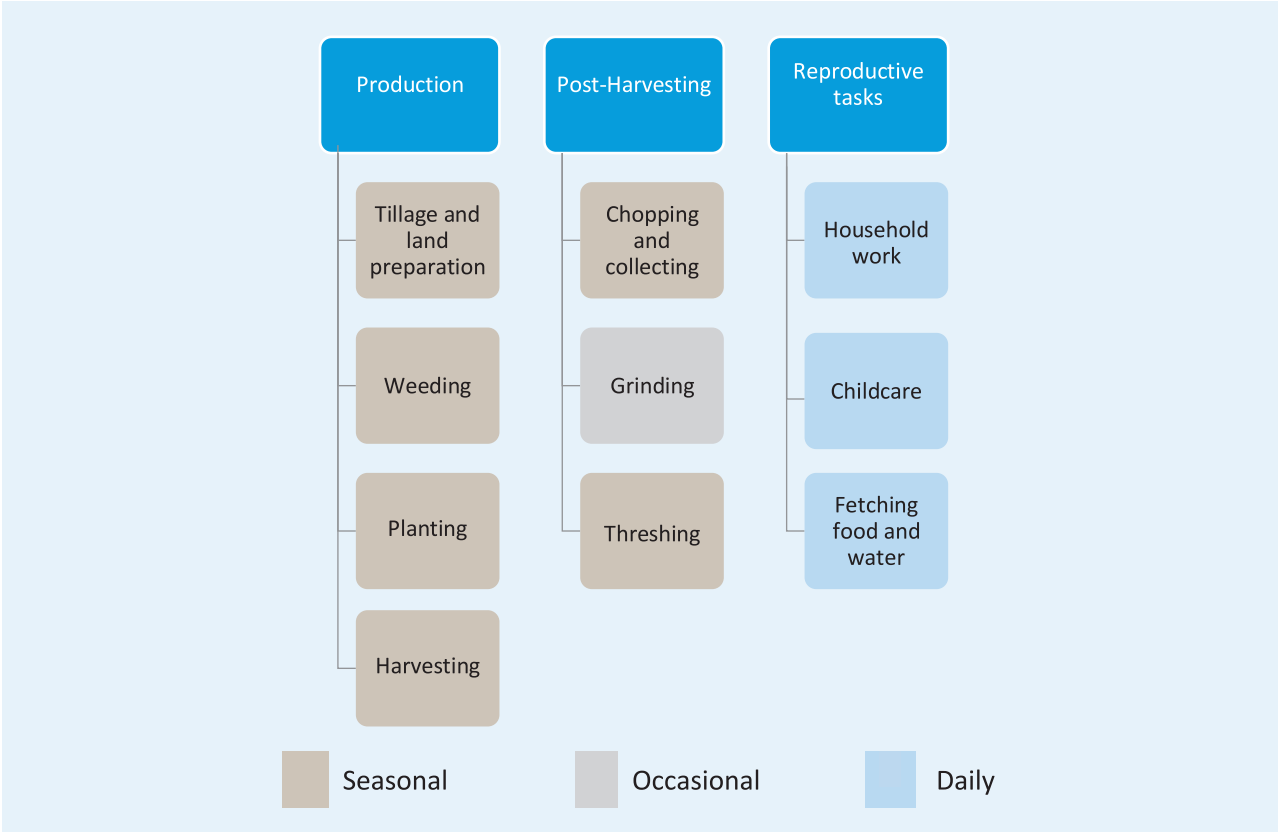
83 FAO, *Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia.*

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

Diagram 1.
Labour-intensive tasks in agricultural production



Furthermore, unequal access to productive resources, social infrastructure, credit, women's engagement in low-value-added and smaller-scale agricultural production and less participation in public meetings and trainings also contribute to gender inequality in agricultural activities.[87] The availability of labour depends on the amount of household labour that can be mobilized for agriculture and on the labour that can be hired in the labour market: men usually can devote their full time to be involved in agriculture and also can hire non-family labour. On the other hand, women have the time burden imposed by domestic tasks, and they usually do not have enough resources to hire non-family labour. This can affect the scale and efficiency of production.

Diagram 1 identifies the more labour-intensive tasks involved in agricultural production, which we will examine through a gender lens:

- Usually men only take up the production and post-harvesting tasks while women take up production, post-harvesting and reproductive tasks (tilling and land preparation, planting and weeding require the most physical effort).
- Due to the lack of data, it is hard to identify the exact division of labour in production and post-harvesting tasks. However, as previously mentioned, women are engaged for 80 more days in agriculture work per year than males.[88]

87 UNDP, Government of Sweden and the Parliament of Georgia, *Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations, Volume 2* (2018). Available at http://parliament.ge/ge/ajax/downloadFile/84646/ENG_Volume2_Gender_Equality_in_Georgia_VOL2_ENG.

88 UN Women, Gender Assessment of Agricultural and Local Development Systems (2016). Available at https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/04/gender-assessment-of-agriculture-and-local-development-systems.

- Moreover, women spend more time on family responsibilities; on average, women spend 45 hours on unpaid care work each week, while men devote only 15 hours per week.[89]

It is these prevailing gender norms and unequal distribution of household tasks that are one of the key explanatory factors of the existing gender gaps in the Georgian agricultural labour market. In fact, in 2019, 62.2 per cent of women and 74.5 per cent of men were employed, while the unemployment rate in rural areas of Georgia amounted to 4.5 per cent for women and 6.4 per cent for men.[90] Along with the gender gap in employment, there is a significant gender gap in terms of income generation. On average (during the 2015-2018 period), the gender gap in male and female salaries in the agriculture, hunting and forestry sector amounted to around 10 per cent, while the gender gap in average monthly income (per household) from self-employment amounted to around 50 per cent, and the gender gap in average monthly income from selling agricultural production amounted to around 58 per cent.[91]

Considering that the programme Plant the Future can have important socioeconomic implications by supporting local agricultural production and contributing to poverty reduction, simply focusing an analysis on the visible gender gaps without addressing the underlying factors would oversimplify this complex issue. The programme is skewed towards men, partly because agriculture is still defined as a male activity but partly because of the lack of the RDA's active efforts to change these gender stereotypes and take them into consideration while implementing the programme. Not considering the discussed gender gaps in programme design can significantly interfere with not only programme effectiveness but also the well-being of communities and households as a whole. However, exclusively focusing on the differences between women and men, especially in terms of access to resources and existing gender roles and values, can limit the analysis by homogenizing women and men as fixed gender groups without focusing on other social dimensions and relations.

In order for the RDA's gender integration efforts to be transformative, the agency should go beyond instrumental interventions and propose structural changes. Women should not be understood as a homogenous gender group; accordingly, the programme should consider that the long-term needs of rural women, their decision-making power, their access to and control of resources and their own labour can vary by many interesting social dimensions such as age, social status, ethnicity and region, among others. Therefore, along with adjustments to programme eligibility criteria to increase the number of women beneficiaries, the RDA must make sure that women beneficiaries are given enough support to put them in position of development actors. Moreover, women's access to the programme should lead to concrete improvements in their everyday lives as well as enhance the overall productivity of the sector and the economy.

89 UN Women, *Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Georgia: Causes and Consequences* (Tbilisi, 2018). Available at https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/womens%20economic%20inactivity%20and%20inf%20employment%20georgia.pdf?la=en&vs=2746.

90 Source: Geostat. Note: Even though the general unemployment rate in the country only amounted 13 per cent for men and 10 per cent for women, the structure of the labour market still remains the challenge: 50.3 per cent are hired employees, and 49.7 per cent still classify as self-employed.

91 Source: Geostat.

GIA OF THE PLANT THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

PART 4: GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME

Given the importance of the programme and its potential in terms of addressing gender inequality in the agriculture sector, this section reviews in greater detail the programme's current impacts through a gender lens. Equally, it is important to examine the level of financial allocations to this programme and consequently the impact those allocations too have on contributing to the achievement of gender equality in Georgia. The state budget resources allocated to the Plant the Future programme have increased, from GEL 1.788 million in 2015 to GEL 15.614 million in 2019. The programme on average receives 7 per cent of the annual financing of the Unified Agro Project, which alone represents almost half of the total MEPA budgetary resources.[92] In 2020, the state budget allocation for the Plant the Future programme is planned to be GEL 13 million.

Currently, it is impossible to track down the state budget to see how Plant the Future's budget responds to the gender equality commitments and targets, as its goals and objectives do not integrate a gender perspective.[93] What we can see now, looking at the allocations as presented in the current budget plans, is that the vast majority of programme beneficiaries are individuals. Furthermore, 51 per cent of them are operating on a land plot smaller than 1.5 hectares. Only 17 per cent of total individual beneficiaries own 10hectaresof land or more. In addition, 80 per cent of total individual beneficiaries have funding for the garden component, and only two nurseries were co-financed by the programme. As we are missing other data, disaggregated by gender – on, for example, the beneficiaries' previous experience implementing similar programmes and their previous income/profit flows – we are not able to assess the impact of the size of allocations that target their improved economic well-being. Once the more gender-disaggregated statistics are available on the beneficiaries of this programme, on variables other than just the size of the land/plot (variables such as their economic and social standing at the beginning of the programme, their income levels, their profits, etc.), we can take a deeper dive into the analysis and propose further measures to enhance the final effect of this programme.

As is, this analysis has tried to identify the key trends and highlight the issues currently visible that could be addressed immediately to improve and enhance gender mainstreaming in this programme.

According to the 2019 Annual Report of the MEPA,[94] between 2015 and 2019, a total of 1,305 gardens were cultivated under Plant the Future, with the total size of the cultivated land amounting to 8,476 hectares. The total amount of investment reached GEL 87 million, 55 per cent of which was co-financed by the State. The top crop choices of the programme beneficiaries were walnuts, almonds and apples. The programme beneficiaries are more concentrated in eastern Georgia – more than 80 per cent of the total cultivated land area is distributed across three regions: Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Shida Kartli. However, when it comes to the berry subcomponent of the programme, almost 90 per cent of the cultivated area is in the western part of

92 See Ministry of Finance of Georgia, https://mof.ge/4564.

93 Georgia's fiscal framework does not include a specification or methodology of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), but existing recommendations from the order of the Government (Order of Minister of Georgia, No. 385, 8 July 2011) recognize GRB as part of performance-based budgeting. In particular, the order of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia providing recommendations on the preparation of performance-based budgeting states that every gender-sensitive budget programme should include, at least, one gender indicator to measure performance of the programme in this regard. In the case of the Plant the Future programme, performance measures only include data on the cultivated land areas and the numbers of gardens, although there are no gender-related data or indicators.

94 Available at https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/Reports.

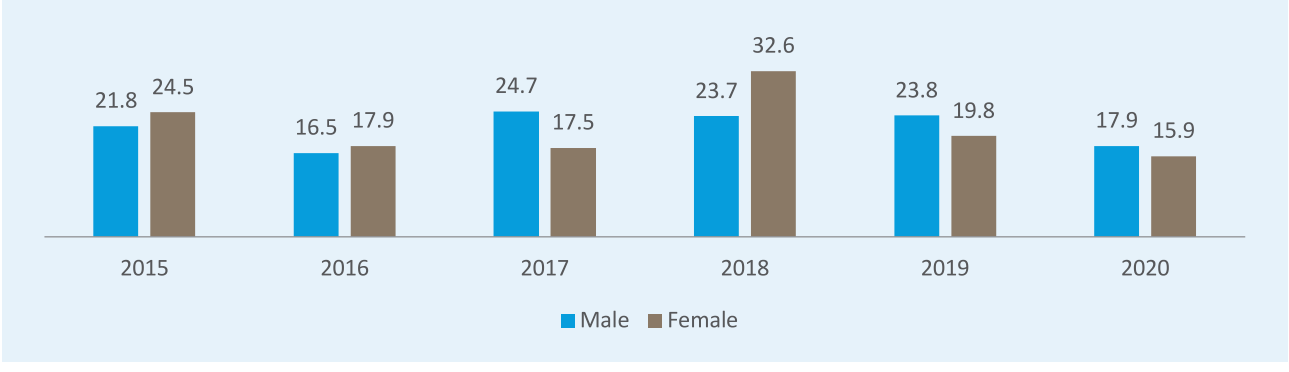
Georgia. These patterns could be explained by the characteristics and size of the land plot, as well as the climate conditions that could be favourable for different crops in the cases of western and eastern Georgia (and traditions of harvesting different crops in particular regions matter as well).[95]

Financing trends

The Plant the Future programme offers financial support to the landowners; nonetheless, subsidies have a ceiling, meaning the programme participants might still need to find some additional sources to finance their project. The overall share of the government subsidy in the total investment amounts to 55 per cent.[96]

The average subsidy and the pattern of the amount of financing received by male and female beneficiaries are not dramatically different from each other. However, in 2018, the average financing received by female beneficiaries was higher compared to male beneficiaries. This was due to the fact that, 24 per cent of the beneficiaries who received the top co-funding from the RDA (more than GEL 50,000) were female, the highest share compared to previous years. Moreover, the number of female beneficiaries who received the top co-funding was also relatively high in 2019; in the same year, the number of beneficiaries, both female and male, with land plots smaller than 1 hectare increased dramatically, therefore decreasing the average amount of financing. However, during the consultation process, no additional explanation was found as to why this was the case – no gender criteria and no encouragement or any intentional intervention was used in this regard. The average co-financing of male beneficiaries is more or less stable and was around GEL 24,000 in the 2017-2019 period, while for women, the average co-financing is quite volatile. This volatility of women's average co-financing highlights that there is definitely room for improvement and that further analysis is needed. It is particularly important to identify factors behind such a positive co-financing pattern for women in 2018. Special attention has to be directed to the role of regional information consultation centres in the process, which represent the RDA in local municipalities and could serve as a facilitator for improvement and further development.

Figure 5.
Average financing from the RDA (percentage)

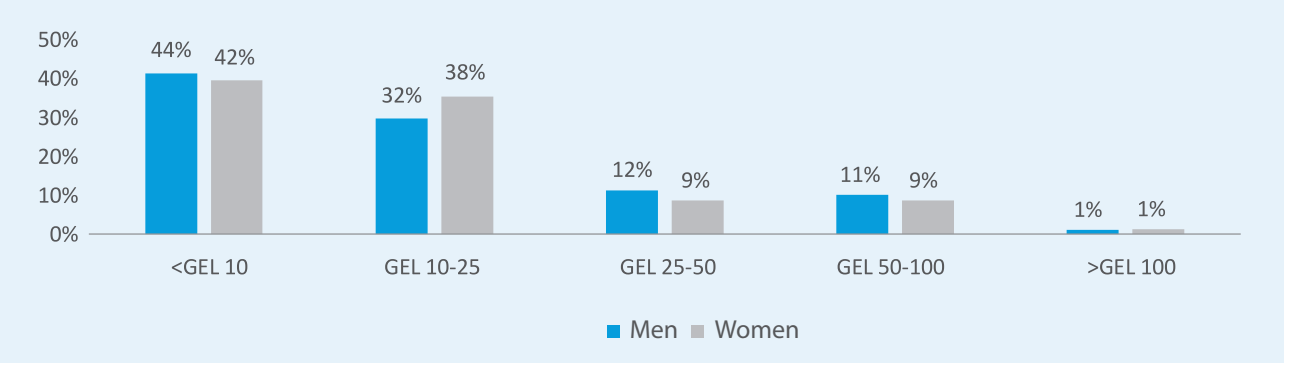


Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

95 In particular, western Georgia has naturally favourable conditions for cultivating berries and is relatively scarce in agricultural lands; instead, there are so-called "small-land plots", thus the conditions envisaged in this new subcomponent of the programme became popular there. In addition, as for the nursery component, only two nurseries have been financed in western Georgia throughout the existence of the programme.

96 Sources: MEPA annual reports for 2018 and 2019.

Figure 6.
Distribution of participants by the amount of financing received (thousands of GEL)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

Studying the top 20 male and female beneficiaries based on the size of subsidies received, the average land size for men is 21 hectares and the average subsidy is GEL 130,844, while for women, the average land size is slightly less at 16 hectares and the average subsidy is GEL 100,805 (see Annex 8). In the case of the beneficiaries that classify as private companies and agricultural cooperatives, the average land size is 16 hectares and the average subsidy is GEL 130,625 (hence, private companies and cooperatives on average receive a higher subsidy per hectare of land compared to individuals).

In addition, applicants have to undertake an amount of costs in order to be able to participate in the selection process:

- They have to provide the documentation on the land ownership from the public service hall – a cost of around GEL 15 – and we should also consider the transportation costs (the public service hall has offices in every regional centre).
- They have to provide the certification of fitness and compliance of the land plot's soil for perennial crops specified – a cost of around GEL 280 per hectare (refunded by the programme in case the applicant is selected).
- They have to cultivate the land plot according to the methodology determined by the agricultural information consultation centre – a cost of around GEL 150 per hectare.
- They have to provide fencing of the land plot (these costs are not refundable).

Moreover, beneficiaries have better physical access to financing – commercial banks and microfinance institutions are operating in all cities and regional towns and offer rural credits to the clients. However, considering that women are less likely to be registered as property owners (of land, houses, apartments and capital equipment), they are left in an unequal position compared to men.

Indeed, the representatives of the programme do not usually analyse gender-disaggregated data to identify specific recommendations for increasing women's involvement in the programme. Had they done so, they would have noted that the majority of the programme beneficiaries tend to be individuals rather than private companies and cooperatives and that the programme is mostly dominated by male candidates, which could be explained partly by gender norms (e.g. working in the garden is considered as a physically difficult job that should be undertaken by men) but also by criteria heavily based on ownership or the lack of collateral accessible to women. Ownership problems, the lack of collateral for women and problems with accessing financing are currently identified as barriers to women's fulfilment of the criteria for programme support.

Moreover, programme representatives would note the gap between men and women involved in the

garden component of the programme – which tends to be quite high. On the other hand, they would note that in cases where women are included, it is often in relation to the berry subcomponent. Indeed, considering that berry production allows farmers to produce from a smaller area of land and, usually, consumes fewer resources, this participation level of women is to be expected. However, what it means is that women do participate at the level of subsistence farming, which is not that profitable. For that reason, we cannot evaluate the economic empowerment impact of this programme yet.

Indeed, the introduction of the berry subcomponent of the programme notably increased the involvement of beneficiaries with a land size smaller than 0.5 hectares. In addition, the average yields for men and women are quite close. However, on average, individual beneficiaries own smaller land plots compared to the private companies and agricultural cooperatives. Agricultural cooperatives are not actively involved in the programme. Moreover, women represent a small share of cooperative stakeholders, as a result of existing gender norms, soviet legacy and, therefore, the negative attitude towards the earlier forms of cooperatives. Despite the fact that the Plant the Future programme offers financial support to landowners, subsidies have limits; participants might still need to find some additional financial resources to undertake the project.

Consequently, if assessed through a gender lens, we see that Plant the Future is trying to achieve its primary objectives; however, it is overlooking the special needs of women and viewing the entire programme and its financial allocation patterns as being gender-neutral. In so doing, programme staff and the RDA overall are missing a great opportunity to use the programme and its financial support to enhance women's overall participation in agriculture and therefore make an impact on women's economic empowerment.

Participation

Much like gender-disaggregated data regarding the impact of programme financing/budget allocations, there is a limit to gender-disaggregated data kept by government institutions. The MEPA's annual report does not provide any gender-disaggregated data and/or analysis of programme beneficiaries. Moreover, the MEPA's annual report publishes forecasts of crop yields and revenues under the co-financing component of perennial gardens.[97]

According to the representatives of the RDA, the agency is not keeping information about those applicants who were rejected due to not fulfilling some criteria of the programme and/or lacking some necessary documentation. It is notable that further analysis of the applicants who did not satisfy the criteria would be helpful to understand which criteria are the most difficult to satisfy by applicants and what are the reasons behind not fulfilling them.[98] This kind of analysis would not only increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the programme but also contribute to the identification of gender-specific obstacles (e.g. issues related to land registration, lack of collateral, access to finance, etc.). The latter could be achieved by collecting information about the gender distribution of the applicants who could not fulfil the criteria and by studying the reasons behind the rejection.

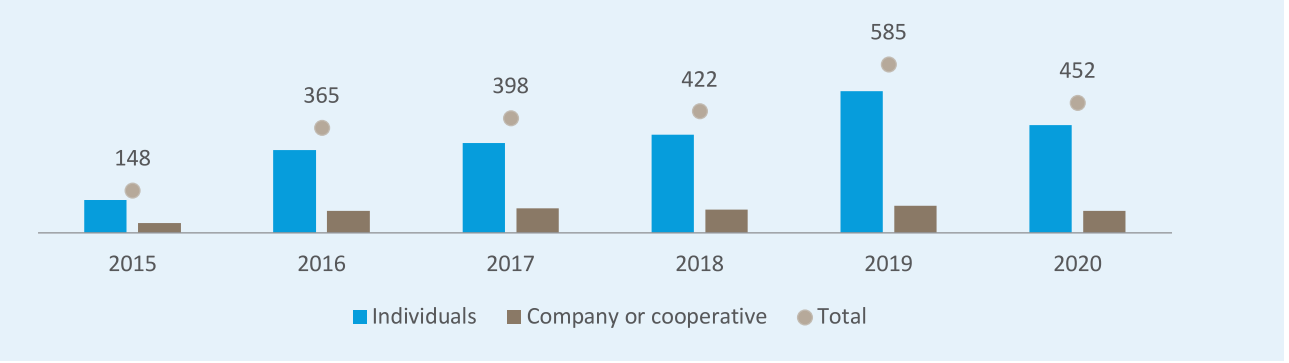
Roughly 50 per cent of those who applied for the programme received a grant. Participants of the programme are grouped into three categories:

- **Individuals** – male or female
- **Co-owners of the land** – as of 2019, registered agricultural land with several co-owners
- **Private companies and agricultural cooperatives**

97 According to the interviews with the representatives of the local extension centres, they usually monitor the development and economic soundness of individual projects in their regions, as well as provide statistical analysis and forecasting for the components of the programme.

98 In addition, such a group would be a useful source to evaluate the effect of the programme in general and how programme beneficiaries benefited with time in comparison to others who were rejected.

Figure 7.
Number of beneficiaries, by category, 2015-2020



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

Figure 7 presents the profile of the beneficiaries of Plant the Future, which makes evident that this programme successfully fulfils the objective of addressing and supporting small landowners' participation in rural development and agriculture in Georgia. Certainly, even though the programme offers slightly higher co-financing rates for agricultural cooperatives (see Annex 4), the majority of the programme beneficiaries tend to be individuals (on average 78 per cent) and on average receive GEL 20,889 of co-financing from the RDA. Agricultural cooperatives or private companies, however, only account for around 14 per cent of the total beneficiaries and on average receive GEL 42,825 of co-financing.

It is understood that mostly financing individual landowners could indeed provide women with even more opportunities to participate in the programme (it would be even better to award grants based on the criterion of "the ownership of the land on the basis of the power of attorney"), as cooperatives and private companies tend to be less represented by women (only around 24 per cent of all cooperative shareholders are women). However, at the moment, it is noted that the programme is mostly dominated by male candidates.

The average share (between 2015 and 2020) of male beneficiaries[99] of the programme equals 79 per cent, while the average share for the female beneficiaries is 19 per cent, and for mixed gender co-owners (female and male owners together), only 2 per cent. Based on the in-depth interviews conducted by the GIA team with major stakeholders, the reasons behind the low level of female participation in the programme include gender norms (e.g. working in the garden is considered as a physically difficult job that should be undertaken by men), land ownership problems, the lack of collateral and problems with accessing financing. In addition, the RDA does not monitor and evaluate already existing projects and their evolvement over time.

99 Sex is indicated only if the beneficiary is an individual or an individual entrepreneur.

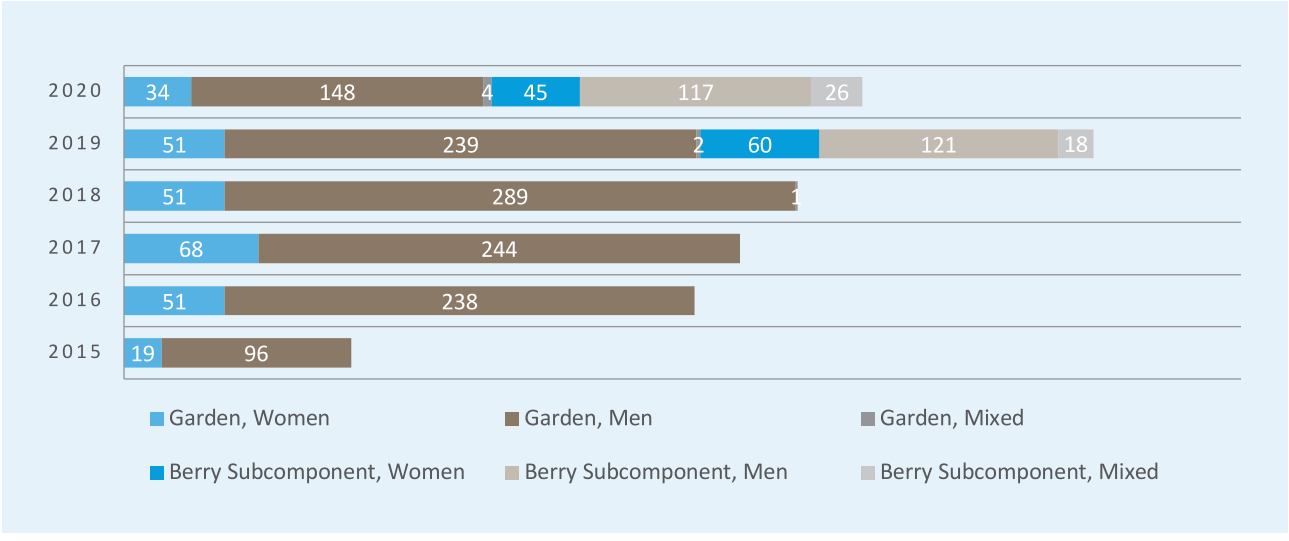
Table 4.
Participation rates in the programme, by gender

Beneficiaries	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	17%	18%	22%	15%	23%	21%
Male	83%	82%	78%	85%	73%	71%
Mixed	-	-	-	-	4%	8%

Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

By looking at the gender distribution of participants by programme component,[100] men are five times more represented in the garden component of the programme than women, while the overall participation rate of men in the newly introduced berry subcomponent (which is considered as a more appropriate job for women compared to the other subcomponents) is lower in comparison. In this case, men are only represented half as much as women.

Figure 8.
Participation, by programme component



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

The introduction of the new subcomponent to the programme indeed supported an increase in the number of female beneficiaries. However, the major investment in the form of the garden component is still mostly directed at men, leaving small-scale farming such as the berry subcomponent for women. This in itself presents a missed transformative opportunity for the programme – the potential ability of a programme like Plant the Future to support women to become more central and active actors in rural development rather than simply working around already existing stereotypical attitudes that men are better at doing business and that the agricultural sector is perceived as being more masculine.

100 As the analysis is focused on individual beneficiaries, the nursery component is not discussed here as it is mostly done by limited liability companies.

Regarding the regional distribution of the women beneficiaries (see Table 5), the vast majority of them are from the Shida Kartli and Kakheti regions, but females make up only 15 per cent and 26 per cent of all beneficiaries, respectively, in these regions. Moreover, Mtskheta-Mtianeti region has the highest share (31 per cent) of women beneficiaries, compared to all other regions. Interestingly enough, this is the region where the average land size owned by the programme beneficiaries is the smallest – around 1 hectare. Moreover, 60 per cent of female beneficiaries in Mtskheta-Mtianeti entered the programme in 2019 and 2020 when the berry subcomponent was introduced; thus, individuals with land size smaller than 0.5 hectares became eligible for the programme. In general, the lowest participation rate in the programme is seen in two regions: Adjara and Racha-Lechkhumi. These are the same regions where there are no women participants as well. However, half of the participants in Adjara are in the mixed category – called "Female, Male" – which are women and men who might have applied for support under this programme as co-owners.

Table 5.
Total number of programme participants, 2015-2020

	Beneficiaries				Shares		
	Male	**Female**	**Female, Male**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Female, Male**
Adjara	3	0	3	**6**	50%	0%	50%
Guria	52	15	12	**79**	66%	19%	15%
Imereti	166	50	14	**230**	72%	22%	6%
Kakheti	264	93	2	**359**	74%	26%	1%
Kvemo Kartli	221	39	0	**260**	85%	15%	0%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	51	25	5	**81**	63%	31%	6%
Racha-Lechkhumi	4	0	0	**4**	100%	0%	0%
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	164	54	12	**230**	71%	23%	5%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	12	2	2	**16**	75%	13%	13%
Shida Kartli	555	100	1	**656**	85%	15%	0%
Total	**1,492**	**378**	**51**	**1,921**	**78%**	**20%**	**3%**

Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

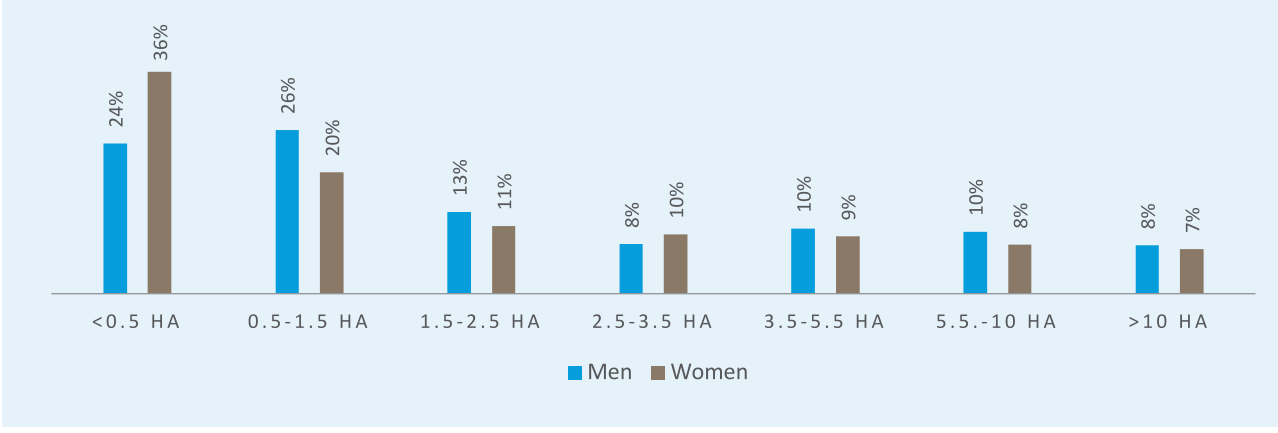
Participation overall is relatively higher in the top fruit-producing regions of Georgia (Shida Kartli and Kakheti, as well as Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti with equal participation) compared to the other regions. However, unlike Kakheti, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Shida Kartli is characterized by the low participation of women. This is mainly linked to the crop choices of the female and male beneficiaries. While Kakheti, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti are mainly producers of walnuts and berries, respectively, crops that are equally popular among women and men beneficiaries, Shida Kartli is the top producer of stone fruits, the crop type that is mostly chosen by male beneficiaries (apples, pears and plums). We have noted that in areas where the extension centres are more gender-responsive and/or have knowledge of gender equality, women's participation is on the rise. Thus, another important influencer regarding the regional distribution of female beneficiaries can be the fact that, even though the general responsibilities of the local extension centres of the RDA are regulated by a decree of the

MEPA, the role of these centres in terms of the Plant the Future programme is not outlined; therefore, their involvement is not always uniform in every region.

Land size

The land size of the programme beneficiaries somewhat mimics the agricultural land fragmentation in the country, meaning that individual beneficiaries own, on average, smaller land plots compared to private companies and agricultural cooperatives. In fact, on average, 55 per cent of male and 51 per cent of female participants of the programme possess agricultural land that is smaller than or equal to 1.5 hectares; 32 per cent of male and 30 per cent of female participants possess agricultural land that is between 1.5 and 5.5 hectares; and 18 per cent of male and 15 per cent of female participants possess agricultural land that is larger than 5.5 hectares (for more details, see Annex 7).

Figure 9.
Land distribution among of the programme beneficiaries (percentage)

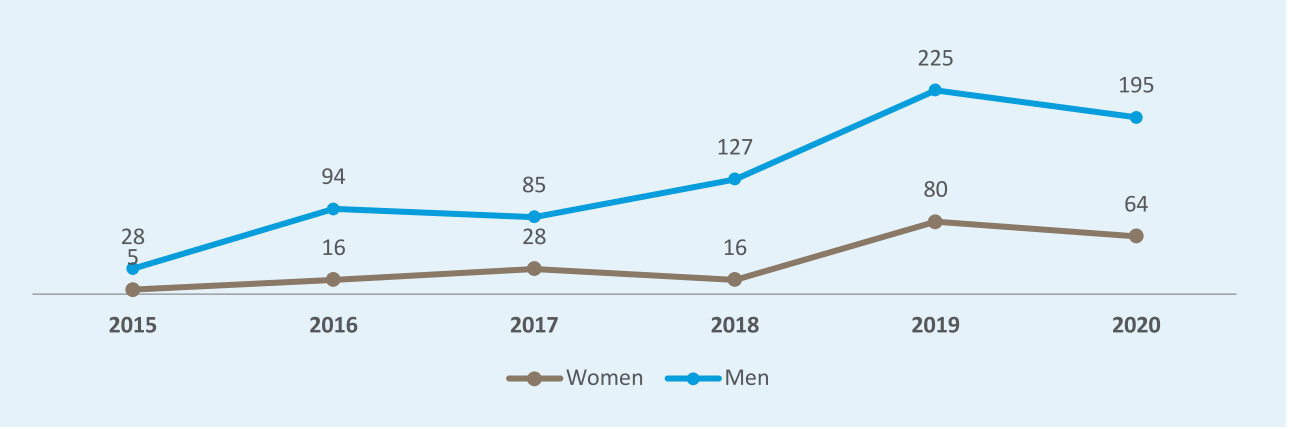


Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

After the introduction of the berry subcomponent to the programme in late 2018, the involvement of the beneficiaries with land sizes smaller than 0.5 hectares has dramatically increased in 2019 and 2020.[101] In addition, introducing the berry subcomponent has also increased female and male participation by around 17 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Moreover, in 2019 and 2020, on average, 45 per cent of programme beneficiaries were involved in the berry subcomponent of the programme. Thus, the introduction of the smaller-land criterion positively affected women's participation in the programme (and had a positive impact on men's participation as well, hence increasing the overall number of beneficiaries).

101 The berry subcomponent includes a 100 per cent subsidy for buying crops, developing an irrigation system and obtaining all other necessary materials for agricultural land that falls in the 0.15-0.5 hectare size range.

Figure 10.
Number of beneficiaries with land size smaller than 1.5 hectares



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

Crop choice

There is also a gendered pattern in the choice of crops that mimics the distribution of gender across land size. As a result of existing gender gaps in terms of the access to land and financial resources, women's participation is less predictable in cash crops, which implies that they are less likely to choose capital-intensive production. Walnuts, apples, blueberries, raspberries and plums are the top choices for the beneficiaries of both sexes, although not with identical rankings.

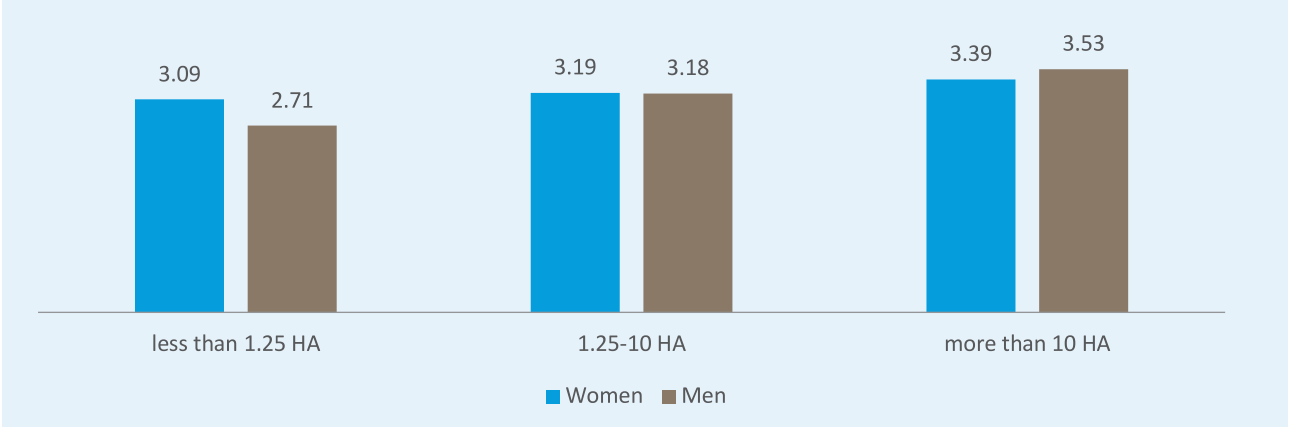
Table 6.
Top crop choices by women and men within the Plant the Future programme, 2015-2020

	Male	Female	Female, Male
Walnuts	18%	19%	0%
Blueberries	14%	21%	65%
Apples	15%	11%	2%
Raspberries	10%	12%	22%
Plums	7%	6%	0%
Almonds	6%	4%	4%
Sweet Cherries	5%	3%	0%
Blackberries	5%	5%	8%
Other Crops	20%	20%	0%

Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

On average, GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA has a return of 1.5 kg in agricultural production and GEL 3.40 of producers' income for the programme beneficiaries. As the choice of land size and, hence, crop does differ slightly for women and men beneficiaries, average producers' income also varies by gender. On average, GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA has a return of 1.75 kg in agricultural production and GEL 3.27 of producers' income for women beneficiaries, and 1.8 kg in agricultural production and GEL 3.30 of producers' income for men beneficiaries. Moreover, women beneficiaries with smaller-sized land plots have higher producers' income compared to men with similar land size; on the contrary, the same indicator is higher for men as the land size increases, once again highlighting the gender gap with respect to access to capital, irrigation and additional finance.

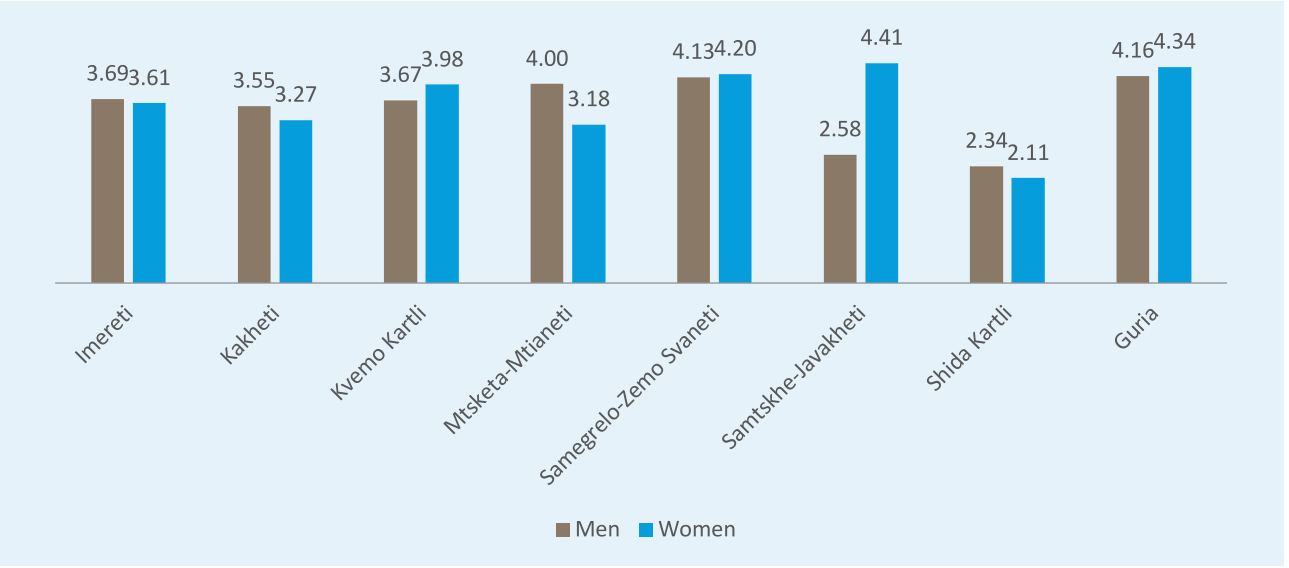
Figure 11.
Producers' income per GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA, by land size (GEL)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

In addition, there are significant regional differences in terms of producers' income per GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA. Samtskhe-Javakheti is the region where the positive gender gap with respect to beneficiary producers' income is the highest. Other regions where women beneficiaries have higher producers' income per GEL 1 of co-finding are Guria, Kvemo Kartli and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, and this trend can partly be explained by the fact that in all of these regions, the share of women who have smaller land plots and who choose nuts as their crop to cultivate is higher compared to those who choose other crops. As previously described, in the case of smaller land plots where cultivating, harvesting and maintenance are possible to do manually, women tend to choose capital-intensive and expensive crops, such as nuts, unlike in the case of larger land plots where the potential need for utilizing automated equipment is far greater.

Figure 12.
Producers' income per GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA, by region (GEL)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

Consequently, upgrading the strategies for any given product value chain, without conducting a thorough gender analysis, might not result in the intended impact on diverse gender groups. The findings of this study show that male farmers in general preferred (and had the ability to fulfil the prerequisite criteria) to export cash crops and that, in terms of future upgrading of the programme's strategies, it is evident that gender needs should be further considered. Crop export is preferred by men as they are more successful in fulfilling the criteria for doing so, not necessarily because crop export is opposed by women per se.

However, if the aim of the programme is to contribute to gender equality, criteria should also be examined in depth in terms of their gender sensitivities in order to open other opportunities (aside from the berry element) for women to enhance their meaningful participation in all parts of the production chain. Likewise, further information on women's needs and their opinion on preferred upgrading strategies related to crop harvesting, transportation and primary processing is needed as we recognize that upgrading strategies (currently biased towards men) are more focused on farm inputs and crop marketing. Consequently, we recommend that site-specific gendered analysis on upgrading strategies in agricultural value chains should be completed prior to introducing new (gender-sensitive) interventions.

PART 5: IDENTIFIED GENDER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

The analysis conducted by the GIA team revealed gender-specific challenges associated with the Plant the Future programme. A major part of these challenges is not only specific to this programme per se but can be extended to the other agricultural state programmes as well. In order to contribute to gender equality in such programmes, the following gender-related aspects should be taken into consideration.

Gender roles and stereotypes

Both statistical data analysis and stakeholder consultations revealed the existence of gender stereotypes and roles in the agriculture sector. In

Georgia, households are usually male-headed; in particular, 65 per cent of them are male-headed and 35 per cent are female-headed.[102] The situation is more equal in urban areas and less equal in rural areas. Women's main responsibility is to take care of the family, while men are considered to be the main decision makers and breadwinners. Women work in agriculture for more days per year compared to men, and their share of unpaid agriculture and care work is higher.[103] There is also a gender-based distribution of agricultural tasks: occupational segregation is prevalent in horticultural industries in general, and men are usually using and managing high-yield cash crops while women's crops are usually those used for food (subsistence).[104]

In addition, the lack of institutional effort to question and change existing gender stereotypes in the state programmes and strategies further promotes these stereotypes. Unless institutions and policymakers undergo adequate changes in their attitudes and behaviour towards understanding existing gender gaps in agriculture, the gender aspect in state programmes will continue to be seen as gender accommodation[105] of the programmes.

Unequal access and control over resources

Men and women in Georgia have the same inheritance and property rights. However, existing gender stereotypes and defined gender roles often exclude women from inheriting land or real estate. It is noteworthy that even if women own the land, it is rarely registered in their name. As a result, they have less access to rural credits and finances and are left in an unequal position compared to men.

Gender inequality is also revealed in the level of access to all necessary factors of production – women have more challenges with accessing irrigation systems, agricultural equipment/machinery and other production inputs important for efficient cash crop production.

Failure to take into account the existing unequal access and control over resources while designing a policy leads to gender blindness in the programmes, not to gender neutrality.

Access to training and knowledge

In order to increase women's participation in cash crop production, trainings and awareness-raising activities are of great importance. They enable women to adopt mechanization-related skills (as the equipment is often made in a way that women cannot use or is physically very difficult for women to use in practice),[106] remove obstacles related to poor networks and consequently increase information-sharing among females.

Special focus should be made on the gender composition of extension services as well. Currently in Georgia, **three of the nine regional extension centres are women-headed (33 per cent)**, and in total only 15 per cent of the agents are females.[107] It is estimated that globally only 15 per cent of

102 Geostat, *Women and Men in Georgia* (Tbilisi, 2019). Available at https://www.geostat.ge/media/27546/W%26M-ENG_2019.pdf.

103 On average, women are engaged for 344 days per year, men for 264. Women's unpaid work exceeds that of men's by 13 times. UN Women, Gender Assessment of Agricultural and Local Development Systems (2016). Available at https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/04/gender-assessment-of-agriculture-and-local-development-systems

104 FAO, *Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia; UN Women, The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

105 Gender-accommodating programmes do not challenge the existing norms but rather plan and work around these differences and inequalities.

106 A. Croppenstedt, M. Goldstein and N. Rosas, *Gender and Agriculture: Inefficiencies, Segregation, and Low Productivity Traps* (The World Bank, Capacity Building Unit, 2013). Available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/957311468161359832/pdf/wps6370.pdf.

107 Source: data received from the MEPA. These data do not cover the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, as there is no extension centre. The Ministry of Agriculture in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara is responsible for monitoring all state and autonomous agricultural programmes.

extension agents are women and that male extension agents frequently target male-dominated farmers' groups – sometimes because it may not be culturally acceptable for them to interact with women. When women do participate in extension activities, they may not be provided equal recognition for their responsibilities and skills.[108]

Data limitations and the lack of analysis of existing data from a gender perspective

Neither programme evaluation reports nor performance budgeting reports present gender-related indicators or analysis regarding most agricultural programmes, including the Plant the Future programme. The analysis revealed that state programmes which are considered gender-neutral suffer from a lack of data analysis from a gender perspective and sometimes even from a lack of availability of such data. Moreover, there is no proper monitoring and evaluation process if already financed projects still exist and continue developing. As previously mentioned, improving gender-disaggregated data collection is the objective defined in several respective strategic and policy documents.

108 A. Gallina, *Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes* – International Literature Review (Sida, 2010). Available at https://www.sida.se/contentassets/7d8e7381a9644c0b83df399f2c837e74/15012.pdf.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS

PART 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND ACTIONS NEEDED

Summary of findings

Defining issues and goals:

- Defining what the programme is trying to achieve in terms of overall gender equality (both within the programme as well as within the overarching strategies)
- Understanding different gender-relevant problems and concerns
- Assessing the level of the programme's ability to enable equal contribution

When assessed through a gender lens, the programme often overlooks gender equality in its efforts to achieve its primary objectives: (1) encouraging the effective use of the agricultural land in Georgia through the cultivation of perennial crops; and (2) supporting the production of locally produced, high-quality phytosanitary clean planting materials (seedlings). The special needs of women and men are not taken into consideration; the programme views gender as homogenous; and indeed the entire programme is being viewed, together with its financial allocation patterns, as **gender-neutral.** Undeniably, the Plant the Future programme has very general and, at the first glance, even non-discriminatory objectives as it allows for the participation of everyone regardless of their sex; however, a closer inspection of the criteria and inputs provided by the programme and the training and services offered have very specific gender ramifications. Furthermore, as outcomes, outputs and indicators for this programme are not gender-specific, the programme is perceived by policymakers as open to everyone, thus not requiring any other programmes and measures specifically targeting more vulnerable and marginalized women, nor does it provide additional social inclusion mechanisms to increase women's participation. The programme staff, the RDA and indeed the MEPA are overall missing a great opportunity to use this programme and its financial support to, among other results, enhance women's overall participation in agriculture and therefore make an impact on women's economic empowerment and on rural development generally.

The gender division of the programme participants varies across different dimensions, such as land size, crop choice, programme subcomponent and region:

- The gender distribution of the programme participants is skewed towards males – the share of female beneficiaries has only been 19 per cent since 2015.
- There is a gendered pattern to cropping that mimics the distribution of gender across land size. As a result of the existing gender gaps in terms of the access to land and financial resources, women are less expected to choose capital-intensive production. Walnuts, apples, blueberries, raspberries and plums are the top choices for the beneficiaries of both sexes, although not with identical rankings (see Table 6).
- The gap between female and male participation differs across subcomponents of the programme. Specifically, the gender difference is quite high for the garden component, while women's participation is notably higher for the berry subcomponent considering that berry production allows farmers to produce from a smaller area of land and, usually, consumes fewer resources.
- Regarding the regional distribution of the women beneficiaries, the vast majority of them are from the Shida Kartli and Kakheti regions – females make up only 18 per cent and 35 per cent of the male beneficiaries, respectively, in these regions. Mtskheta-Mtianeti region has the highest female to male ratio. As for the regions where the total level of participation in the Plant the Future programme is almost nil (in Adjara and in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti), there are no female participants.

The reasons behind the low level of female participation in the programme include existing gender norms, unequal access to knowledge,

unequal gender distribution of land, lack of collateral and unequal access to finance:

- Agriculture is still perceived as a male activity, and difference between males and females in terms of access to resources and existing gender roles and values can limit the analysis by homogenizing women and men as fixed gender groups without focusing on other social dimensions and relations. The RDA, however, makes no active effort to change these gender stereotypes and take them into consideration while implementing the programme.
- Women tend to be less informed and rarely participate in public, local community meetings or trainings compared to men. Despite the fact that Plant the Future used to offer mandatory trainings, they were usually conducted in Tbilisi; therefore, poor transport and physical proximity could have been important factors limiting women's access to training. These trainings had an unequal impact on male and female participants given pre-existing gaps in knowledge and capacities.
- The co-financing component of the Plant the Future programme requires land ownership or a long-term lease, which does create a barrier considering that women are less likely to be registered as property owners (of land, houses, apartments and capital equipment), leaving them in an unequal position compared to men to attain necessary financial resources. In 2019, for example, the share of landowner men (61.6 per cent) was significantly higher than that of women (38.4 per cent).
- Despite the fact that the Plant the Future programme offers financial support to landowners, subsidies have limits; therefore, participants might still need to find some additional financial resources to undertake their project.
- Farmers do not have equal access to irrigation benefits, and usually women's needs and interests are neglected in irrigation system design and provision. Women mostly own smaller land plots and have limited access to finance, and they are expected to rely on labour-intensive manual irrigation. Considering that the criterion of having an irrigation system or water source near the land is another participation requirement that could be considered as another unintended, negative gender-discriminating implication of the programme.
- Agricultural cooperatives, which used to own, on average, larger land plots compared to individual beneficiaries, are not actively involved in the programme and are mostly represented by men. Lower female representation in agricultural cooperatives could be explained by the existing gender norms, soviet legacy and negative attitude towards such cooperatives.

Collecting data:

- Gathering gender, age, ethnicity and disability disaggregated statistics
- Consulting experts, women and men, minority ethnic and disability groups
- Interpreting existing data from different perspectives

Data limitations and the lack of analysis of existing data from a gender perspective hinders proper evaluation of efficiency, inclusiveness, profitability and sustainability of the programme:

- Neither programme evaluation reports nor performance budgeting reports present gender-related indicators or analysis.
- The programme suffers from a lack of data analysis from a gender perspective of existing data and sometimes even from a lack of availability of such data.
- The RDA did not store information about applicants who were denied a grant within the scope of the Plant the Future programme; as a result, it becomes impossible to determine cause and effect between interventions and outcomes of the programme.
- The programme does not conduct proper monitoring and evaluation of already financed projects (if they still exist and continue developing).

Developing (alternative/more gender-sensitive) options:

- Determining the impact/implications for different groups
- Offering choices for the enhancement of gender equality within the programme
- Removing stereotyped perceptions and proposing transformative actions

Women should not be understood as a homogenous gender group; accordingly, the programme should consider that the long-term needs of rural women, their decision-making power, their access to and control of resources and their own labour can vary by many interesting social dimensions such as age, social status, ethnicity and region, among others. Therefore, along with adjustments to programme eligibility criteria to increase the number of women beneficiaries, the RDA must make sure that women beneficiaries are given enough support to put them in -position of the development actors. Moreover, women's access to the programme should lead to concrete improvements in their everyday lives as well as enhance the overall productivity of the sector and the economy.

Communication:

- Integrating programme results with equality commitments when reporting to the public, the Government and donors
- Using inclusive language
- Ensuring that key perspectives are included

The main information-sharing channel of the Plant the Future programme is the staff of its extension centres, which provide information to the general public. The RDA's website is interactive and user-friendly, which makes it easier for interested parties to obtain all necessary information. However, from the standpoint of inclusiveness and having a gender perspective, the following problems were identified in relation to the promotional video available on the RDA's website. Particularly, content of this promotion:

- The current promotional materials tend to strengthen, rather than transform, existing gender norms in society (that men are usually the ones who inherit family land and are the main decision makers in the agricultural sector).
- The communication material is not proactively encouraging women's participation in the programme. In particular, in the aforementioned promotional video, not one woman appears on screen.
- The perspectives of beneficiaries are not that often evident and represented.
- Municipal-level websites, which are very important in terms of local access to information, sometimes do not include any information about the Plant the Future programme, or they provide incomplete and/or outdated information.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Monitoring the gender impact of different programme element (e.g. capacity-building, grants, infrastructure support, etc.), conducted by internal and external stakeholders
- Developing gender-specific indicators
- Examining the differential impacts
- Achieving equality of opportunity and equal outcomes
- Learning lessons regarding gender mainstreaming in the programme/sector
- Capturing and disseminating best practices

Although there is the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System of the Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2017-2020 and the Action Plan 2018-2020 – developed with the support of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development's (ENPARD) project "Support to Rural Development in Georgia", funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP – this review has confirmed that the practice of implementing M&E, and especially gender-informed M&E, is still at its beginnings in much of the programme structure.

As is the case with many other programmes in the

agricultural sector, when it comes to monitoring the RDA's Plant the Future programme, it is based mostly on monitoring the implementation of actual activities and utilization of financial aid, rather than on M&E of the processes or impact.

Proper monitoring and evaluation of the programme from a gender equality perspective is complicated due to a lack of data and the following factors:

- Non-existence of the initial benchmark/baseline study: As the Plant the Future programme was initiated without an initial baseline analysis, it was hard for the GIA team to identify impacts of the programme properly.
- Impossibility to conduct a proper counterfactual analysis: The RDA did not store information about applicants who were denied a grant within the scope of Plant the Future; as a result, it became impossible to determine cause and effect between interventions and outcomes of the programme.
- Failure to properly conduct programme outcome[109] and process[110] evaluations from a gender perspective: Barriers/facilitators to participation in the programme and outcomes for beneficiaries are not properly studied.
- Failure to conduct proper monitoring and evaluation of already financed projects (if they still exist and continue developing).

Actions needed

Based on the study analysis findings and given the structure of programme implementation and existing management, action for enhancing the impact of this programme was cluster into three segments: (a) enhancing the programme's gender sensitivity; (b) addressing existing gender norms and unequal access to resources; and (c) tackling data collection, analysis and evidence-based policymaking from a gender perspective.

a) In order to make the Plant the Future programme gender-responsive, to meaningfully increase women's participation in similar programmes and to contribute to women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the agriculture sector, the following actions are needed:

- Gender expertise in the public policy institutions, including the RDA and the MEPA, with specific thematic knowledge needed for specific sectors
- Gender-relevant and gender-sensitive capacity development within the RDA, the MEPA and stakeholders to ensure increased numbers of women participating in the programme
- Comprehensive collection of gender-disaggregated data on the programme's beneficiaries as well as unsuccessful applicants in order to get a better understanding of the impacts of similar programmes in the future
- Efficient programme budget allocation to ensure increased efficiency of the programme's targeting, including through more and better information-sharing practices
- Site-specific gendered analysis on upgrading strategies in agricultural value chains, completed prior to introducing new (gender-sensitive) interventions
- Further information on women's needs and their opinion on preferred upgrading strategies related to crop harvesting, transportation and primary processing
- Introduction of gender-sensitive criteria and gender targets (gender quotas) for certain crops and enhancement of the overall inclusion of gender in monitoring and evaluation of the programme's implementation

b) Stronger focus on addressing problems related to gender norms, unequal access to knowledge, unequal gender distribution of land, lack of collateral and unequal access to finance is needed in programmes like Plant the Future, including:

109 An outcome evaluation measures programme effects in the target population by assessing the progress in the outcomes that the programme is to address.

110 A process evaluation determines whether programme activities have been implemented as intended and have resulted in certain outputs.

- Increasing the knowledge of programme beneficiaries and enhancing information-sharing via trainings and awareness-raising activities – by increasing women's knowledge in marketing and business, by their learning how best to utilize existing mechanization (which is often made so that women cannot use or is physically very difficult for women to use in practice) and other technologies, and by providing other important, appropriate and easily accessible agronomic information.
- Considering the different knowledge bases and needs of males and females when designing trainings, including logistic issues such as the location of training centres, the duration of training sessions, and making sessions easily accessible for every participant, including women
- Increasing access to and investment in modern irrigation systems, especially for women, by permitting participants of the Plant the Future programme to participate more easily in other state-supported irrigation programmes
- Creating opportunities for Plant the Future programme participants to simultaneously access various complementary agricultural programmes, allowing them to acquire necessary funds
- Accelerating the land registration process, which could guarantee women's easier fulfilment of similar programmes' criteria (such as land ownership and laboratory examinations) and improve access to financial resources for women (using registered land as collateral), as well as encourage co-ownership of the land
- Building capacity for gender responsiveness in the extension centres, which are actively involved in the application process of the Plant the Future programme, to enable them to take the different needs of women into consideration in all of the phases of this and similar programmes
- Encouraging policymakers' cooperation to address the issue of land fragmentation and cooperate to transform the agriculture sector from subsistence to profitable farming

c) Data limitations and the lack of analysis of existing data from a gender perspective can be addressed/mitigated by the following:

- Increasing data availability (e.g. provide gender-disaggregated data online) for evidence-based policymaking
- Collecting information about the gender distribution of applicants who could not fulfil the programme criteria and studying the reasons behind their rejection, thereby understanding which criteria are the most difficult to satisfy by applicants and identifying gender-specific obstacles
- Conducting proper monitoring and evaluation of already financed projects
- Providing programme evaluation and performance budgeting reports and gender-related indicators and analysing existing data from a gender perspective

The following activities should be undertaken to improve the monitoring and evaluation process of Plant the Future as well as to inform the programme design:

- Conducting proper monitoring and evaluation of already financed projects from a gender perspective
- Providing programme evaluation and performance budgeting reports and gender-related indicators and analysing existing data from a gender perspective
- Safely storing information about rejected applicants in order to have proper counterfactuals for future evaluation of the programme

Finally, in terms of the overall promotion of gender equality and gender-transformative interventions, the programme could work more in ensuring that programme results are also presented in a way that changes existing norms and values and which actively seek to:

- Portray and/or promote successful case studies of women farmers through their PR and consider more gender-inclusive advertisements

- Actively address existing discrimination by making sure that programme announcements are not strengthening existing gender norms and stereotypes
- Provide up-to-date information about this and similar programmes on the websites of the RDA's partner organizations and other government partners

PART 7: PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE PLANT THE FUTURE PROGRAMME IN TERMS OF GENDER EQUALITY

Based on identified challenges and taking into consideration the overall cost-benefit of the below proposed options, the GIA team decided to examine two scenarios of programme change and evaluate their gender impact as compared to the status quo.

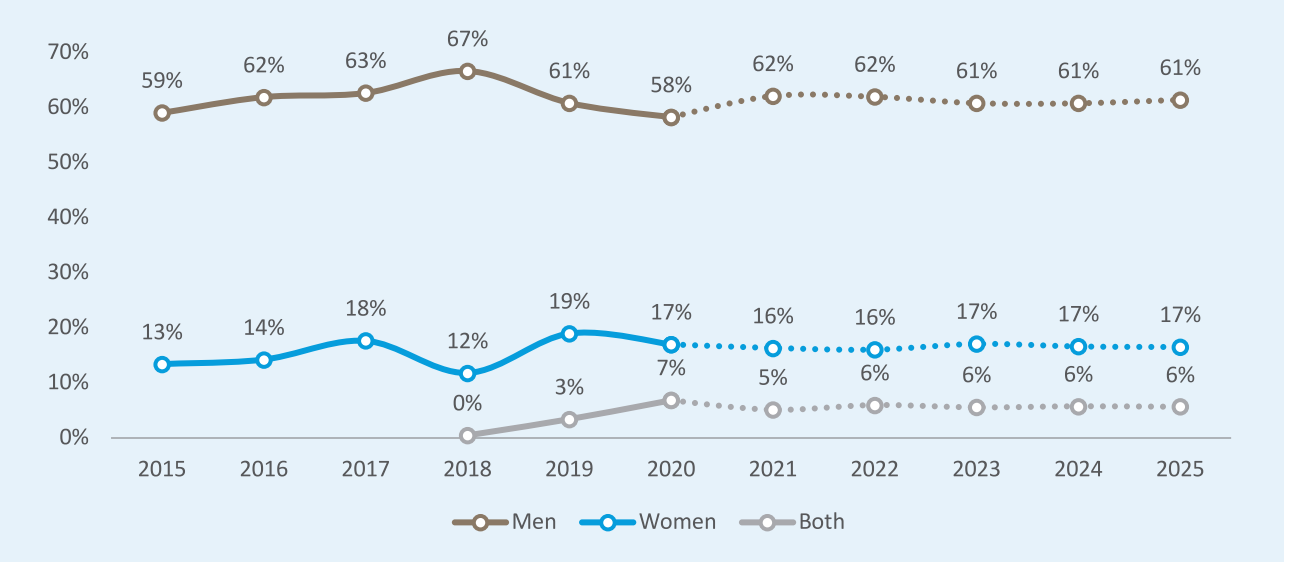
Option 0: Status quo – Programme design is not changed, and the current trends continue

In order to have a baseline for comparison, the GIA team looked at option 0 – the Plant the Future programme is not changed. This means that the current trend of low female participation continues. The programme will still continue to be perceived as gender-neutral by policymakers, resulting in no additional introduction of gender-sensitive criteria for programme eligibility and the absence of a gender-specific analysis. In this option, we expect the average share of female beneficiaries to stay around 20 per cent, which is the average share of female beneficiaries in the programme for the period 2015-2020.[111]

As the main assumption of this baseline scenario is that the RDA will not use a gender-sensitive approach when targeting the programme beneficiaries, the participation rate for women and men is assumed to follow the existing trend. Hence, the average participation rate for the 2021-2025 period will likely be as follows: of the total beneficiaries, 61 per cent will be men and only 16 per cent women. Hence, GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA will have a return of approximately 1.4 kg in agricultural production and GEL 2.99 of income for beneficiaries.

111 Before introducing the berry subcomponent of the programme in late 2018, the average participation rate for women was 17.8 per cent (for the period 2015-2018). Introducing the berry subcomponent made farmers with land plots equal to 0.5 hectares or smaller eligible for the programme. Hence, 36 per cent of female beneficiaries own a land plot equal to 0.5 hectares or smaller, while the same indicator for male beneficiaries amounts to 24 per cent.

Figure 13.
Participation rate of female and male beneficiaries (percentage of the total number of programme beneficiaries)



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

Accordingly, in this option, the gender-transformative potential of the programme is untapped. Without providing structural changes to the programme, by simply introducing such instrumental interventions as lowering the minimum land plot size for programme eligibility, the female participation rate could still increase, but these beneficiaries are not likely going to be given enough support to become meaningful actors in rural development. As a result, the initiative will miss the opportunity to positively affect their everyday lives and enhance their and the overall productivity of the programme as well as the agricultural sector itself.

In addition, the monitoring and evaluation procedures of the programme are likely to stay the same in this option. The programme administrative bodies would still fail to collect and store data regarding unsuccessful applicants, which would in turn mean that there is no baseline for proper programme impact evaluation, including a GIA, and the limited potential to increase the efficiency of targeting the programme participants is lost.

This option is associated with the following opportunities:

- Easy to implement
- Does not require any additional human and financial resources

Risks associated with this option are as follows:

- Missing the outreach to a large share of potential beneficiaries, women in particular
- Women's persistent unequal access to the programme, knowledge, resources, financial resources and grants compared to men
- Would not lead to women's economic empowerment in the rural sector
- No capacity-building among ministries and the RDA
- No gender impact or profitability assessments
- Continued lack of data available for evidence-based policymaking

Option 1: Introducing gender-responsive/ sensitive criteria for the Plant the Future programme based on comprehensive gender analyses and developing the gender equality and analytical capacity of the Government's institutions

The policy objective views beneficiaries not only through their gender groups but also takes into consideration intersectionality. Conversely, rather than analysing female and male beneficiaries as fixed groups, it also considers other social and economic variables specific to those beneficiaries. Therefore, the policy objective proposes that the RDA conduct further, more sophisticated and in-depth analyses of potential and current beneficiaries in order to determine the extent to which the Plant the Future programme encourages and enables its beneficiaries – and therefore rural and agricultural development in Georgia in general – to move away from traditional subsistence production to commercialization.

The commercialization of agriculture is all about increasing farmers' engagement with markets by diversifying and increasing the fraction of crops destined for sale as well as increasing inputs and factors of production, such as the usage of machinery and other tools, labour capital, finances and technology. In order for the programme to promote commercialization with desirable outcomes, the RDA must analyse several aspects that determine and enable greater participation of marginalized gender groups:

- Size of the land plot: Most of the programme's beneficiaries (both women and men) are owners of land plots smaller than 1.5 hectares. Owners of small land plots are limited in terms of further growth and commercialization, mainly because they have less land to devote to commercial farming as they are small-scale farmers trying to produce much of their own food (traditional subsistence production).
- Gender of the beneficiaries: Commercialization can further magnify gender differences. Specifically, men are likely to have better commercial opportunities as they typically have better access to capital and finance and have better links to relevant related networks, such as cooperatives, traders and processors.
- Crop type: The distinction should be made between crops according to level of demand, quality standard in the market, processing needs and profitability.
- Location/geographic region: Access to markets can vary according to the region of the country as their agro-potential also varies. Moreover, the natural resources, demographic structure and supply of public goods in the region can also influence the engagement of farmers in the programme.

Actually, the option 1 takes into consideration two potential approaches to closing the gap and increasing the potential impact of the programme:

- Firstly, the RDA could chose to reduce the participation gap between women and men who own smaller land plots and, therefore, choose to follow tradition subsistence production. This would mean that the programme would be able to meet its socially responsive rural development objectives, i.e. enabling berry growing and supporting smaller farms with the aim to ensure that smaller/poorer farmers are included, thereby ensuring some level of poverty reduction. However, by doing so, it would not be expected that any significant influence would be seen in terms of the programme's impact on enhancing and promoting transformative women's economic empowerment as such.
- Secondly, the RDA could focus on closing the programme's gender participation gaps in all crop choices and funding support lines. This option would have far greater impact in transforming the programme's success in terms of meeting the objective of supporting and contributing to the commercialization of the sector and, in turn, contributing to economic growth from rural development. In this case, the focus would be on integrating gender aspects into all stages of the programme's planning, implementation and monitoring, especially including utilizing gender analysis in decisions regarding the provision of support to larger

farms (which usually export fruit production), while at the same time additionally providing affirmative actions designed to incrementally increase women's participation overall. Such measures should include:

- The introduction of complementary grants from other programmes to ensure that the beneficiaries also get equal access to infrastructure/irrigation support and knowledge building (to put women and men on an equal footing and give men and women equal opportunities)
- The creation of an enabling environment for some improved cooperative-style female enterprises (although an affirmative measure, this option should aim to be transformative in terms of the economic empowerment of both women and men, helping them gain substantial profits)
- Support for better cooperation and connection between beneficiaries within different supply chains in order to ensure the link of beneficiaries to the domestic markets

Option 1.1: Traditional subsistence farming

Women and men owning land plots sized 1.25 hectares or smaller account for around 36 per cent of total programme beneficiaries, of whom 8 per cent have land plots smaller than 0.25 hectares. This means that they are nearly landless in terms of commercializing their agro-production. Considering that beneficiaries falling into this category can mainly be classified as farmers who are mostly specializing in subsistence farming and production, the Plant the Future programme can be seen as having more of a social impact than an economic one. Hence, Option 1 suggests that if the programme is to have more of an economic impact, then the introduction of gender quotas for this segment of beneficiaries is essential. Furthermore, GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA generates GEL 3.09 of income for women beneficiaries who have land plots 1.25 hectares or smaller, while the same indicator for men only generates GEL 2.17. Therefore, equalizing the participation rate of women and men (18 per cent for each) who fall within this category could lead to a GEL 0.10 increase in average producers' income for every GEL 1 co-financed from the RDA through the Plant the Future programme. If average producers' income generated by GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA amounted to GEL 2.99 in the case of the status quo option, equalizing the participation rate of women and men with land plots equal to or smaller than 1.25 hectares would increase average producers' income to GEL 3.08.

The success of this option highly depends on the access to resources such as land – for example, by easing the land registry for landowners who have plots equal to or smaller than 1.25 hectares in valley regions and 5 hectares in mountain regions.[112] However, the role of local extension centres would need to be enhanced in this case and their capacities developed further, as they would not only be expected to inform the local population about different elements of Plant the Future and similar programmes to encourage participation, but they would also need to make sure that potential beneficiaries know their rights in terms of land ownership and that they engage actively in land registry reform.

This option is associated with the following opportunities:

- Enhancing the overall inclusion of gender by increasing women's participation and closing the economic gaps in agriculture
- Increased gender sensitivity and building knowledge among key involved parties/stakeholders
- Greater focus on gender impact and profitability assessments
- Increased efficiency of the programme through more efficient programme budget allocation and better information-sharing

112 Law of Georgia on the Improvement of Cadastral Data and the Procedure for Systematic and Sporadic Registration of Rights to Plots of Land within the Framework of the State Project

Risks associated with this option are as follows:

- Missing the outreach to a large share of potential beneficiaries – women in particular – due to the slow pace of land registry reforms
- Women's continued unequal access to the programme, knowledge, resources, financial resources and grants compared to men due to existing gender norms and values
- Targeted but limited women's economic empowerment in the rural sector
- Limited capacity-building opportunities among ministries and the RDA
- Limited gender impact and profitability assessments
- Lack of data available for evidence-based policymaking

Activities and measures that the RDA would need to undertake in order to successfully adopt Option 1 in terms of enhancing the agency's impact on gender equality are as follows:

– ENHANCED ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING:
  - Strengthening its data collection and its capacity to analyse gender-disaggregated data (not just on programme beneficiaries but on overall programme applicants) would improve the targeting and efficiency of the intervention.
  - Provide the RDA and its partners and staff with potential enhancements and an opportunity to identify regions where the demand (i.e. number of applicants) for the Plant the Future programme and/or the applicant-to-beneficiary conversation rate is the lowest, and analyse the main reasons behind it.
  - Enable the RDA to identify those regional agricultural extension centres that need to invest more in finding efficient ways to inform the local population about Plant the Future.

Although there are some costs associated with production and maintenance of the data, **no additional collection costs** will be added to the RDA's expenses, as there is an already existing data-collection programme that could also serve this purpose.

– STRENGTHENING EXISTING PROGRAMME COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION:
  - The RDA should enhance and coordinate work with other government entities in charge of land registry reform. Since 2019, the initiative of the Georgian Government to ease the registry for landowners with land plots smaller than 1.25 hectares in valley regions and 5 hectares in mountain regions became the permanent amendment to the Law of Georgia on the Improvement of Cadastral Data and the Procedure for Systematic and Sporadic Registration of Rights to Plots of Land within the Framework of the State Project. Potentially enhanced coordination would enable the RDA to identify the regional demand for and involvement in the programme if land registry reform follows the same trend. Moreover, the RDA and respective land authorities should encourage land co-ownership. However, joint ownership does not always mean equal rights. Therefore, gender-sensitive training is essential for applicable authorities as well as target beneficiaries seeking joint titles.
  - The RDA could improve the efficiency of local extension centres by including information-sharing on the land registry reform as part of their information campaign. For this purpose, the RDA might need to arrange several coordination meetings with respective entities in order to decide upon the information-sharing form, time and frequency.

– CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:
  - The RDA should consider integrating learning, capacity-building and knowledge management into all stages of the Plant the Future programme's implementation in order to effectively include gender equality and women's empowerment in

their agricultural programmes. This type of capacity development will require a longer-term commitment and investment in building in-house capacities on gender equality and rural development and agriculture issues, which is currently missing.

- As the local agricultural extension centres are the primary source for farmers to access new information on all of the state programmes offered by the RDA, they should also be included in the capacity-building process. Although these costs are not high, as capacity-building is ongoing, the RDA would need to (re)allocate resources for this in its budget.

Option 1.2: Commercialization of production

Women and men owning land plots sized 10 hectares or larger account for around 7 per cent of total programme beneficiaries, meaning they have enough land to produce a fair share of crops for trading/selling purposes. Considering that beneficiaries falling within this category can be classified as farmers specializing in commercial production, in this case the Plant the Future programme could have more of an economic impact than a social one.

Commercialization could initially lead to a further increase in the already existing gender gap; however, this would mainly depend on the willingness of programmes like this one to include in its implementation interventions that would address already existing unresolved tensions over gender roles within the sector. However, while promoting and encouraging commercial production through its programming, the RDA needs to be aware of such contexts and needs to aim to design interventions in a way that take this into consideration. Accordingly, the RDA should aspire to create programmes that aim to close and not increase this gap. This might mean that in terms of promoting women's participation in commercialized farming, the RDA would need to put in place other support mechanisms that would not only ensure their participation but also enhance their capacities for increased profitability. Indeed, as is, we see that unlike in the case of the small land plots, women operating on land sized 10 hectares (and higher) on average have less producers' income per GEL 1 of co-financing from the RDA than men. The indicator amounts to GEL 3.39 for women, while it equals GEL 3.53 for men. This could be due to many reasons: the lack of access to capital, additional financing and innovative irrigation systems; the choice of less expensive and risk-averse crops; less start-up capital; and the lack of mechanization and infrastructure. Therefore, in Option 1.2 the analysis suggests that along with the intervention's financial incentive and support, the RDA needs to start identifying other key variables that are currently limiting the programme's development towards more commercialized farming practices. However, in order to take a step towards this type of programming, the RDA needs to improve its overall capacity in terms of understanding the importance of gender and equality in the agriculture sector and commence working on collecting more comprehensive and complete data in order to understand the underlying processes influencing the participation, output and productivity of this programme.

Similar to Option 1.1, this option is to be based on an in-depth analysis of Plant the Future and similar programmes in Georgia in order to create a baseline for future monitoring of the impacts of the RDA's and the MEPA's work.

Opportunity:

- Enhancing the overall inclusion of gender by increasing women's participation
- Increasing the gender responsiveness of the programmes of all key involved parties/stakeholders
- Increasing the transformative power of the programme
- Detailed focus on gender impact and profitability assessments
- Increased efficiency of the programme through more efficient programme budget allocation, better information-sharing and affirmative measures
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment within the rural development sector
- Increasing data availability for evidence-based policymaking

- Strengthening women's equal access to the programme, knowledge, resources, financial resources and grants, compared to men
- Strengthened human resources and better (re) allocation of financial resources from the State

Risks:

- Low participation of women, resulting in unspent budget allocated to women
- Altered incentives among potential participants – nominally presenting women as a beneficiary, while men are the real recipients of the grants

Activities and measures that the RDA would need to undertake in order to successfully adopt Option 2 in terms of enhancing the agency's impact on gender equality are as follows:

– CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:

As in Option 1, in this case, the RDA should also consider integrating learning, capacity-building and knowledge management into all stages of the Plant the Future programme's implementation in order to effectively include gender equality and women's empowerment in their agricultural programmes.

– DATA COLLECTION, STORAGE AND MAINTANANCE AND DATA ANALYSIS:

  - In addition to collecting data on the programme applicants as described in Option 1, the RDA should start collecting and analysing data on the agricultural costs of production of its programme beneficiaries. While studying the gender relevance of the Plant the Future programme, considering existing social norms and values, this GIA analysis identified **key gender gaps** that rural women could be experiencing in terms of their access to resources and, therefore, programme participation.
  - In order for the RDA to be able to monitor and evaluate these differences among its beneficiaries, as well as the programme's impact on closing those gaps, the agency should consider collecting detailed data on the following: the primary and secondary production for each beneficiary; the operating costs they are experiencing, including those for fertilizers, chemicals, machines and equipment and the energy (e.g. water, fuel, electricity, etc.) and repair costs associated with them; the use of family labour and hired labour; and the yield and price of their production.
  - Unlike in the case of collecting data on programme applicants, the RDA would have to decide upon which data collection approach to use in terms of the costs of production by programme beneficiaries, the mode of data collection, and the frequency and timing.

– STRENGTHENING EXISTING PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION:

  - The RDA should consider improving coordination between Plant the Future and other agricultural programmes that the agency offers. Solely improving women farmers' access to land will not have as much benefit if the **gender gap** in terms of access to additional finance (credit), productive inputs, trainings and information is not addressed at the same time.
  - Therefore, the RDA should make sure that beneficiaries of the Plant the Future programme, especially women participants, have sufficient information about the following RDA programmes:

- Stimulating Agricultural Landowners
- Co-financing Harvesting Agricultural Machinery
- Agro-Diesel Support
- Agro-Insurance
- Supporting the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives

– KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION-SHARING:

- The RDA could go a bit further and develop a user-friendly guideline focusing not just on the programme but on the combination of all these services, including the eligibility criteria and necessary documentation and procedures to apply and an explanation of how one can use

this combination of services in order to build a sustainable and effective agro-business.

Several of the above-mentioned activities might require new funds and/or additional human resources allocation. But in general, it is better to improve the targeting and reallocate existing funds and resources – not only for the RDA but also for other respective state agencies – as these activities encompass various important measures to be taken at the local and state levels.

For a start, rather than injecting new funding, the RDA's current financing can be reallocated from existing funds in order to make the Plant the Future programme more efficient and profitable, supporting gender equality in the programme and in the agricultural sector.

Table 7.
State budget assignments for the MEPA, UAP and Plant the Future, 2018-2024

State budget assignments (thousands of GEL)							
	2018	**2019**	**2020 (planned)**	**2021 (projected)**	**2022 (forecasted)**	**2023 (forecasted)**	**2024 (forecasted)**
MEPA, including:	263,009	358,045	476,860	415,805	456,215	459,025	491,434
UAP, including:	101,689	140,817	211,795	159,040	156,350	159,700	166,700
Plant the Future	9,563	15,614	13,000	17,000			

Source: Ministry of Finance of Georgia.

According to the 2021 budget law project[113] of the Ministry of Finance[114] (see Table 7), the MEPA budgetary assignments are projected to be over GEL 415 million in 2021 and to grow by about 6 per cent annually from 2022 to 2024. The MEPA's programme Unified Agro Project (UAP) is projected to be in the range of about GEL 159 million in 2021 and to grow by about 2 per cent annually (see Annex 3 for more detail). State budget financing for the Plant the Future subprogramme itself shows a considerable increase (by 31 per cent) in 2021 compared to 2020. Although it is projected for this programme to have funding in the range of GEL 17 million in 2021, there are no official projections for the 2022-2024 period. If we assume the average growth rate of the MEPA and the UAP in the same period, we can assume that funding for Plant the Future will grow by about 4 per cent annually (see Table 8). We recommend that the proposed actions from this GIA are therefore integrated into the programme's budget in 2022.

As the international experience suggests,[115] there are various forms of allocating more gender-sensitive funding, often utilizing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).[116] For the purpose of our analysis, rather than trying to project the actual costs – which is not easy

113 The project is presently in its first version. It may change by the end of the year 2020 before the 2021 budget law is adopted by the Parliament.
114 See https://www.mof.ge/5355.
115 L. Chakraborty, Asia: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts (IMF, Strategy, Policy, and Review and Research Departments, 2016). Available at https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16150.pdf.
116 GRB can be done both on the expenditure and revenue sides of the budget, and it usually requires multiple phases to develop and be effectively implemented in the country.

to do at the moment due to the lack of disaggregated data – we will use the "5 per cent rule" for GRB, which is used effectively in several Asian countries.[117] What it means is that there is a minimum requirement that the funds allocated for GRB be kept at 5 per cent of total public expenditure. In other words, it can be expressed as the integration of issues important for gender equality into the regular activities of state agencies, by at least 5 per cent of their budgets.

Although we could have used this experience and taken 5 per cent of the RDA's total budget into account in our overall analysis (see Table 3), given the focus of the GIA on the Plant the Future programme, we will use only that programme's budget (see Table 8) and propose that the RDA allocate 5 per cent of it (averaging around GEL 800,000 to GEL 900,000) annually for the activities promoting gender equality that are described earlier in this chapter in detail as a first step in implementing GRB principles in the agency's planning, programming and implementation.

Table 8.
Plant the Future programme financing for 2020-2021 and GIA team projections (in red)

State budget assignments (thousands of GEL)					
	2020 (planned)	**2021** (projected)	**2022** (forecasted by GIA team)	**2023** (forecasted by GIA team)	**2024** (forecasted by GIA team)
Plant the Future programme	13,000	17,000	17,621	17,900	18,183
Proposed budget allocated for activities promoting gender equality, 5% of Plant the Future programme budget (suggestion by GIA team)	-	850	881	895	909

Source: Author's projections based on data from the Ministry of Finance.

Finally, to ensure strengthened transparency and accountability – to gender equality but also overall – the RDA should consider developing its budgetary information about the Plant the Future programme with more detailed and disaggregated data. Such data would include the economic and social data of all applicants (both successful and rejected); gender data in terms of programme participants; cultivated crops disaggregated by multiple variables, including gender; and information on the financial profitability of their investments. With such improved and detailed data, a deeper and more encompassing analysis of the RDA's programmes, including Plant the Future, can be undertaken and will directly lead to improvements in the targeting and efficiency of the programme, especially in terms of integrating a gender perspective in the future. Consequently, the RDA would be able to share findings and best practices, in terms of closing the gender gaps observed in the Plant the Future programme, with the MEPA so that it can develop and adopt an explicit gender strategy for the empowerment of women within the agricultural sector and rural development.

117 M. K. V. Delgado, Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting at the National Level: The Philippine Experience (Office of the President, Philippine Commission on Women). Available at https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2.%20The%20Philippines.pdf. For more details, see the experience of India: "Budget 2020: The need for gender budgeting" at https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/budget-2020-the-need-for-gender-budgeting/articleshow/73793600.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1:
STAKEHOLDER MATRIX USED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY (INTERVIEWED STAKEHOLDERS)

	LOW INFLUENCE	HIGH INFLUENCE
LOW INTEREST	Soil analysis laboratories Gender experts Regional Development Center (RDC) TASO Foundation	RDA: • Cooperatives Development and Management Department
HIGH INTEREST	Extension service coordinators Agricultural and Rural Policy Research Center of the ISET-PI Georgian Farmers' Association	RDA: • Project Operations Department • Project Development Department • Reporting and Budgeting Unit of the Finance Department

ANNEX 2: REFERENCES

During the GIA process, the team reviewed the following literature:

National sources

National framework:

- Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia, "Georgia 2020"
- Government Program 2019-2020
- Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of Georgia 2021-2027
- Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020
- Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2017-2020
- Regional Development Program of Georgia 2018-2021
- SME Development Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020
- Voluntary National Review Georgia / VNR 2020 – Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development
- State budgetary documents, including basic data and directions (BDD) and programme budgeting parts
- 2018 Pilot Survey on Measuring Asset Ownership and Entrepreneurship from a Gender Perspective (Geostat)

Georgian Farmers' Association. Road to becoming a Farmer. Tbilisi: GFA, 2018. Available at https://gfa.org.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/გზა-ფერმერობისკენ.pdf.

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UN Women. *Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus.* 2018. Available at https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/womens-economic-empowerment---regional.

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UN Women, UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank Group. *The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda.* 2015.

UN Women. *The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa:* Causes, Costs and Solutions. 2019.

World Bank, FAO, and IFAD. *Gender in Agriculture: Sourcebook.* 2009.

ANNEX 3: STATE BUDGET FINANCING AND THE PLANT THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

State budget assignments (thousands of GEL)										
	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020 (planned)**	**2021 (projected)**	**2022 (forecasted)**	**2023 (forecasted)**	**2024 (forecasted)**
1. State budget assignments, total, including:	9,703,127	10,292,234	11,764,835	12,590,182	13,469,689	15,923,793	17,071,433	-	-	-
1.1. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) of Georgia	314,332	330,256	329,099	263,009	358,045	476,860	415,805	456,215	459,025	491,434
1.1.1. Unified Agro Project (UAP)	231,793	250,602	115,614	101,689	140,817	211,795	159,040	156,350	159,700	166,700
1.1.1.1. ***Plant the Future***	**1,788**	**6,861**	**10,961**	**9,563**	**15,614**	**13,000**	**17,000**	-	-	-
Share of MEPA assignments in total state budget	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	-	-	-
Share of UAP budget in MEPA budget	74%	76%	35%	39%	39%	44%	38%	-	-	-
Share of Plant the Future budget in UAP budget	1%	3%	9%	9%	11%	6%	11%	-	-	-
Growth rate of MEPA budgetary assignments		5%	0%	-20%	36%	33%	-13%	10%	1%	7%
Growth rate of UAP budgetary assignments		8%	-54%	-12%	38%	50%	-25%	-2%	2%	4%
Growth rate of Plant the Future budgetary assignments		***284%***	***60%***	***-13%***	***63%***	***-17%***	***31%***	-	-	-

Source: Ministry of Finance of Georgia.

ANNEX 4: PLANT THE FUTURE PROGRAMME – COMPONENTS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT/SUBSIDIES

The programme offers financial support/subsidies for three separate components:

1. **Co-financing component of perennial gardens:** Under this component, targeted financial assistance is provided to potential beneficiaries in the form of co-financing both for the *purchase of perennial crop seedlings and for the arrangement of a drip irrigation system.* The share of state financing for the former is 70 per cent in general and 80 per cent for agricultural cooperatives as well as for villages adjacent to the occupied territories and in mountainous regions. The share of state financing for the latter is 50 per cent in general and 60 per cent for agricultural cooperatives as well as for villages adjacent to the occupied territories and in mountainous regions. The maximum size of the garden(s) to be financed for one beneficiary was 20 hectares at the beginning but increased to 50 hectares following the changes in the programme in 2019. Technical assistance under this component included obligatory trainings for the beneficiaries of the programme, but since March 2020, trainings have become voluntary for programme participants. Programme beneficiaries can be both individuals and legal entities. The main criterion to become a programme beneficiary is to own a registered plot of land or to have land with a long-term lease (i.e. at least for the next 10 years). The minimum size of the land plot on which the perennial crop garden is planned to be arranged should be at least 0.5 hectares for now, but it used to be 5 hectares at the beginning of the programme in 2015, changed to 1 hectare later in 2015 and became the current 0.5 hectares after May 2019. The land for the planned garden must be cultivated. In addition, there are detailed preconditions that programme applicants have to satisfy, such as the suitability and compliance of the plot's soil, accessibility to main communication channels, documents to be submitted for funding, other preconditions for co-financing and provisions of monitoring procedures for beneficiaries.

1.1. **Financing of subcomponent of berry crops of the component of perennial gardens:**[118] Under this subcomponent, the targeted financial assistance is provided to potential beneficiaries in the form of co-financing the *purchase of berry crop seedlings, the arrangement of a drip irrigation system and the purchase of materials necessary for garden cultivation.* All three parts of the subcomponents are 100 per cent financed by the State. The following berry crop gardens can be financed under this subcomponent: blueberries, blackberries and raspberries. After submitting all necessary documents for funding, technical assistance is provided in the form of trainings and respective testing (exams); this technical assistance is also a precondition before becoming a beneficiary. The size of the land plot on which the berry crop garden is planned to be arranged should be at least 0.15 hectares and no more than 0.5 hectares for one beneficiary. However, the funding under the berry subcomponent will only be provided if the application submitted by the relevant municipalities requires the cultivation of a berry garden(s) of at least 3 hectares. Programme beneficiaries can be both individuals and agricultural cooperatives. Unlike other components of the programme, the berry crop subcomponent allows an individual applicant to have a land plot in ownership or co-ownership

118 "Co-financing" means that the programme offers the beneficiary the option to fund the programme with the Government (percentage share of the state funding is prescribed in the programme in detail), and "financing" means that in this case, the subcomponent of "berry crops" is fully financed by the State (i.e. 100 per cent state financing).

(allowing "co-ownership" was added to the subcomponent in late 2019). The main criterion to become a programme beneficiary is to own a registered plot of land of at least 0.15 hectares and not more than 5 hectares of land in total. In addition, there are detailed preconditions that programme applicants have to satisfy, such as a laboratory analysis of the plot's soil, accessibility to main communication channels, documents to be submitted for funding, other preconditions for co-financing and provisions of monitoring procedures for beneficiaries.

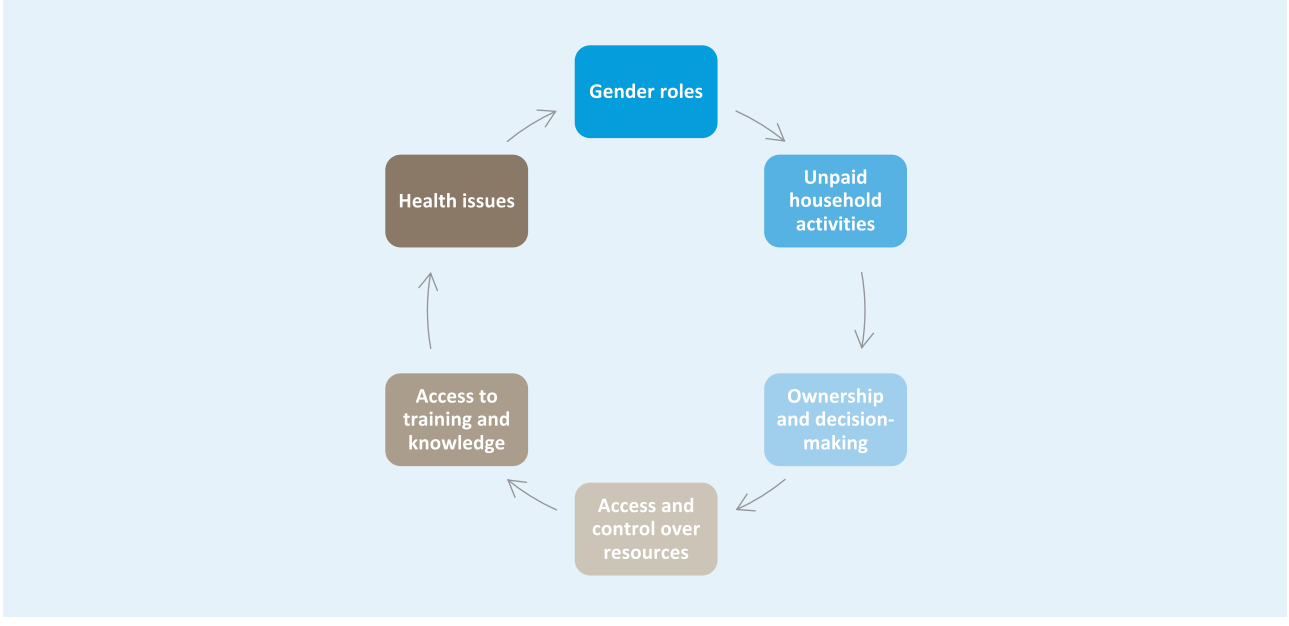
2. **Co-financing component of nursery farms:** Under this component, the funding is targeted to potential beneficiaries wishing to establish nurseries or develop existing nurseries. Financial assistance under the nursery component provides funding for the arrangement of a nursery with virus-free seedlings. The share of state financing has been 70 per cent since May 2019, but it used to be 50 per cent at the beginning of the programme in 2015. Only those beneficiaries who will create nursery farms that produce the crops listed in the annex of the government resolution on the Plant the Future programme will be funded by the nursery co-financing component. Technical assistance under this component included obligatory trainings for the beneficiaries of the programme, but since March 2020, trainings have become voluntary for programme participants. Programme beneficiaries can be both individual entrepreneurs and legal entities. The main criterion to become a programme beneficiary is to own a registered plot of land or to have land with a long-term lease (i.e. at least for the next 10 years). In addition, there are detailed preconditions that programme applicants have to satisfy, such as the suitability and compliance of the plot's soil, accessibility to main communication channels, documents to be submitted for funding, other preconditions for co-financing and provisions of monitoring procedures for beneficiaries.
3. **Co-financing component for the arrangement of anti-hail systems and/or wells, draw wells or pumping stations:** As previously stated, this component is the newest to the programme, having been added recently in March 2020. The component envisages providing state co-funding to potential beneficiaries for the arrangement of anti-hail systems and/or arrangement of a well, draw well or pumping station both for existing and new perennial gardens. State financing for the cost of arranging anti-hail systems for vineyards and for apple, pear and cherry orchards will be no more than 10 per cent for individuals and legal entities and 20 per cent for agricultural cooperatives as well as for villages adjacent to the occupied territories and in mountainous regions. State financing for the cost of arranging a well, draw well or pumping station will be no more than 50 per cent for individuals and legal entities and 60 per cent for agricultural cooperatives. The main criterion to become a programme beneficiary is to own a registered plot of land or to have land with a long-term lease (i.e. at least for the next 10 years). The minimum size of the land plot on which anti-hail systems and/or wells, draw wells or pumping stations are planned to be arranged should be at least 0.5 hectares. In addition, there are detailed procedures described in the component as well as a list of documents to be submitted for funding.

ANNEX 5: GENDER EQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE – LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality in agriculture is fundamental from both social and economic perspectives and is a keystone for human development in general. In other words, gender in agriculture matters from both an efficiency (access to and control over productive resources) and an equality (basic human right) point of view.[119] On a daily basis, agricultural work and food security are linked to every other sphere of our lives; they are directly related to basic human needs and impact the health and lives of the people involved.

The important fact is that gender-specific challenges in the agricultural sector are very much alike worldwide in developed and developing nations. One of the underlying reasons is that there are more or less generally accepted gender divisions of labour in agriculture (e.g. sex-disaggregated activities across the lifecycle of a plant or animal; "male" and "female" crops and animals; etc.[120]). Despite recognizing the physical differences between men and women and somehow defined gender roles, it is then the social, economic, political and legal interpretation of these differences that leads to inequality between them.[121]

The gender issues in horticultural crops[122] are somewhat different from general agricultural and field crops, but women play a very important role generally in the sector. Horticultural crops are gaining importance owing to their commercial, nutritional and export potential, and the role of women is likely to change as a result. Efforts are needed to alter the role of women from hired labour or a subsidiary role to entrepreneur.[123] To this end, the growing volume of literature regarding the sector suggests that while designing policies and proposing initiatives, sustainable agricultural and food security strategies should focus on the causes and roots of inequality, rather than the symptoms.



119 C. R. Farnworth, *Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes: A Study of Sida-supported Agricultural Programmes* (Sida, 2010). Available at https://www.sida.se/contentassets/45e74879e0c94430bc85f466b2418e85/15017.pdf.

120 Gallina, *Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes.*

121 European Commission, *Women in EU Agriculture and Rural Areas: Hard Work, Low Profile* (2012). EU Agricultural Economic Briefs. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/agri-economics-brief-07_en.pdf.

122 Horticulture is the branch of plant agriculture dealing with garden crops, generally fruits, vegetables and ornamental plants. See https://www.britannica.com/science/horticulture.

123 Tripathi and others, eds., *Role of Women in Horticulture and women friendly technologies.*

Gender roles

As previously mentioned, there are somehow distributed roles in agriculture that are perceived as either "male" or "female" tasks. For example, in horticulture, the seed cleaning, preparation of seed and sowing in the field are all done by women. Nursery production is also traditionally done by women. Weeding too is usually done by women, which takes a lot of time and involves a considerable amount of drudgery.[124] Accordingly, occupational segregation is prevalent in horticultural industries as well – not only in terms of who specifically does the harvesting, planting, processing, weeding and irrigation but also from a wider perspective. For instance, in crop production, men tend to focus on market-oriented or cash crop production, whereas women often work with subsistence crops, minor crops and vegetable gardens.[125] The same is also true in Georgia – women are mostly engaged in producing subsistence crops for home consumption, while men are responsible for cash crops due to their specificity.[126] Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that resources and income controlled by women are more likely to be used to improve the overall well-being of the family, taking care of family food consumption and child nutrition and education.[127] In addition, women often have more knowledge of local needs and special interpersonal and communication skills.[128] Women also often grow a wider diversity of crops and, through a continuous selection process, they make significant contributions to the genetic improvement of crop plants and other economically important plants. They tend to domesticate food and medicinal plants that are then usually found in every home garden.[129]

Despite the fact that currently these gender roles are very active, it does not mean that the situation is and should be static. To use every opportunity and improve the economic situation of families and society in general, on the one hand, men should be strengthened in their roles in household food security and well-being, and on the other hand, women should be strengthened in their marketing and business roles.

Unpaid household activities and the invisibility of women's role

Women are major contributors to the economy, both through their remunerative work on farms and through the unpaid work they traditionally render at home and in the community.[130]

Women's activities in agricultural work is unpaid and unreported in both household and farming activities. Women spend most of their time taking care of the children, the elderly and other family members, which are considered as unpaid household activities and can significantly limit women's involvement in the paid and official labour markets. Women in rural areas are more likely to choose part-time work than those in urban areas; this is mostly due to inadequate infrastructure and basic facilities in rural areas, including those for care services for children and elderly people,[131] so they have to take care of these "home" activities themselves. Another problem

124 Ibid.

125 World Bank, FAO and IFAD, *Gender in Agriculture: Sourcebook.* Subsistence farming is a form of farming in which nearly all of the crops or livestock raised are used to maintain the farmer and the farmer's family, leaving little, if any, surplus for sale or trade (cash crops). See https://www.britannica.com/topic/subsistence-farming.

126 FAO, *Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia.*

127 Farnworth, *Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes;* UN Women, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank Group, *The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda* (2015). Available at https://www2.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/costing%20gender%20gap_launch.pdf?v=1&d=20151015T142608.

128 EIGE, *Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development* (2016). Available at https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-agriculture-and-rural-development.

129 World Bank, FAO and IFAD, *Gender in Agriculture: Sourcebook.*

130 Asian Development Bank, *Gender Checklist: Agriculture* (2006). Available at https://think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/2443/agri2.pdf?sequence=1.

131 EIGE, *Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development.*

is that women tend to classify themselves as not in employment when undertaking unpaid agricultural work, despite the fact that, for example, women in Georgia engage in agricultural work, on average, 80 more days each year than men do.[132] Women do not even receive separate income from their husband; their role is often linked to farming within the context of unpaid support to the work of men and is therefore not included in the value chain.[133]

Underrepresentation of women in farm/land ownership and agricultural decision-making

As European experience suggests, women's contribution to local and community development is significant, but rural women are in the minority in decision-making and planning.[134] In general, the situation is the same throughout the world – women occupy few managerial positions in agriculture (just as in most other sectors as well), despite the fact that the sector is highly important for women and is female labour-intensive. For example, the female share of the agricultural labour force is about 30 per cent to 50 per cent in developing nations, while their share among agricultural landholders in the same nations ranges between 5 per cent and 20 per cent.[135] While women are not the majority of those reported to be working in agriculture, the agricultural sector is important for women – overall, 48 per cent of the economically active women in the world report that their primary activity is agriculture.[136]

A study[137] shows that female-headed households represent between 3 per cent and 38 per cent of all households and produce between 2 per cent and 17 per cent of the value of food produced. This means that female-headed households produce less than their share would predict if resource use and productivity were equal with male-headed households. One of the underlying reasons is that female-headed households face more severe labour constraints than male-headed households because they typically have fewer members but more dependants.[138]

Analysing the situation in Georgia, for example, where family budgets are often controlled by women even in rural societies, this reality can be positively used to strengthen and increase women's role in decision-making processes. For instance, another study[139] suggests that Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and women's participation in local planning is an effective way to achieve more sustainable and gender-equitable results in agricultural development.

Unequal access and control over resources

Access and control over resources can be considered as the root cause of the inequality in the agriculture sector because it is what makes women less productive in the sector as a result. In general, limited access to factors of production is the reason behind the lower productivity,[140] which is measured by the value of agricultural produce per unit of cultivated land. There is evidence that shows that women-run farms are as productive as their male counterparts when women have access to the same resources as men, like family labour, high-yield crops,[141] pesticides and fertilizer, education, improved technologies, credit, land and other resources.[142] Moreover,

132 ACT, UN Women, SCO and ADC, *Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.*
133 EIGE, *Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development.*
134 Ibid.
135 FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture.*
136 Doss, *If women hold up half the sky, how much of the world's food do they produce?*
137 SOFA Team and Cheryl Doss, *The role of women in agriculture* (FAO, Agricultural Development Economics Division, 2011). Available at http://www.fao.org/3/am307e/am307e00.pdf.
138 FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture.*
139 ACT, UN Women, SCO and ADC, *Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.*
140 Croppenstedt, Goldstein and Rosas, Gender and Agriculture.
141 High-yield and high-value crops include cash crops and exported crops, which are typically farmed by men. UN Women, *The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa.*
142 Doss, *If women hold up half the sky, how much of the world's food do they produce?;* UN Women, The Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

providing women farmers with the same quantity and quality of inputs that men typically receive could increase national agricultural output and incomes by an estimated 10 per cent to 20 per cent.[143]

In the case of land ownership, it is worth mentioning that not only are female-headed households less likely to own land but they also own less land than their male counterparts do, and farms run by women are generally smaller than those run by men. Women also seem to have less access to household labour, which is one of the most important constraints contributing to the gender productivity gap, along with women's access to agricultural machinery and other production technologies.[144] In addition, male-headed households are more likely to use chemical fertilizer (a purchased input) than female-headed households.[145] Access to finance and credit is another crucial topic in this regard. All above-mentioned inequalities in access and control over resources lead to fewer chances of getting credit to start or expand one's business because that is how financial institutions work – to get a loan, one must usually have some property as collateral. For credit that requires collateral, women are more disadvantaged than men because women have less land and other resources to put up as collateral.[146]

In summary, the use, control and ownership of a wide range of assets affect the ability of both men and women to benefit from agricultural interventions.[147] It is rather misleading to assume that women automatically benefit from horticultural interventions – when horticultural crops become lucrative, men often take over the production[148] because of all of the advantages they take from the current situation and distribution of resources.

Access to training and knowledge

It is worth separately mentioning the use and importance of education and knowledge as not just a typical resource but actually the most significant and core human resource for development. Here, the emphasis is not only on higher education – which is particularly important in regions where women constitute a large part of the agricultural sector[149] – but also on trainings and awareness-raising activities. Such initiatives enable women to increase their knowledge in marketing and business activities and to learn how to use mechanization (which is often made in a way that women cannot use or is physically very difficult for women to use in practice) and technologies and other important agricultural information.

Because of existing gender stereotypes, women are often less informed than men and rarely participate in public, local community meetings or trainings.[150] Special focus should be made on extension services as well. It is estimated that globally only 15 per cent of extension agents are women and that male extension agents frequently target male-dominated farmers' groups – sometimes because it may not be culturally acceptable for them to interact with women. When women do participate in extension activities, they may not be provided equal recognition for their responsibilities and skills.[151] As Georgian experience suggests,[152] of the nine extension centres in the country, only three are headed by women.

143 Farnworth, *Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes.*

144 UN Women, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank Group, *The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda.*

145 Croppenstedt, Goldstein and Rosas, *Gender and Agriculture.*

146 Ibid.

147 N. L. Johnson and others, "Gender, Assets, and Agricultural Development: Lessons from Eight Projects", *World Development*, vol. 83 (July 2016), pp. 295-311. Available at https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X16000073.

148 S. Nischalke, B. A. Wondimagegnhu and G. B. Keding, "Gender challenges in horticultural research in Ethiopia and Madagascar", *Acta Horticulturae* (June 2018). Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326603720_Gender_challenges_in_horticultural_research_in_Ethiopia_and_Madagascar.

149 Croppenstedt, Goldstein and Rosas, *Gender and Agriculture.*

150 ACT, UN Women, SCO and ADC, *Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.*

151 Gallina, *Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes.*

152 Source: consultations conducted with 10 extension centres within this research (see Annex 9).

Health issues

Women's employment in agriculture is linked to non-economic challenges such as unsafe working environments or the impact of repeated physical activities.[153] As previously noted, women in agriculture are mainly employed in low-skilled, manual drudgery that, among other impacts, also threatens their health differently. Health risks in the growing horticulture industry include exposure to hazardous toxic products (which can have repercussions for reproductive health[154]), as such insecticides and pesticides. There is also a demonstrated impact in different ways and to different degrees on the health of women and men using herbicides.[155] The reason behind this is the largely inadequate training and protective clothing, poor hygienic conditions and the physical demands and long hours.[156] Therefore, to reduce the negative impacts of agro-chemicals on the health of women, it is necessary to enhance knowledge and skills for the safe and judicious use of agro-chemicals,[157] to establish occupational health standards in workplaces and to control compliance with the standards.

153 A. Giroud and J. S. Huaman, "Investment in agriculture and gender equality in developing countries", Transnational Corporations, vol. 26, No. 3 (2019). Available at https://unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/diaeia2019d3a4_en.pdf.

154 Sexsmith, *Promoting Gender Equality in Foreign Agricultural Investments:* Lessons from voluntary sustainability standards (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2017). Available at https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/promoting-gender-equality-foreign-agricultural-investments.pdf.

155 World Bank Group, FAO and IFAD, *Gender in Climate-Smart Agriculture: Module 18 for the Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook* (2015). Available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22983/Gender0in0clim0riculture0sourcebook.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

156 World Bank, FAO and IFAD, *Gender in Agriculture: Sourcebook.*

157 S. P. Khatiwada and others, "A Gender Analysis of Changing Livelihood Activities in the Rural Areas of Central Nepal", *Sustainability*, vol. 10, No. 11 (2018). Available at https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/11/4034/htm.

ANNEX 6: PLANT THE FUTURE SUMMARY DATA FROM THE 2019 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEPA

Cultivated gardens and investment (2015-2019)				
Number of gardens	Plot size	Full investment	State co-financing	Share of state co-financing in full investment
1,305	**8,476 ha**	**GEL 86,898,356**	**GEL 47,843,589**	**55%**

Crop yield forecast and farmers' revenues' forecast, by year						
	2020	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Crop yield (tons)	16,139	28,468	42,338	57,597	68,708	74,385
Revenue (GEL)	20,505,543	41,534,827	69,224,305	105,013,765	134,060,181	151,425,550

Cultivated crops and investments (2015-2019)				
Crops	**Cultivated area (ha)**	**State co-financing (GEL)**	**Share in total cultivated area**	**Share in total state co-financing**
Walnuts	**2,809**	**13,641,155**	**33%**	**29%**
Almonds	**1,412**	**5,552,262**	**17%**	**12%**
Apples	**1,023**	**8,449,076**	**12%**	**18%**
Hazelnuts	627	1,213,016	7%	3%
Blueberries	474	6,807,243	6%	14%
Olives	468	2,414,056	6%	5%
Raspberries	318	3,038,109	4%	6%
Plums	311	1,562,762	4%	3%
Other	1,034	5,165,909	12%	11%
TOTAL	**8,476**	**47,843,588**	**100%**	**100%**

Cultivated areas, by region (2015-2019)		
Region	**Cultivated area (ha)**	**Share in total cultivated area**
Adjara	44	1%
Guria	196	2%
Imereti	497	6%
Kakheti	**3,380**	**40%**
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	120	1%
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	21	0%
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	648	8%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	25	0%
Kvemo Kartli	**1,449**	**17%**
Shida Kartli	**2,096**	**25%**
TOTAL	**8,476**	**100%**

Cultivated berry crops and investment (2019)				
Crops	**Cultivated area (ha)**	**Full investment (GEL)**	**State co-financing (GEL)**	**Share of state co-financing in full investment**
Blueberries	50.90	2,120,945	2,120,945	100%
Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries	0.40	10,060	10,060	100%
Blackberries	3.31	68,502	68,502	100%
Raspberries	11.57	285,693	285,693	100%
Raspberries, blackberries	2.26	50,688	50,688	100%
All	68.4	2,535,888	2,535,888	100%

Cultivated berry crop areas, by region (2019)		
Region	**Cultivated area (ha)**	**Share in total cultivated area**
Guria	**15.95**	**23%**
Imereti	26.34	38%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	7.79	11%
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	17.61	26%
Shida Kartli	0.75	1%
TOTAL	**68.44**	**100%**

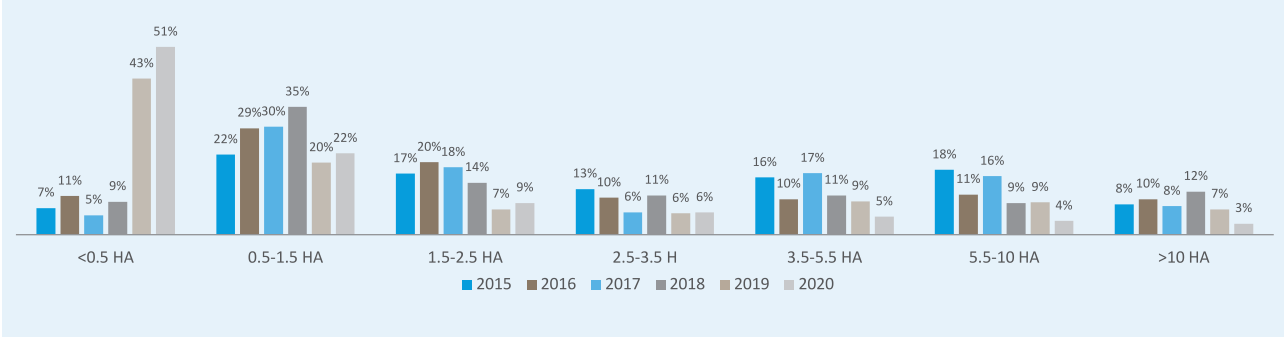
Source: 2019 MEPA Annual Report[158] and authors' calculations based on this report data.

Between 2015 and the end of 2019, a total of two nursery farms with an annual production capacity of 100,000 seedlings were established in Senaki and Vani municipalities.

158 Available at https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/Files/ViewFile/35451.g-gender-equality-foreign-agricultural-investments.pdf.

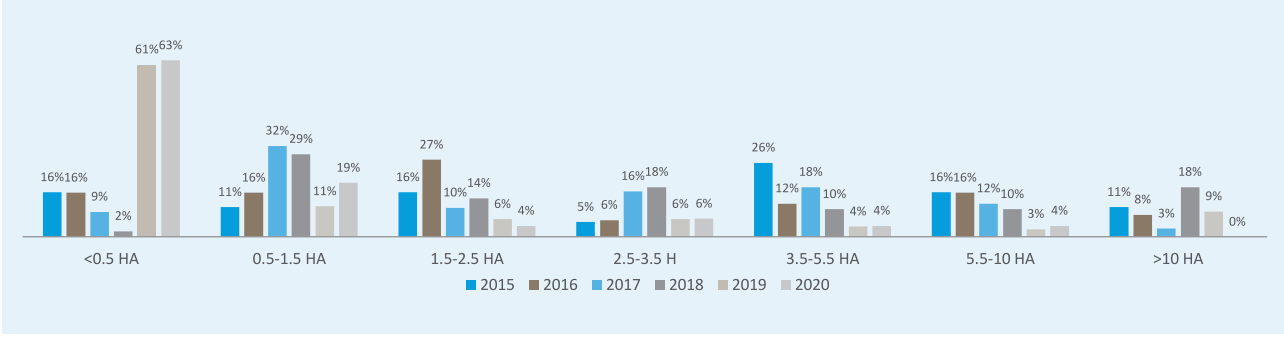
ANNEX 7: LAND SIZE – FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF PROGRAMME BENEFICIARIES, BY SEX AND YEAR

Figure 14.
Land area owned by male beneficiaries



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

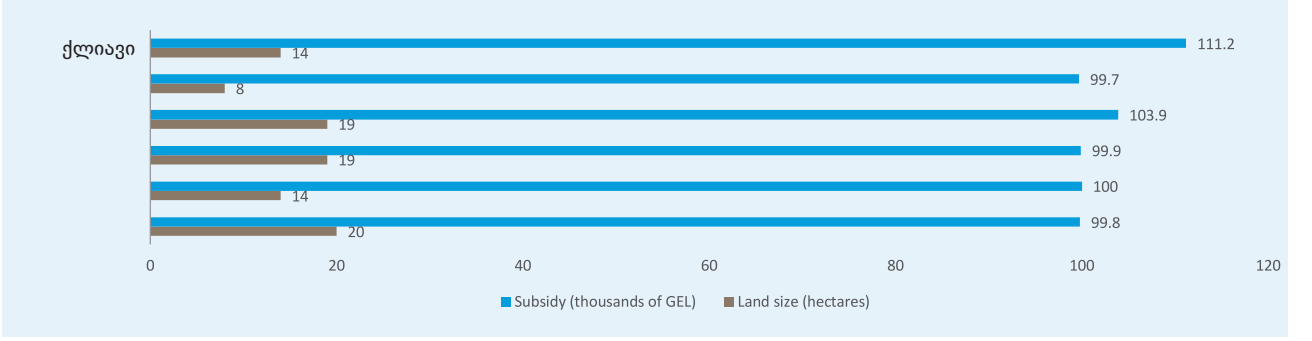
Figure 15.
Land area owned by female beneficiaries



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

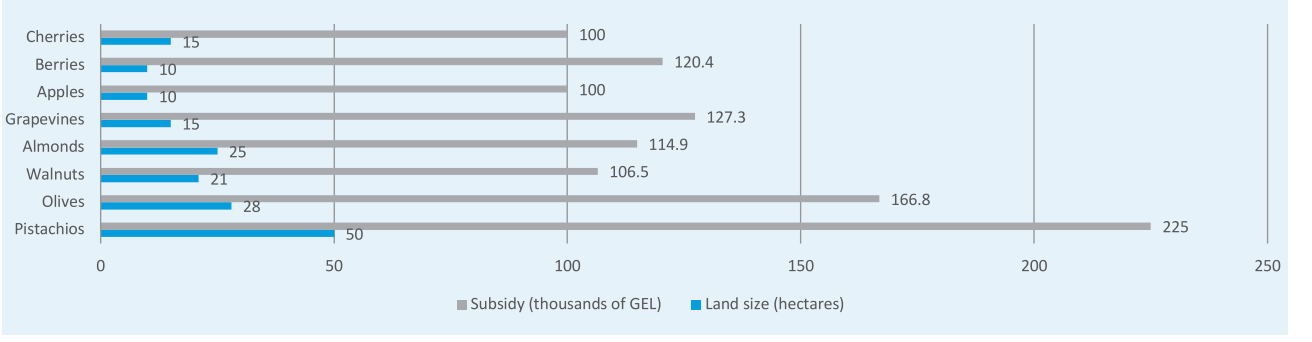
ANNEX 8:
GENDER PROFILE FOR TOP 20 BENEFICIARIES

Figure 16.
Top 20 female beneficiaries, by crop



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

Figure 17.
Top 20 male beneficiaries, by crop



Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the RDA.

ANNEX 9:
STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

RDA

Participants: Project Operations Department; Project Development Department; Cooperatives Development and Management Department; Reporting and Budgeting Unit of the Finance Department
Type: Online in-depth interviews
Dates: 29 May; 4 June; 19 June 2020

Background information

- The idea of developing the Plant the Future programme was based on the given reality that most agricultural land in the country was not cultivated. The programme was developed taking into consideration the needs assessment and the outcomes of two previous agricultural programmes of the MEPA: (1) supporting small and medium farmers; and (2) supporting storage and processing enterprises.
- The budget of the Plant the Future programme depends on the demand. If demand is higher than the programme budget, the programme tries to obtain additional financing.
- There are no gender criteria in the programme.
- The RDA has experience with processing data from a gender perspective, due to the demand from other organizations working on gender issues.
- Within the Plant the Future programme, some costs (e.g. fencing the land plot, purchasing support poles, obtaining auditing services) are directly funded by the applicants. However, it is also worth mentioning that it should be in farmers' interest too to finance these costs because eventually the outcomes will be beneficial in the future to the farmer.

Monitoring and evaluation

- The RDA, within the scope of monitoring and evaluation of different programmes, does different kinds of analyses. However, as Plant the Future has no specific gender criteria (there are some other programmes that do have some gender criteria), the data are not analysed in a gender-disaggregated manner.
- The Beneficiaries Monitoring Unit[159] under the RDA is responsible for monitoring activities within the programme. However, the Regional Agricultural Extension Centres are the only ones involved in the physical observation of the beneficiaries' land plots. In general, monitoring of the programme is not a direct responsibility of the extension centres.
- In cases when a beneficiary of the programme fails to fulfil the obligations, it is regulated by respective terms of contract with the beneficiary – the fine for failing to submit mandatory documents is GEL 50. In addition, the fine for each overdue day for non-fulfilment of the contracted obligations is 0.05 per cent, capped at 3 per cent of the total assigned/awarded amount.

Awareness

In order to increase the popularity and awareness of the programme, the Regional Agricultural Extension Centres play the most important role as they directly communicate with the local population and farmers. In addition, the representatives of the RDA frequently visit municipalities and conduct meetings with local farmers. The RDA Call Centre is another key player in this process. In general, the agency tries to use every information channel for this purpose.

159 Regulation of the Agency of Rural and Agricultural Development (Order of the Director of the same Agency No. 1-4 / 211, 28 May 2020), Article 6. Functions of the structural units of the Agency; Part 6.13: Beneficiaries Monitoring Unit.

Soil Analysis Laboratories

Participants: Multi-test Chemical Laboratory for Food and Soil Minerals; Laboratory Center of the Agricultural University of Georgia; Soil and Food Diagnostic Center "Anaseuli"
Type: Phone interviews
Dates: 12 and 17 June 2020

Background information

- All laboratories are properly informed about the Plant the Future programme, have detailed information about standards, and understand what beneficiaries need from them.
- One of the laboratories serves about 80 per cent of Plant the Future programme beneficiaries.
- The programme beneficiaries have favourable price conditions. The price offered to the beneficiaries participating in the programme is lower than the price offered to non-participants (market price of the service).
- In addition, the price of service differs by laboratory. According to a respondent, one of the laboratories has slightly higher prices because they provide higher-quality research (conducting the laboratory research twice to ensure reliable results).
- Over the years, the price of service has slightly increased from around GEL 375 in 2015 to GEL 398 in 2020.
- The total cost of services of one laboratory for the programme beneficiaries is GEL 250 (total laboratory costs) plus consultants' transportation costs.
- It is necessary for lab consultants to be present at the soil sampling, which usually requires only one day.
- The price of taking a soil sample is the same for all beneficiaries and does not vary by geographic location, but transportation costs are considered separately.
- The consumer may provide transportation himself/herself, or he/she will have to reimburse the transportation costs to the lab (depending on the location).
- Specialists visit the beneficiaries living in the same municipality only once, which significantly reduces transportation costs per beneficiary.
- In terms of the laboratory analysis itself, it officially takes about one month to complete the soil research; however, in practice, it takes up to 10 to 14 days to get the laboratory research results.

Regional Relations Department of the RDA

Participants: Regional Coordinators / Regional Division Representatives of the RDA (extension centres)
Type: Phone interviews (10 in total, out of which 9 were conducted with the Regional Division Representatives of the RDA and one with the RDA coordinator at the Ministry of Agriculture in Autonomous Republic of Adjara)
Dates: 12 June; 2 July 2020

The Regional Coordinators and Regional Division Representatives of the RDA (extension centres) mainly conduct a variety of informational campaigns in their respective regions/towns/villages about the state agricultural programmes. Representatives of the extension centres usually:

- Give recommendations and advice to the interested people/entities planning to apply for any of the agricultural programmes, as well as to the beneficiaries of specific programmes
- Support applicants to prepare documents in order to satisfy programme criteria (e.g. land

registration and ownership documents, etc.)
- Help applicants to upload respective documents electronically
- Connect applicants to the appropriate laboratories, where they can obtain land analyses
- Assess whether the applicant's land has access to basic utilities (e.g. electricity, water, etc.)
- Conduct a pre-analysis of the land (*different from the laboratory analysis done by the three soil analysis laboratories throughout the country*) before applying for the programme to find out whether the land is appropriate for specific crop cultivation; in some cases, they will give a certificate of approval as well
- Support beneficiaries in contacting and communicating to relevant experts or consultants
- Support beneficiaries in contacting scientific centres and mechanic experts
- Assist beneficiaries by explaining how to cultivate and take care of specific crops
- Assist programme beneficiaries to meet the liabilities they have due to the programme contract
- Collect data (e.g. on sown areas, about how much harvest is taken, on general statistics and forecasts, etc.)
- Have a specific role in monitoring – taking photos of cultivated land plots after programme financing, making respective descriptions and sending them to the respective department of the RDA;[160] there is also a practice of using some examples (of beneficiaries and awarded land plots) for demonstration purposes

The **main communication channels** used by the regional extension centres while contacting the regional population and all interested parties include but are not limited to the following:
- Meetings/visits with the regional population periodically together with village trustees
- Visits to the extension centres' offices by interested parties themselves
- In some cases, providing the regional population with journals (like the MEPA monthly journal "Our Village") and giving them information about state strategies in the sector
- Distribution of booklets about state programmes in the sector
- Providing information booklets and newspapers to the regional centre of the public service hall office
- Telephone calls (private calls are used; call centres are available only directly to the MEPA/RDA)
- Internet (websites), social networks, chats (e.g. Viber), messages, the media, TV (which is especially active when the application period of individual projects opens), etc.

Main takeaways and challenges (including gender-related)
- There is a lack of information about the programme and its benefits. In addition, programme applicants do not have enough information on the type of documents they need to provide to participate in the programme.
- The programme requires too many documents, making the process more difficult.
- There are problems/challenges obtaining land ownership/registry certificates.[161]
- Most programme participants are men, as, in general, most landowners are men,[162] and land trustees are also mostly men. There have been some examples of women trustees of family properties. In some programmes, there are many women co-owners of the required property.
- As the Plant the Future programme is mostly about garden cultivation, women are often interested in this programme. Women tend to take their husbands with them to apply for the programme (as the husbands/men are usually the owners of the land[163]).

160 Ibid. (Author's note.)
161 Less than 30 per cent of Georgia's agricultural land is registered.
162 One of the main criteria of the Plant the Future programme is to own a specific plot of land with a respective size. (Author's note.)
163 Ibid.

- After introducing the berry subcomponent to the programme, women became more interested because the requirement is only for 0.15 hectares of land, which makes the programme more accessible to women.[164]
- In several regions, the land size requirement is a problem – people cannot engage in the programme because in some regions, the land plots that people/households own are too small.
- People cannot apply to the programme because there are problems regarding the requirement of access to utilities (e.g. electricity, water, etc.).
- Land cultivation is tough physical work, and beyond that, women have many tasks at home – so they have less interest in the programme.
- Applicants' technological awareness is low and does not differ by gender – applicants are given a piece of paper listing all of the documents required for submitting an application.
- Farmers need trainings in order to increase their knowledge in growing and cultivating specific types of crops.
- Women tend to talk about the programme in the neighbourhood more often than men, and in general, it is primarily women who spread necessary information in the villages.

TASO Foundation

Type: Phone interview
Date: 13 July 2020

The TASO Foundation has not been directly involved in the Plant the Future programme, as women often do not meet the criteria required by this programme and, consequently, there is less interest – when they learn about the conditions of the programme, they already know that they cannot participate in it.

Main takeaways and challenges

- Difficulty to spread information in some villages
- Lack of access to the Internet or computers
- Lack of knowledge about how to use computers
- Lack of knowledge and experience of women associated with filling out applications
- Lack of motivation of women to apply for funding due to examples of funded projects owned by men, not women
- Lack of trust towards the organization as some NGOs make promises but then fail to implement projects
- Women's limited mobility (unlike men, who can ask others to travel to any destination or to reach someone who can help them fill out an application; women often cannot travel alone, especially in villages populated by ethnic minorities)
- Inability to meet the minimum required land size for programme eligibility, as such plots are often not owned by women
- Difficulties with land registration requirements

Unlike Georgian settlements, for example, in Marneuli (settled by ethnic minorities), the issues of property ownership by gender in families are more regulated – recently women have become co-owners of property from birth.

There is often a need for a variety of educational courses and awareness-raising activities:

- The need for knowing the state language (in ethnic minority areas) and computer skills
- The demand for specific culinary courses
- The need for psychological consultation about issues of domestic violence

164 The size of land plots in women's ownership is mostly less than 0.5 hectares.

Agricultural and Rural Policy Research Center (APRC) of the ISET-PI

Type: Online interview
Date: 14 July 2020

The ISET-PI has conducted several studies in the agriculture sector. Based on those studies and the interview with ISET-PI representatives, the following aspects were highlighted. In general, it is considered that berries give the highest income per hectare, including in Georgia. The agriculture and gardening sector is specific and requires a variety of technical work. Such tasks as pruning, applying pesticides and similar types of work are mainly done by men, while women mostly work on picking the berries. Based on practical experience, however, many local rural women are going to benefit from the berry subcomponent and apply for it.

Main takeaways and challenges

- Amount of land size required by the programme is large and instead should have be reduced
- Lack of knowledge within and scarcity of the workforce
- Women's lack of connections in the sector prevents them from participating in different stages of the supply chain
- Women not always equally seriously perceived by their male counterparts

Georgian Farmers' Association (GFA)

Type: Online interview
Date: 16 July 2020

The GFA has many projects in the field that support women and promote women's engagement (including UN Women projects).

The GFA sent comments to the RDA regarding the Plant the Future programme **in early 2019.** These remarks concerned the berry subcomponent and were taken into account by the agency. The Association had no gender remarks. The programme had no restrictions regarding gender. In addition, GFA had remarks on the size of the land (which in itself is a gender-sensitive issue).

According to the GFA, there are always gender criteria in the programmes of donor organizations, unlike state programmes.

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