

# *International Day of Rural Women: Increasing Malnutrition for Women, Warns FAO*

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Santiago, October 16 (telesur-RHC), -- Latin American women are suffering more than their male counterparts from poverty and malnutrition, especially because of cultural prejudices, warned the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) regional office in Chile on the International Day of the Rural Woman on Oct. 15.

“In Latin America, 40 percent of rural women over 15 years old do not have their own income, and half of female rural workers live under the poverty line,” stated Raul Benitez, FAO representative in Latin America. Socio-economic inequalities are detrimental to food security, and delay economic and agricultural growth, he added.

At a global level, rural women are key to ensuring food security in their region, and responsible for half of the world's food production. According to the organization, 58 million women are living in rural areas, including 4.5 million working as agricultural producers.

According to the FAO report, if female rural workers enjoyed the same conditions as their male counterparts, 150 more million people could be fed in the world.

The FAO representative highlighted the crucial importance of its “gendered policy” - a policy that takes into account the differences and inequalities between males and females. It encourages governments in Latin America to introduce gender equality in their programs, emphasize the role of women, especially in rural areas, and promote the idea that equality between men and women means progress for every one.

“In order to reverse this pattern, we must change the old and deeply rooted ideas about the role of men and women that keep women from participating fully in the decision making processes and in socio-economic development,” he explained.

"Collectively, rural women are a force that can drive global progress. We must harness that power to achieve our three interlinked objectives for next year: accelerating our work towards the Millennium Development Goals, adopting a new vision for sustainable development, and concluding a meaningful universal climate agreement, " said UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

Rural women are key agents for achieving the transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face, which are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change.

Empowering them is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also to overall economic productivity, given women’s large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

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