

«Women, Food Chains and Agrarian Reform» by Ingrid Palmer, FAO, World Day, 16 October.

The food chain means that people need food to get energy to produce food. Women in developing countries have always played an important economic role in producing food for the family. Besides working for wages, they cultivate food crops and manage the family's nutrition. If they suffer from malnutrition and overwork, not only their children are apt to suffer from physical disorders, but the women's work efficiency will be greatly reduced.

In many countries, technology and new niring practices have greatly affected job opportunities. Many women lose their jobs when crop processing is mechanized. Other factors affecting women's economic role are: 1) the increasing number of women who are the acting, heads of the household 2) The splitting of the extended family into nuclear families where the search for jobs obliges them to move or to become itinerant, thus losing the mutual support which the extended family system provided.

Women and Agrarian Reform

Because women provide most of the family's food and grow most of the locally consumed food, it is necessary to give them land title, permitting them to raise credit and purchase seeds and fertilizers.

In 1979, the Program of Action of the FAO World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development urged the promotion of ownership rights for women including co-ownership of land, the right for women producers with absentee husbands to take decisions on the land they manage; also equitable

access to land, livestock and other productive assets.

Helpful Projects

In several Third World Countries, new projects have been created with the aim of providing women with extension services and credit for new outputs. Such projects serve to raise yields of vitamin and protein rich foods and provide women with a new source of income. Carts and grain mills have been introduced to relieve women of some of their household-associated tasks. Home gardens which are the responsibility of women are receiving more attention.

These ameliorative measures, however, do not incorporate the concept of women's equal rights with men in land and other agrarian reforms. They neglect the question of the nature of year-round sources of food for the landless. New agricultural technologies have caused landless women in particular to lose important sources of income.

Contradictions and Questions

Partial agrarian reform raises the question of whether women will be able to achieve any real profit from the small amounts produced by their owned small pieces of land for cultivation of own consumed food crops.

If they are given equal rights in all land reform, other questions and problems will emerge that require careful study and adequate solutions, placing a high priority on the needs of women.

Afaqu-th-Thamaninat fi-Lubnan Tanzim-ul-Usra (Family Planning) (Prospects of the Eighties in Lebanon) Beirut, 1981.

Prospects of the Eighties in Lebanon is a book of 140 pages reporting on the Seminar organized by the Lebanon Family Planning Association, on the occasion of the Sixth Family Planning Week, 1-3 December, 1980⁽¹⁾. The book was compiled and introduced by Mr. Toufiq Osseiran, general secretary of the Association. It contains a detailed program of the Seminar, the names of speakers, lecturers, moderators and commentators, along with the complete texts

of conferences, reports and discussions revolving around the general topic of the book.

In his introduction, Mr. Osseiran highlighted the importance of the eighties in the evolution of demographic studies which preoccupy a large number of researchers nowadays. He also announced for this decade another international conference like the one held at Bucharest in 1974. He represented the aim of the LFPA Seminar as a serious effort to enlighten public opinion as well as to induce both the authorities and the public to adopt a clearly defined position regarding family-planning.

(1) See "Al-Raida", Feb. 1981, vol. IV, No. 15, p. 11.

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