

CARE International
SuPER - Four Principles for Sustainable, Productive, Equitable and Resilient Agriculture

Small-scale agriculture is a source of livelihood and income for over three billion people, many of whom are women. It is the basis of food security, a contributor to nutrition and health, and the foundation of identity. It is also a user of ecosystem services and a source of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in the global north, and thus important in terms of ambitious action to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees¹. But it continues to suffer from neglect and inadequate investment. CARE's primary target population in its small-scale agriculture work is households engaged in crop and livestock production, either as farmers or labourers, with a particular focus on women. Researchers and voluntary, public, and private sectors are critical partners in our work.

Outcome: the outcome we seek in our small-scale agriculture work is food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change.² The principles by which we abide in our small-scale agriculture work to meet this outcome are SuPER (Sustainable, Productive, Equitable and Resilient) and our capacities are based upon our commitment to delivering this outcome based on these principles.

1 Promote **sustainable** agriculture systems that address climate and environmental impacts and which are: grounded in healthy ecosystems; driven by stable, accountable and enduring institutions and policies; and based on sustainable social and economic policies and investments that prioritise the redress of gender inequality in agriculture.

The characteristics at the core of CARE's definition of sustainable agriculture are that it is: 1) grounded in healthy ecosystem management practices; 2) supported by stable, accountable and durable institutions and inclusive governance; and 3) providing access to financial services, quality inputs and other business development services on equitable terms to promote small-scale producer income. This broad definition of sustainability implies the promotion of a set of farming practices that includes, but is not limited to: diversified cropping systems; crop rotation and cover- and inter-cropping; integrated pest management; use of manure to increase soil organic matter; use of legumes to boost soil nitrogen; improved storage of crops and seeds; soil and water conservation; minimum or no-till agriculture. Many of these practices fall under broader headings such as agro-forestry, community-managed natural regeneration, or conservation agriculture – where CARE has significant experience. Our research has shown that such approaches can raise incomes, yields of and nutritional status. Further to the imperative of environmental sustainability, CARE also prioritises the importance of the socio-economic sustainability. If small-scale farmers have no access to inputs, or can only access them on unfavourable terms and become indebted, or if they are unable to find markets³ or forced to sell crops at low prices post-harvest, then agriculture, for them, is unsustainable. Women engaged in agriculture experience significant additional constraints through discriminatory practice and social norms – and the needs of young people are neglected. CARE's interventions aim to enhance access by small-scale farmers to markets on favourable terms, strengthen enterprise groups, and protect and enhance socio-economic capital. Since farmers lack market power, group formation through cooperatives or village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) is a key strategy.

¹ Climate Action Network (CAN-Ag 2017). CARE and partners insist that actions in the land sector should be undertaken in addition to ambition in phasing out fossil fuel emissions, and should especially address non-CO2 GHG, as agriculture is the main source of methane and nitrous oxide. Food security cannot be an excuse to defend high emissions models of agricultural production nor can agricultural land become a solution for carbon sequestration and an excuse to postpone urgently needed transition to low carbon economies.

² This outcome is one of four in the CARE International Programme Strategy (2020).

³ Productivity emphasises the necessity of increasing yields, but increasing small-scale farmer incomes also requires access to input and output markets on favourable terms, and interventions in this area are an essential element of a comprehensive strategy.

2 Promote **productive** (including profitable and nutrition-sensitive) climate resilient intensification that specifically addresses the needs of women producers and increases returns on investment, including of labour, by farmers.

CARE's concept of productivity includes both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, requiring attention to closing yield gaps, ensuring a diverse and nutritious food basket and generating income. Sustainable productivity increase is often possible, but reducing post-harvest loss is also essential to sustainably increase the availability of food. Malnutrition is widespread, so CARE's efforts to increase productivity explicitly address the quality of food produced in terms of calories, protein and micronutrients. Cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables, and animal protein are all required for a diverse food basket. Home gardens, including the cultivation of micronutrient-rich vegetables, and the keeping of small livestock are interventions that CARE promotes as they are also particularly accessible to women and enhancing of household nutrition. Nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes in agriculture have enormous potential to enhance the scale and effectiveness of nutrition-specific interventions and behaviour change related to specific nutrition practices, crop and breeding choices, postharvest choices and food safety practices are considered in CARE's efforts to improve dietary diversity and household diet quality. Finally because market systems play a critical role in the transformation of rural livelihoods, and empower producers to effectively generate income, CARE's models prioritise market inclusion. Engaging poor and marginalised groups in roles ranging from producer, service provider and entrepreneur to employee with a job that provides a living in a dignified way, benefits those who are often excluded from the benefits of agricultural market systems. The productivity and efficiency of inclusive market systems, (including sustainable value chains) are thus priorities for CARE.

3 Promote **equitable** outcomes in small-scale agriculture by: supporting the realisation of the Right to Food and other rights for the most vulnerable; enabling equal access to opportunities, resources, services and rewards for women farmers as well as men; and promoting access to affordable nutritious food by farm labourers and rural and urban consumers.

Inequality and injustice are the primary drivers of poverty and food insecurity in our world. Gender inequality is particularly pervasive in agriculture and women are generally not recognised as farmers by many actors. Patriarchy, stereotypes about men and women's rights and roles, traditional values and cultures, and prevailing economic models combine to reinforce an impression that women are not equals on the farm. This is compounded by policies, legislation and practice – among the consequences of which are that women are denied secure and adequate land, inputs, credit, and appropriate infrastructure and technology.⁴ Agricultural extension and advisory (and climate information) systems are overwhelmingly gender-blind and inequitable access to and control of productive inputs is a persistent problem stifling adaptive capacity. CARE's mission for systemic change is recognised because it seeks gender-transformative outcomes. This goes beyond gender relations among individuals or households, and critically examines institutions and structures in

⁴ The Synthesis Report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development states; "there is a world of asymmetric development, unsustainable natural resource use, and continued rural and urban poverty. [T]he adverse consequences of global changes have the most significant effects on the poorest and most vulnerable, who historically have had limited entitlements and opportunities for growth." Security of tenure is critical for farmer investment in sustainable land management practices. CARE thus supports the 'Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest in the Context of National Food Security' (CFS 2012). Paragraph 23.1: "States should ensure that the legitimate tenure rights to land, fisheries and forests of all individuals, communities or peoples likely to be affected, with an emphasis on farmers, small-scale food producers, and vulnerable and marginalized people, are respected and protected by laws, policies, strategies and actions with the aim to prevent and respond to the effects of climate change consistent with their respective obligations, as applicable, in terms of relevant climate change framework agreements."

agriculture and the ways in which they determine disadvantage and privilege. CARE recognises that focusing on women alone is unlikely to result in a sustainable increase in their (or society's) adaptive capacity in the face of climate change. Crucially, the approach considers social diversity and the multiple social roles and power relationships, which, together with gender, shape the climate vulnerability of small-scale farmers. Addressing such gender inequality is a question of social justice and requires sustained efforts to give priority to women's access to education, information, science and technology, and extension services to enable access, ownership and control of economic and natural resources. Beyond redressing social injustice, empowering women in agriculture leads to improved nutrition outcomes – central to achieving our goal of food and nutrition security.

4 Build **resilience** for communities and systems to be able to withstand and recover from climate-induced shocks and stresses and other risks by supporting community-based adaptation in agriculture communities, and using market, technical and climate information to support farmer-led analysis, planning and risk management.

Enhancing the resilience⁵ of agriculture and global food systems to climate change requires new approaches to building the adaptive capacity⁶ of farmers to ensure that long-term stresses and discrete shocks do not lead to downturns in socio-economic progress. Characteristics of a resilient system include: a high level of diversity; connectivity between institutions and organisations at different scales; the blending of different forms of knowledge; redundancy within the system; equality and inclusiveness; and high social cohesion and capital.⁷ CARE's approach to resilience in its agriculture work is therefore 1) informed by market, technical and climate information (including long-term climate projections and shorter-term weather information for better farmer decision-making); 2) employs analysis, planning and risk management strategies (particularly focusing on gender and power analysis); 3) is embedded in systems for disaster risk management and productive safety nets; and 4) is supported by learning, flexibility, diversity and innovation.⁸ CARE builds the analytical and decision-making capability of farmers and their organisations, since the challenges they face vary and evolve over time as the impacts of climate change intensify. CARE builds the capacity of farmers and governments to manage variability, change and increasing shocks to their livelihoods and systems by offering a range of options together with the tools needed to choose among them.⁹ This work recognises that effective adaptation to climate change is dependent on access to climate information. Developing scenarios of how livelihoods would be affected by probable climate futures contributes to increased resilience and can contribute towards reducing the effects of climate-related disasters. Farmer Field Schools also help to build local adaptive capacity by encouraging and strengthening farmer awareness of the value of their own knowledge, and by enhancing confidence in decision-making, willingness to innovate and ability to access resources and services. In crisis-prone areas, CARE promotes innovative approaches to increasing or sustaining small-scale production while at the same time protecting or increasing asset bases and buffers to protect against shocks. This includes the use of cash. CARE's agriculture work in vulnerable communities connects deliberately with its humanitarian action and seeks positive nutrition outcomes in all contexts. In this regard, and across all the principles above, the agency of farmers, farmer collectives and national civil society is central.

⁵ *the ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the effects of a hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions.* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2001

⁶ Adaptive capacity defined by the IPCC is "the ability or potential of a system to respond successfully to climate variability and change, and includes adjustments in both behaviour and in resources and technologies."

⁷ Mitchell, T. and Harris, K. ODI Background Note, 'Resilience: A Risk Management Approach'. 2012.

⁸ The ACCRA Local Adaptive Capacity Framework defines adaptive capacity in terms of: asset base; institutions and entitlements; knowledge and information; innovation; and flexible, forward-looking decision-making and governance. CARE et al.

⁹ Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) is carried out extensively by CARE