









THE BUSINESS CASE FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN PEPSICO'S POTATO SUPPLY CHAIN IN WEST BENGAL: KEY RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

USAID partnered with PepsiCo to test the business case for economically empowering women in PepsiCo's potato supply chain in West Bengal, India. Women are heavily involved in potato farming in West Bengal, but often in overlooked areas of work such as seed cutting and seed treatment, typically done at home. As a result, most PepsiCo registered farmers are men. The partnership hypothesized that increasing women's visibility and participation in PepsiCo's supply chain would positively contribute to important tangible and intangible business metrics for the company, including increased productivity and profitability for farming families, adoption of sustainable farming practices, increased supplier base size and retention, and improved brand loyalty. The partnership worked with women and men farmers in 11 target communities and PepsiCo employees to increase gender equality awareness and women's access to critical productive resources in order to meet both women's empowerment and PepsiCo's business objectives.

Women's Empowerment Objectives	Business Objectives
 <p>Promote the recognition of women as farmers and capable to manage potato farming independently</p>	 <p>Improve potato productivity and profitability for farmers and PepsiCo</p>
 <p>Improve women farmers' confidence, access to resources, and decision-making power</p>	 <p>Increase PepsiCo's supply base stability and growth through greater farmers' loyalty</p>
 <p>Strengthen women's access to and control of land</p>	 <p>Improve compliance with PepsiCo's sustainable farming practices (SFP)</p>
 <p>Shift attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to gender equality in potato farming communities</p>	 <p>Equip PepsiCo staff with the knowledge, tools, and mindset to better engage women farmers in the supply chain</p>

To meet these objectives, the four-year (2019-2023) partnership worked with men and women farmers, PepsiCo staff, and aggregators, who are independent intermediaries procuring larger volumes of potatoes from farmers for PepsiCo. Activities included:

- Agronomy training for 1,888 women farmers on PepsiCo's Package of Practices (POP), as well as sustainable farming practices (SFP);
- Land literacy training for 542 women and 296 men farmers on the importance of documented land rights and practical steps on how to update outdated documents;
- Entrepreneurship training for 21 women and 5 men farmers to help them gain basic business and management skills, to begin to treat farming as an enterprise;
- Deployment of 17 local women Community Agronomists to help increase outreach to women farmers;

- Establishment of 11 women-led PepsiCo demonstration farms, to showcase PepsiCo recommended practices and women’s leadership, reaching a total of 225 women and 80 men farmers;
- Support to 7 women’s land leasing groups to help landless women collectively rent and farm together in order to enter PepsiCo’s potato supply chain;
- Gender norms dialogues with 174 women and 115 men farmers to address underlying harmful gender norms that act as a barrier to women’s access to productive resources and participation in commercial value chains; and
- Capacity strengthening for all PepsiCo staff in West Bengal on gender equality, women’s empowerment, and gender-based violence (GBV), delivered through in-person and online training, written resources, and ongoing mentoring and support.

KEY RESULTS

Results show that investing in women’s empowerment can increase business performance and benefit women, their families, communities, and PepsiCo.

Women farmers are consistently participating in training and applying new skills at the farm level.



Women farmers are experiencing increased recognition as farmers, leading to improved confidence and greater participation in decision-making at both farm and household levels.



PepsiCo employees have become more gender inclusive in their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as they recognize women's contribution to the business.



95%

PepsiCo employees believe that awareness of gender issues is relevant to their work



76%

PepsiCo employees agree that women's participation adds value to the business



96%

PepsiCo employees reported improved gender knowledge and skills over the past 4 years



88%

PepsiCo employees feel comfortable providing agronomy training to women farmers independently

PepsiCo staff report an improvement in yields and quality of produce along with improved SFP compliance as a result of better engagement with women farmers.



84%

women farmers reported an increase in their farm yield in the target areas



68%

PepsiCo employees identified lower potato rejection rates as one of the most impactful results of the pilot



77%

women farmers registered a change in household income since associating with PepsiCo



1.7x

rate of improvement in the sustainability score across 4 years

The farmer supply base has significantly grown due to women farmers support and encouragement to others.



8%

Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of overall farmer supply base over 4 years



22%

Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of women in the supply base over 4 years



90%

women farmers recommended PepsiCo to others

There is improved brand perception and loyalty amongst farmers to continue engagement with PepsiCo.



80%

women farmers stated they prefer farming PepsiCo potatoes over other varieties



57%

women farmers stated they would continue growing PepsiCo potato varieties even if the price for other varieties is higher



69%

PepsiCo employees identified greater farmer loyalty as one of the most positive results of the pilot





56%



women farmers have dedicated more land to PepsiCo cultivation over 4 years

The women's empowerment and business results discussed above demonstrate that there is a business case for promoting women's empowerment in PepsiCo's potato supply chain in West Bengal, and potentially in other markets with a similar supplier model.

However, certain areas require either improvement or better data points for future and continued assessment, especially considering the challenges experienced during implementation and the short timeframe of the project. These areas include early alignment on business case elements and sustainability of interventions; strengthening women’s ownership, access to and control over land; promoting equitable work sharing at the household level; increasing women’s representation in the entire supply chain (as suppliers, aggregators, and PepsiCo staff); and setting up efficient data monitoring and governance processes. The key recommendations for PepsiCo’s continued efforts to empower women in its supply chains and for future public-private partnerships on women’s empowerment are summarized below:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Category	Recommendations
<p>Training Delivery</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leverage multi-channel training mobilization (posters, videos, door-to-door outreach) through the support of Community Agronomists and PepsiCo staff so women and men farmers see the value and importance of initiatives. ● Engage men as champions to increase support for women’s participation. ● Tailor agronomy training to the roles women have in potato production, and focus on “sticky” areas of sustainable farming practices compliance (agrochemical storage, use of protective equipment, record keeping) ● Streamline and simplify gender training as a broader gender sensitization for women and men farmers; identify community champions to encourage men’s participation. ● Integrate life skills components into agronomy training (communication, negotiation, decision-making); integrate vision-building exercise to help farmers perceive family farming as an enterprise that they all need to work together to achieve. ● Consult women and men about the best venue, date, and time for training to reduce access barriers. ● Optimize farmer time availability for training through hybrid delivery (text-based, media, in-person).
<p>PepsiCo Capacity and Internal Practices</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revise exclusionary criteria for farmers to join the supply chain (minimum production values, land ownership) to promote greater participation of women in the farmer base. ● Promote and support women taking up farmer-facing and management roles, including by setting minimum quotas for women. ● Revise job descriptions and advertisements to reach more women candidates. ● Continue to strengthen local PepsiCo staff capacity on gender equality and women’s empowerment, developing a gender core competency training program and creating mechanisms for staff to exchange experiences.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide tailored support for PepsiCo women agronomists, assessing the main challenges they face and developing appropriate solutions. ● As agronomists have heavy workloads, adapt job descriptions and Key Performance Indicators to include WEE components to act as a monitoring and incentive structure to increase engagement with women. ● Establish incentives for aggregators to collaborate with women farmers, both as suppliers and by engaging women Community Agronomists to increase outreach to women.
<p>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use rigorous data collection and analysis within PepsiCo to inform ongoing activity modification and better track their impact on business outcomes. ● Develop an impact-aligned branding strategy to highlight PepsiCo’s “double bottom line” impact of sourcing from women farmers. ● Ensure targeted delivery of agronomy training, including PepsiCo’s sustainable farming practices (SFP) practices, through rigorous data collection and monitoring to assess on-farm implementation. ● Support PepsiCo data collection on women’s participation in the supply chain.
<p>Strategic and Partnership Level</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify key barriers to women’s participation in context and levers to overcome them. ● When working with multinational companies, make sure that buy-in at the global level translates into buy-in from local company teams, so they have the motivation and ownership needed to implement WEE activities. ● Weigh the pros and cons of different approaches to delivering WEE activities (separate team by outside implementer, embedded team within company structure). ● Define what business success looks like for WEE early on with partners (tangible and intangible business case) and continually refine. ● Develop a long- and medium-term vision and roadmap for the engagement, with necessary resources (financial, HR) and specific roles and responsibilities to sustain and scale WEE activities.

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