

# Sowing Seeds of Hope: Building Resilience of Women in Agriculture during Pandemic Times

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## ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus Disease COVID-19 created an unprecedented global change and challenge that led to its declaration as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020. Consequently, the Philippine government placed the country under the state of calamity. The pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities in the food and agriculture system and severely impacting the vulnerable members of the society, including women. Adverse impacts on the agricultural sector directly affect the welfare of women, as they comprise a fourth of its labor force. Furthermore, another burden women face is ensuring that members of the household are consuming safe and nutritious food. Key informant interviews from councilors in rural Southern Philippines revealed the constraints faced by women in their constituency. During the onslaught of the pandemic, rural women faced challenges such as limited mobility due to lack of transportation, community quarantine and taking care of the children at home. Moreover, there are limited job opportunities for women who worked as agricultural laborers due to reduced production and operations. However, interview results indicate that there are opportunities for women. During the beginning of the community quarantine, the national and local governments not only distributed food packs but also meted out free vegetable seeds for household gardening. As a result, the products are able to feed the household and later start an opportunity for the women to market the surplus. Aside from producing vegetables, the women also join the online marketplace to sell the food they used to cook only for their family.

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