

8 March 2021

Recognizing Women as Drivers of Food Safety #FES #BD4FS #IWD2021 #ChooseToChallenge

On International Women's Day – and every day – FES honors women and their critical role in improving food safety around the world.

Women are essential for improving food safety and for global food security more broadly as they play important roles in food production, processing, and sales, while also serving as the primary providers for household nutrition and health. Yet women are often under-recognized and under-appreciated in this role; and because of this they are subject to hazardous working conditions, have a lack of training on mitigating risks, and women-owned business have less access to financing. These factors pose serious disadvantages to the health and well-being of women and their households, and to the public at large when women food producers lack adequate support for supplying safe foods for consumers.

In recognizing women's critical role in food security and food safety, Food Enterprise Solutions (FES) actively recruits women leaders, subject matter experts, business owners, and food handlers in its efforts to provide safe, nutritious, and affordable foods by working in partnership with businesses and organizations. FES has many projects that are both led by women and aiming to benefit women business owners and practitioners, with two prime examples being our work with women fish processors in Senegal to adopt safer food preservation practices and business literacy trainings with women coffee producers.



Fish processors gathered around a modern smoker, the FTT-Thiaroye, in Senegal. Photo credit: Owusu, 2019.

Co-Creating Safer Food Practices with Women Fish Processors in Senegal

FES Business Drivers for Food Safety (BD4FS), a Feed the Future project funded by USAID, is a multi-country effort that works alongside growing food businesses (GFBs) to increase the use of existing food safety practices and technologies, improving upon them where needed, and adding their voice to the food safety culture in their country. BD4FS Senegal, led by the Program Director Mariama Samb Dieng, has been working with artisanal seafood processors – an industry operated primarily by women - to assess and improve upon current food handling

practices. Many women seafood processors use a traditional smoking technique that poses harm from smoke inhalation and produces high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), a known carcinogen, in the smoked fish products. BD4FS is now leading focus group meetings with women processors to learn why they choose this technique, to educate them on the risks to themselves and others, and ultimately to co-design technologies that reduce contamination and at the same time are culturally acceptable and financially feasible. In a tangential effort, BD4FS is launching a survey to understand consumer knowledge and concerns regarding PAH consumption – research that will heavily involve women since they are the primary purchasers and preparers of food for their families.

To learn more about smoker technologies and PAH risks, please read the BD4FS Technical Learning Note: <https://www.agrilinks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/BD4FS-PAH-TLN-20210127.pdf>

Building Business Skills for Women Coffee Producers

FES Director of Programs, Roberta Lauretti Bernhard, has partnered with the International Women's Coffee Alliance (IWCA) to empower women by building their business skills while providing them access to affordable loans. Through this partnership, FES and IWCA collaborated with Earth's Choice Organic Coffee and Rotary International to fund and support a business literacy training manual. This training manual was created by coffee experts Verena and Beatriz Fischersworing, Maria Eliza Luis, and Lucita Mendoza for the Earth's Choice "Women in Coffee Microfinance Learning

Loan Program." The project is currently operating in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, and Mexico with plans to expand to Peru, Rwanda, Kenya, and Ethiopia in 2021. There are three important outcomes of this effort for these coffee businesswomen: they have gained some financial literacy, they have learned how to manage a loan, and they have expanded their businesses.



Lucita Camposeco, financial literacy trainer for a training with the El Salvador IWCA Chapter. Photo credit: Roberta Lauretti Bernhard.

To learn more about FES, BD4FS, and our ongoing work, visit www.foodsolutions.global