



*We are the Guardians of Land,  
Life, Seeds and Love*

## **RWA Concept Note**

### **Webinar 2: Structural Barriers and Gender Inequalities in Food Systems**

**Webinar Series | International Year of the Woman Farmer**

**Date:** 22 June 2026

**Time:** 14:00 to 15:30 CAT / SAST

**Format:** Online webinar on ZOOM

**Organised by:** Rural Women's Assembly Southern Africa

#### **1. Background**

Women farmers are at the heart of food systems across Southern Africa and the world. They produce food, save and exchange seeds, care for families, manage natural resources and sustain rural economies, often under conditions of deep inequality. Despite this central role, women farmers continue to face structural barriers that limit their access to land, water, seeds, finance, markets, extension services, technology and decision-making spaces.

These inequalities are shaped by unequal power relations, patriarchal land systems, limited recognition of women's unpaid and underpaid labour, and economic systems that often prioritise profit over people, care and ecological sustainability. Women farmers are also navigating the growing pressures of climate change, rising debt, volatile markets, food price increases, disrupted supply chains, digital exclusion and constrained access to essential farming resources such as organic inputs, tools and locally adapted seeds.

For rural women, these crises are interconnected. Climate shocks affect production, market instability affects income, seed and input dependency affects autonomy, and lack of land rights affects long-term security. Yet, across Southern Africa, rural women are organising, resisting and building alternatives rooted in agroecology, seed sovereignty, care, solidarity, community economies and feminist food systems transformation.

As part of the international webinar series "**Cultivating Change: Women Reclaiming and Transforming Food Systems,**" this second session will focus on the structural barriers and gender inequalities that women farmers face in food systems. The session will create space for women farmers, practitioners, researchers and policy actors to examine how these barriers operate in practice and to highlight women-led solutions that are already transforming food, seed and agricultural systems from the ground up.

## **2. Webinar Focus**

The webinar will examine how gender inequality is embedded within food systems and how this affects women farmers' livelihoods, resilience and leadership. It will explore the ways in which women's access to land, finance, services, markets, digital tools and decision-making remains constrained, while also showing how women farmers are challenging these barriers through collective organising and practical alternatives.

The session will combine evidence-based reflections with grassroots experiences from rural women. It will also connect local realities to wider policy debates on gender-transformative approaches, climate justice, food sovereignty and the recognition of women farmers in the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

## **3. Objectives**

The webinar aims to:

1. Highlight the structural barriers and gender inequalities affecting women farmers in food systems.
2. Examine how climate change, market volatility, supply chains, debt, input dependency and digitalisation affect women farmers differently.
3. Share lived experiences from rural women leaders and practitioners working to transform food and seed systems.
4. Showcase women-led solutions rooted in agroecology, seed sovereignty, collective organising and feminist food systems transformation.
5. Identify practical and policy pathways for advancing gender-responsive and gender-transformative food systems.

## **4. Proposed Session Structure**

### **14:00 – 14:05 | Welcome and Opening**

Brief welcome from the organisers, setting the context of the webinar series and the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

### **14:05 – 14:15 | Why Structural Barriers Matter in Food Systems - Mercia Andrews**

A short framing presentation introducing the key inequalities affecting women farmers, including access to land, finance, services, markets, digital tools and decision-making.

### **14:15 – 14:55 | Women Farmers Facing and Transforming Structural Barriers**

A moderated discussion with RWA sisters sharing experiences from different country contexts.

### **14:55 – 15:15 | Women-Led Solutions in Practice**

Sisters share practical examples of agroecology, seed saving, community organising, feminist movement building, local food systems and advocacy.

**15:15 – 15:25 | Interactive Session with Audience**

A moderated session: Questions, reflections and contributions from participants.

**15:25 – 15:30 | Closing Reflections and Way Forward**

Summary of key messages, policy asks and next steps for the webinar series.