



AFRICAN FEMINIST MACROECONOMIC ACADEMY
The Audacity to Disrupt

Exploring the Feminisation of Agriculture in the Context of Food Security and Climate Resilience



*Image Description: A group photo of AFMA North Africa Participants
in Marrakech, Morocco*

AFMA North Africa Report

Dates: April 29th – May 3rd, 2024

Venue: Marrakech, Morocco

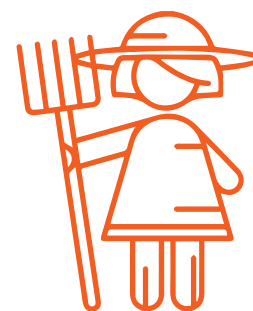
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since 2017, the annual African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy (AFMA) has been a valuable learning exchange platform for African women's rights organisations, feminist movements and researchers interested in strengthening their knowledge and advocacy for the advancement of economic justice. The central aim of AFMA is to deepen participants' appreciation of the many intersectionalities that exist between macroeconomic policies and the lived realities of the women whose lives they are working to transform. With this, participants are enabled to understand how various efforts in various specialities at the local, national and regional levels can shape these policies. The year 2024 was AFMA's first venture into North Africa having covered East, West and Southern Africa in previous years.

Contextual Background

The economies of North African countries are diverse. Countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt have a significant agricultural sector employing a large portion of its population. In other countries, particularly Algeria and Libya, oil and gas industries fuel their wealth. Nonetheless, the [North African region](#) grapples with economic challenges including but not limited to high population growth, rising unemployment and limited opportunities for young people. Many choose to immigrate, particularly to Europe, in search of better prospects.

Amid this context, **the 'feminisation of agriculture' has become a growing trend in countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Egypt.** Women are increasingly becoming involved in agriculture - with 55% of them employed in the sector compared to only 23% of men¹. Reasons for this are attributed to limited alternative economic and employment opportunities. Despite the fact that agriculture is the primary source of employment for women in the region, their contributions to the agricultural sector are often undervalued and unrecognized². Beyond this, women engaged in agriculture in North Africa face various challenges including: (1) Wage inequalities, (2) Indecent working conditions (3) Health risks associated with farm work, and (4) Limited economic autonomy over their agricultural work and income.



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of women are employed in the agriculture sector compared to only 23% of men.

¹ Kühn, S. (2019) 'Global employment and social trends', World Employment and Social Outlook 2019 (1): 5'24

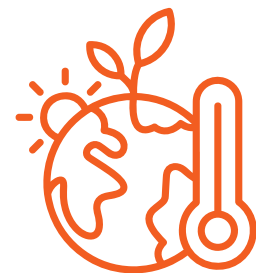
² Kabeer, N., Deshpande, A., & R. Assaad. (2019). Women's access to market opportunities in South Asia and the Middle East & North Africa: barriers, opportunities and policy challenges. London, UK: Department of International Development, London School of Economics and Political Science.

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Indeed the ‘feminisation of agriculture’ has become a growing trend across North Africa, with countries like Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt seeing a significant rise in women’s participation. Nonetheless, their crucial contributions to the sector are largely undervalued and unrecognized. Beyond this, women continue to face challenges that prevent the realization of their social, economic and political rights. This trend underscores the urgent need for advocacy efforts to address the challenges faced by women and girls in North Africa, which include wage inequalities, inadequate working conditions, health risks associated with farm work, and a lack of economic autonomy over their agricultural labour and income. Only through such efforts can we achieve true gender equality in North Africa and the best part is... we can collectively redefine and reimagine this kind of advocacy here at the African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy over the next 5 days.”

– *Shereen Talaat, Founder/Director of the MENAFEM Movement for Economic, Development and Ecological Justice in her opening remarks during AFMA NA.*

Notably, these **agricultural problems are linked to inequitable trade policies and practices** across the globe. Trade policies and agreements often favour of the Global North. For example, existing trade agreements allow the European Union (EU) to import North African agricultural products at low prices. This not only exploits the region’s resources but also widens the inequality gap between the North and the South. The EU further exacerbates the ongoing structural problems through development strategies and policies that promote liberalized open-market agreements with North African countries under the guise of ‘trade for development’. Furthermore, climate change poses a double threat to North African agriculture. The combination of climate and environmental changes, puts women working in the sector in a precarious position. While the Arab uprisings dismantled some traditional systems and sparked increased participation in civic activities, with women playing significant roles; this shift has not yet translated into a higher involvement of women in shaping legislation, regulations, and rights that define their autonomy within their communities (ICARDA, 2022). This lack of influence makes regions with existing gender disparities even more vulnerable to the harsh realities of climate change.



Climate change poses a double threat to North African agriculture. The combination of climate and environmental changes, puts women working in the sector in a precarious position.

Against this backdrop, AFMA North Africa sought to co-create a clear vision for a **Just Economic Recovery by exploring the Feminization of Agriculture in the context of Food Security, and Climate Resilience**. This initiative aims to empower women in agriculture, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met in building a more sustainable and equitable future for the North African region.

“The journey to women’s economic justice in Africa requires steadfast commitment and collective action from all sections of the society—especially the most marginalised women and girls...”

– *Memory Kachambwa, Executive Director of the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) during her opening remarks at AFMA North Africa.*

Scope and Structure of AFMA North Africa

AFMA North Africa which took place over a 5-day period in **Marrakech, Morocco** between **29th April and 3rd May 2024** was convened by the **African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)** in partnership with the **MENAFem Movement for Economical, Development and Ecological Justice**. Structured around the theme **‘Exploring the Feminisation of Agriculture in the Context of Food Security and Climate Resilience’**, the academy comprised four standard modules, i.e. (1) Introduction to Feminist Analyses and Feminist Macroeconomics, (2) Introduction to the Political Economy in Africa, (3) A Deep Dive into the Feminisation of Agriculture, and (4) Feminist Agroecology as a pillar to achieving food sovereignty and climate justice.

The academy aimed to enhance participants’ understanding of agricultural policy discourse, regional agricultural development, and sustainable environmental practices. It also focused on regional projects and alliances striving for an equitable transition in North African agriculture, emphasizing how women in the region can maximize their benefits from agricultural participation.

Using interactive case studies and presentations, the academy drew linkages between these concepts and what it means for the quality of life of women and girls in Africa, amid growing connections between global and local economies.

Participants Profile and Demographic Footprint

AFMA North Africa brought together a diverse group of **15 participants** from across North Africa. These individuals, **14 of whom were female**, and **1 male** were drawn from civil society organisations, media, universities, and movements focused on women’s rights and working in various sectors such as agriculture, informal trade, natural resource extraction, sexual reproductive rights, and trade, among others. Regarding country representation, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia each had 5 participants.

DAY 1: Introduction to Feminist Analyses and Feminist Macroeconomics

On the first day of AFMA North Africa, participants were introduced to feminist analysis and feminist macro-economics.

Day 1 Session Facilitators

1. **Imene Cherif** – Regional Program Manager (Economic Policies for Social Justice in the MENA Region), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
2. **Shereen Talaat** – Director/ Founder, MENAFEM Movement for Economic, Development and Ecological Justice

During an interactive first session of the day, Ms. Imene shared about the difference between macro-economics and microeconomics- in which she noted that the while the former caters to the economy, the later focuses on individuals.

“ In the vast world of economics, two terms reign supreme: macroeconomics and microeconomics. Although these terms may seem interchangeable, they mirror distinct spheres of economic studies, and each term comes with its own focus and implications on the lived realities of women and girls in the North African region’

- Imène Cherif, facilitator for AFMA North Africa.

Using an interactive approach, participants were able discuss the macro-economic issues such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), inflation, unemployment, aggregate demand as well as fiscal and monetary policy and tools. The discussion centred on how these issues influence economic growth. Additionally, Ms. Imene shared about how economic outcomes are impacted by market structures and consumer behaviour.



Image Description: Ms. Imene Cherif facilitating the first session of the day

The second session explored the complexities of the global financial system. In this session, participants were enabled to understand the roles, objectives of the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank) and how they shape the global financial architecture.

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‘Adequate financing and well-designed and properly targeted macroeconomic, structural, and financial policies and institutions can vastly accelerate the reduction of gender disparities and support the equitable advancement of women and girls’ rights – and indeed, society at large.’

‘The current financial architecture exacerbates income, non-income, and wealth inequalities, and undermines the conditions for sustainable peace and economic development. Without urgent, ambitious action to change course, these challenges will multiply and will continue to drive violent conflicts, ecological crises, gender inequality and geopolitical fractures.’

- Imene Cherif, facilitator for AFMA North Africa.

This session also featured a virtual speaker, Ms. Khadija Errebbah, a Moroccan advocate for women’s economic justice, who shared her experiences on championing gender equality and advancing feminist economic alternatives in Morocco.

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‘To champion women’s economic justice and social rights, the Moroccan feminist movement works around four key strategies, which are – the **knowledge strategy** which involves understanding women’s realities and reasons for their exclusion from the labour market, the **defence strategy** which is centred on advocating for women’s rights before the government, the **communications strategy** that focuses on raising awareness about issues affecting women and the **collaborative action strategy**, which guides how we work with other women’s organizations to promote economic justice.

- Khadija Errebbah, Coordinator of the Democratic Association of Women in Morocco (ADFM).



Image description: Photos of AFMA North Africa Participants during group work

The third session titled **'Feminists Mobilising for Economic Change – Moving the Agenda Forward'** focused on mobilizing for economic change from a feminist perspective. Discussions shed light on gender inequalities across the North African region. An overview was shared on the movements and processes in African countries that are currently working towards demanding a shift from neoliberal and capitalist policies to those that are gender transformative and inclusive.

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Economic growth cannot be sustained without inclusiveness, and women represent an untapped resource in the economy of Egypt. However, the discriminatory labour market treatment of women, especially in the agricultural sector, is a significant obstacle to their participation and contribution to economic growth’.

– Alya El Markaby, Campaigns and Communications Coordinator at RESURJ.

DAY 2: Introduction to the Political Economy in Africa

Day 2 Session Facilitators

1. **Imene Cherif** – Regional Program Manager (Economic Policies for Social Justice in the MENA Region), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
2. **Shereen Talaat** – Director/ Founder, MENAFEM Movement for Economic, Development and Ecological Justice

Day two featured sessions discussing the political economy in Africa. The first session examined the history of trade, resource extraction, and conflicts, from a feminist perspective. Participants then delved into core feminist concepts in development economics, like patriarchy, gendered labour divisions, and intersectionality. By exploring these concepts, the session shed light on how these feminist concepts shape and interact with the political economy of North Africa.

During later sessions in the day, participants discussed the role of IFIs in advancing women's economic justice, they collectively agreed that there was a need to enhance both economic governance and economic opportunities in North Africa. The key proposals highlighted included; the need to establish a clear state ownership policy, the need for strategies to bolster transparency across all sectors to foster trust and accountability; and the need to reform the global financial architecture to allow for equal participation of African countries in the design of international financing policies.



Description: Participants Presenting during group work on Day 2 of AFMA North Africa

DAY 3: Deep Dive into the Feminisation of Agriculture

Day 2 Session Facilitators

1. **Alya El Markaby** – Campaigns and Communications Coordinator at RESURJ
2. **Eman Emad Mahfouz** – Project Manager at Greenish

Session during the third day took a deep dive into the AFMA NA theme of exploring the feminization of agriculture in the context of Food Security, and Climate Resilience.

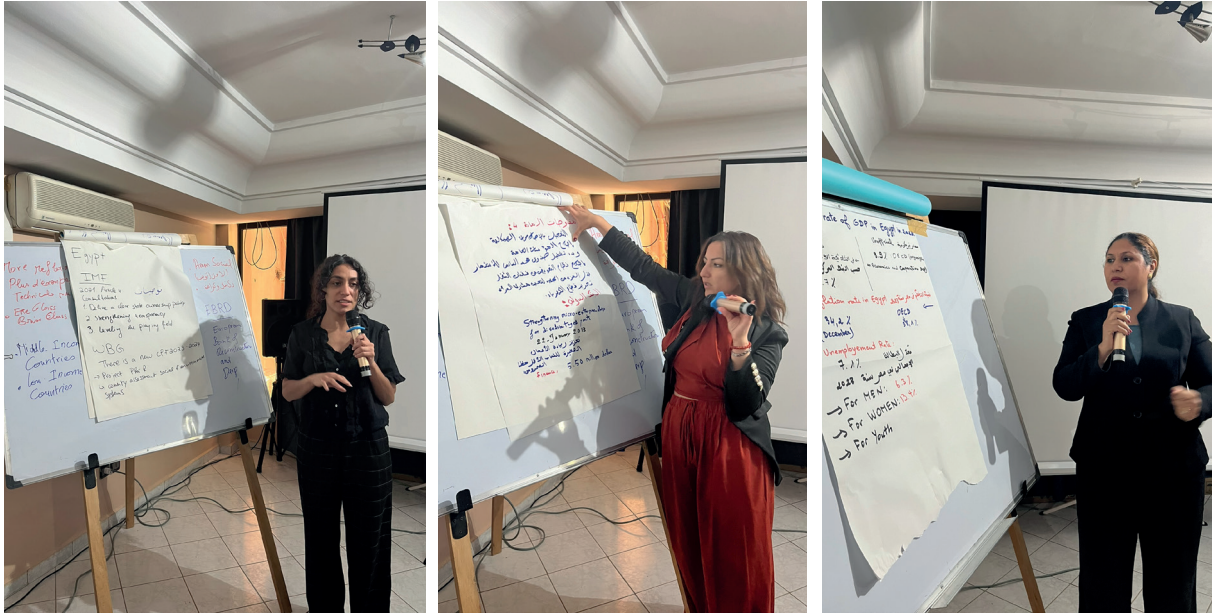
Knowledge Resources

- Story Analysis of the struggles faced by women in Egypt:** [“Alexandria: The Daily Struggle of the Ladies of the Sidewalk”](#).
- Challenges faced by women in Morocco:** [The Women of Fish Canning: Making a Humble Living while Creating Vast Wealth](#)”.
- Challenges faced by women living and working in Tunisia’s agricultural sector:** [“Rural Women in Tunisia: The Dilemmas of Informal and Feminized Labour”](#).

During the first session on understanding the Feminization of Agriculture, participants explored the growing phenomenon of women taking on a larger role in agricultural production. This involved examining traditional gender roles in the region and how they influence agricultural practices and the division of labour.

The second session focussed on the politics of care work and the feminization of marginal labour. Discussions during the session centered on the concepts of unpaid care work, often associated with women’s roles in rural communities. This included analysing how these responsibilities impact workloads and decision-making within the agricultural sector.

To foster a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play within North Africa’s agricultural sector, participants were tasked to discuss [a series of articles on feminised/marginalised work in North Africa](#)- with a focus on Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. From these, participants were expected to generate potential policy interventions and campaign ideas that feminists could mobilize around. This gave them a chance to draw connections between their research and professional experiences.



Description: Participants engagement during Day 3 of AFMA North Africa

DAY 4: Feminist Agroecology as a pillar to achieving Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice

Day 4 Session Facilitators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alya El Markaby – Campaigns and Communications Coordinator at RESURJ 2. Eman Emad Mahfouz – Project Manager at Greenish
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Deliberations on day 4 of AFMA North Africa focused on agroecology and food sovereignty. Participants learned about the principles of agroecology and their connection to climate justice and women’s empowerment. Alya discussed food security, its four pillars, and the World Bank’s shortcomings in addressing it.

Towards the end of the day, the conversation shifted to food sovereignty, its challenges, and its potential for local control and sustainable agriculture. Participants identified key areas for action to achieve feminist agroecology, including education, infrastructure, policy changes, and women’s land ownership.

“ It is disheartening to see these so-called ‘Green projects’ prioritizing market forces over the very people they are supposed to help. They become obsessed with profits and feeding global markets, leaving the needs of our communities hanging in the balance. There is no clear path to achieving food security under this system. We are encouraged to ramp up production, often of cash crops or for export, but this does not translate to putting food on the tables of our own people. The focus is on short-term gains, not long-term sustainability. What is even worse is that we are pressured to exploit our natural resources – the very foundation for future food production – to pay off our debts. It is a vicious cycle that leaves our communities hungry and our land depleted. We need a new approach, one that prioritizes people and local food systems, not just market forces and external pressures.”

- Shereen Talaat, Director/ Founder of the MENAFEM Movement.

Knowledge Resources

Video: [What Is Food Security and How Is the World Bank Supporting the Most Vulnerable Households?](#)

“ The whole system of large-scale agricultural exports feels like a shell game to me. We are told it is about food security, but really, it is just a way to generate hard currency to pay off international debts that most of our citizens had no say in creating. These debts hang over our heads, and we are pressured to export vast quantities of food – often our most nutritious crops – leaving our own people with less to eat. The prices for these exports might be high on the global market, but that does not trickle down to benefit local farmers or consumers. We are essentially selling off our food security to service these debts, and everyday people are the ones who suffer the consequences. There has to be a better way to manage our resources and ensure we’re not sacrificing the well-being of our own communities to appease international creditors.”

- Hassan Boumehdi, AFMA North Africa participant.

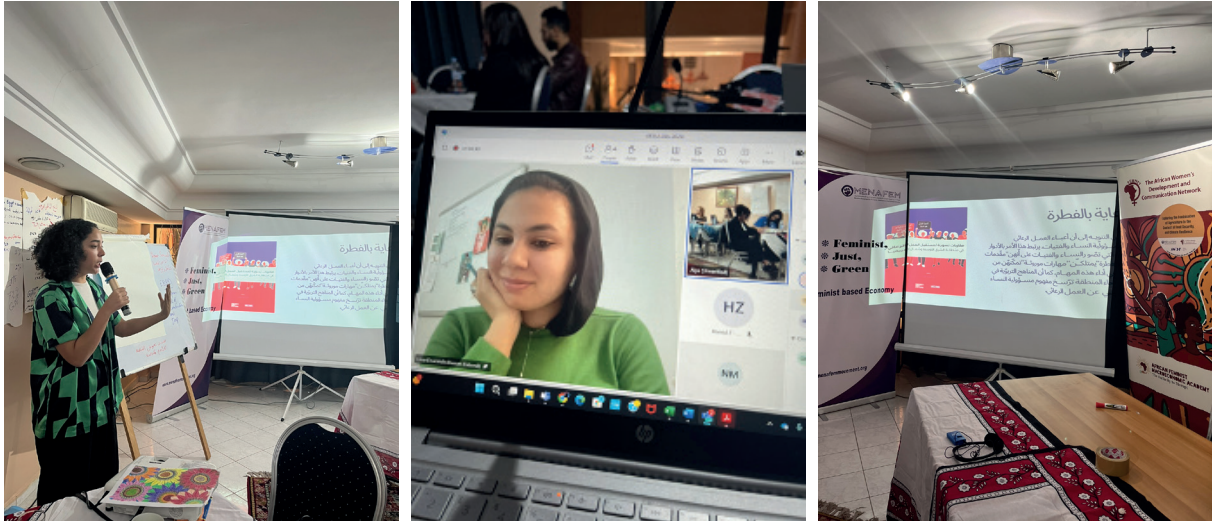


Image Description: Alya El Markaby (far left) & Ms. Eman Mahfuz (middle) facilitating Day 4 Sessions

Key takeaways from day four included: (1) Agroecology strengthens food systems and empowers women, (2) Food sovereignty offers a promising alternative to market-driven food security approaches and (3) Achieving food sovereignty requires navigating changes to the current inequitable trade and land ownership policies and practices.

DAY 5: Closing Ceremony

AFMA North Africa culminated on day 5 with closing remarks by MenaFEM and FEMNET. This was followed by a certificate award ceremony officially inaugurating the participants into the AFMA Alumni community and the **#Femonomics Movement**.

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‘The FEMONOMICS Movement, with over 300 active gender advocates, offers a powerful platform to champion women’s economic justice. This established network by FEMNET can guide discussions, empower participants, and drive progress towards gender equality. It also serves as a valuable entry point for the Maghreb region, opening a new chapter for our engagement.’

– Nicole Maloba, Economic Justice and Rights Lead at FEMNET in her closing remarks.

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Dismantling patriarchal systems and their discriminatory language is critical for a more inclusive and equitable Africa. We must act with urgency to support women and girls across the continent. Solidarity within the feminist movement is paramount. By sharing knowledge and resources, we can create a supportive environment where African women and girls can collectively achieve economic justice and rights.’

– *Shereen Talaat, Founder/Director of the MENAFEM Movement for Economic, Development and Ecological Justice in her closing remarks.*



Description: Photos from the certificate awards ceremony hosted on the last day of AFMA

Annexure

1. Photo Gallery– Link: https://femnet.sharepoint.com/:f/s/FEMONOMICS/EnVgSKx9uTdEuxxYRMeTFQ4BwHS0_VZ5_IeyZyT8Kz3TbQ?e=QKUMvW

