Women play a key role in ensuring family nutrition and household food security. However, women in agriculture and rural development face numerous constraints when it comes to accessing labour-saving technologies and financial services. There is broad consensus on the need to invest in women farmers to guarantee their equal access to productive resources, technical knowledge and viable markets. Despite this recognition, women have limited exposure to new technologies, lack opportunities to meet each, and rarely get to interact with entrepreneurs and financiers.

Countless small-scale innovations are being implemented in the region that need to be shared, incubated and taken to scale. These innovative, women-led activities can inspire change and ultimately contribute to better agriculture productivity, enhanced livelihoods and improved household nutrition.

Studies have demonstrated that by removing gender-related barriers and empowering women in agriculture to fully engage in regional economies would accelerate growth, reduce poverty and improve food security. Indeed, a recent International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) report (2014) noted that agricultural technologies could increase global crop yield by as much as 67 percent and cut food prices to nearly half by 2050.

This Sharefair comes at an opportune time. It will boost attention to rural women as drivers of rural progress and change in view of the 2015 MDGs, and the post-MDG agenda as well as the 20th anniversary in 2015 of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women. In addition, 2014 is the International Year of Family Farming, and the African Union has declared 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security.
The Sharefair on Rural Women’s Technologies to Improve Food Security, Nutrition, and Productive Family Farming will promote technologies and innovations that support rural female smallholder farmers. There will be a substantive South-South component to the initiative that will not only bring together rural women innovators from around the region, but it will also offer a platform for policymakers, academicians, food producers, investors, technology innovators and others to interact with the women.

To encourage and develop future technologies, a Young Scientist Award is will be presented to acknowledge promising students who are designing technologies that take into consideration the unique gender dimensions of rural agriculture, food security and nutrition.

To kick-off the Sharefair, a high-level roundtable will be held with regional and national government officials and other selected leaders to highlight efforts to introduce gender-sensitive agricultural and nutrition policies, identify promising technologies, and how to address the constraints to scaling up.

This 3-day event is being prioritized as the 2014 flagship event for the Regional Network on Gender and Rural Livelihoods for Eastern and Central Africa and will draw from the collective expertise and active

Objectives of the Sharefair

1. Accelerate programmatic and policy attention to gender and agriculture and practical ways to overcome challenges in gender-related technology, food security, and nutrition.

2. Generate a permanent technology repository of technology options that meet the needs of female farmers and that can serve the sector and the region.

3. Identify new and scale up existing technologies by linking farmers to entrepreneurs, investors and policy makers.

4. Strengthen the Regional Network on Gender and Rural Livelihoods through deepened collaborations on gender and agriculture and food security.