

## **“We Work Together, But the Fields Are Not Equal”: Lived Experiences of Agricultural Division of Labour in Rural Zimbabwe**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the lived experiences of agricultural division of labour among rural households in Zimbabwe, examining how gender, cultural, and social norms influence everyday dynamics of agricultural production. While family members often work together in the fields, the burdens and benefits of agricultural labour remain unequally distributed. Women frequently undertake the most labour-intensive and repetitive work with limited recognition or reward, while customary practices reinforce male authority in agricultural planning and control over livestock and outputs. Through qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation conducted in a Communal Area and A1 Farm in Zvimba, Zimbabwe, the study reveals persistent inequalities in task allocation, resource access, decision-making power, and livelihoods despite the collaborative nature of family farming. Results indicate gendered divisions in farm tasks, crop types, livestock ownership, and output sales. Men dominate agricultural production not through labour input but through land access and decision-making power, while women face land constraints and crop devaluation. As a survival strategy, women have developed resistance, adaptation, and agency within traditional agricultural structures. The findings demonstrate how households navigate the tension between collaborative farming and unequal power structures, with women creating spaces for economic participation despite systemic constraints. Understanding these nuanced patterns of cooperation and inequality is crucial for designing policies that promote both productivity and equality in rural agricultural systems. The paper concludes with recommendations for interventions that recognise and address entrenched asymmetries in agricultural labour division, emphasising the need for gender-sensitive approaches to rural development.

**Keywords:** Agricultural Productivity; Crops; Gender; Inequality; Livestock