

Taking the Bull by the Horns:

Women Ranchers Carving Their Own Path

COSTA RICA





In a sector that significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, women ranchers are demonstrating their commitment to environmental stewardship.

Their efforts to integrate sustainable practices into livestock farming make them key agents in tackling climate challenges.





Women ranchers show a strong commitment towards taking care of the environment, which represents an opportunity to consolidate and guarantee their participation in climate change mitigation activities.





Jessenia and Carla are women ranchers whose passion for livestock farming drives them to break stereotypes and learn new skills every day.

Their dedication is a testament to unstoppable strength. However, like many women in this sector, they face challenges that make it difficult to adopt the sustainable practices that could transform their communities and environment. Despite these barriers, their commitment remains steadfast, guided by the hope of a fairer, greener future.





"My father used to value our work at half that of a man's, and that made me uncomfortable."

Jessenia Castillo

Woman Rancher from San Vito, Costa Rica





Only 42% of women ranchers own the land they use for their agricultural activities.

Limited access to land and financing restricts their ability to make decisions and access financial opportunities.

A woman with grey hair tied back, wearing a red, blue, and white plaid shirt, is working in a forest. She is holding a large, green, cylindrical container (possibly a water drum) and is using a rope to secure it to a wooden post. The background is a lush green forest with many trees.

33% of women report having limited ability to make decisions in their livestock activities.

They are often perceived as less physically capable of handling demanding tasks in the field – a view that hinders their full participation and reduces opportunities for their valuable contributions to be recognized.





85% do not receive financial compensation for the farm work they perform.

Many of them also take on domestic chores at home, further complicating their development in the livestock sector.



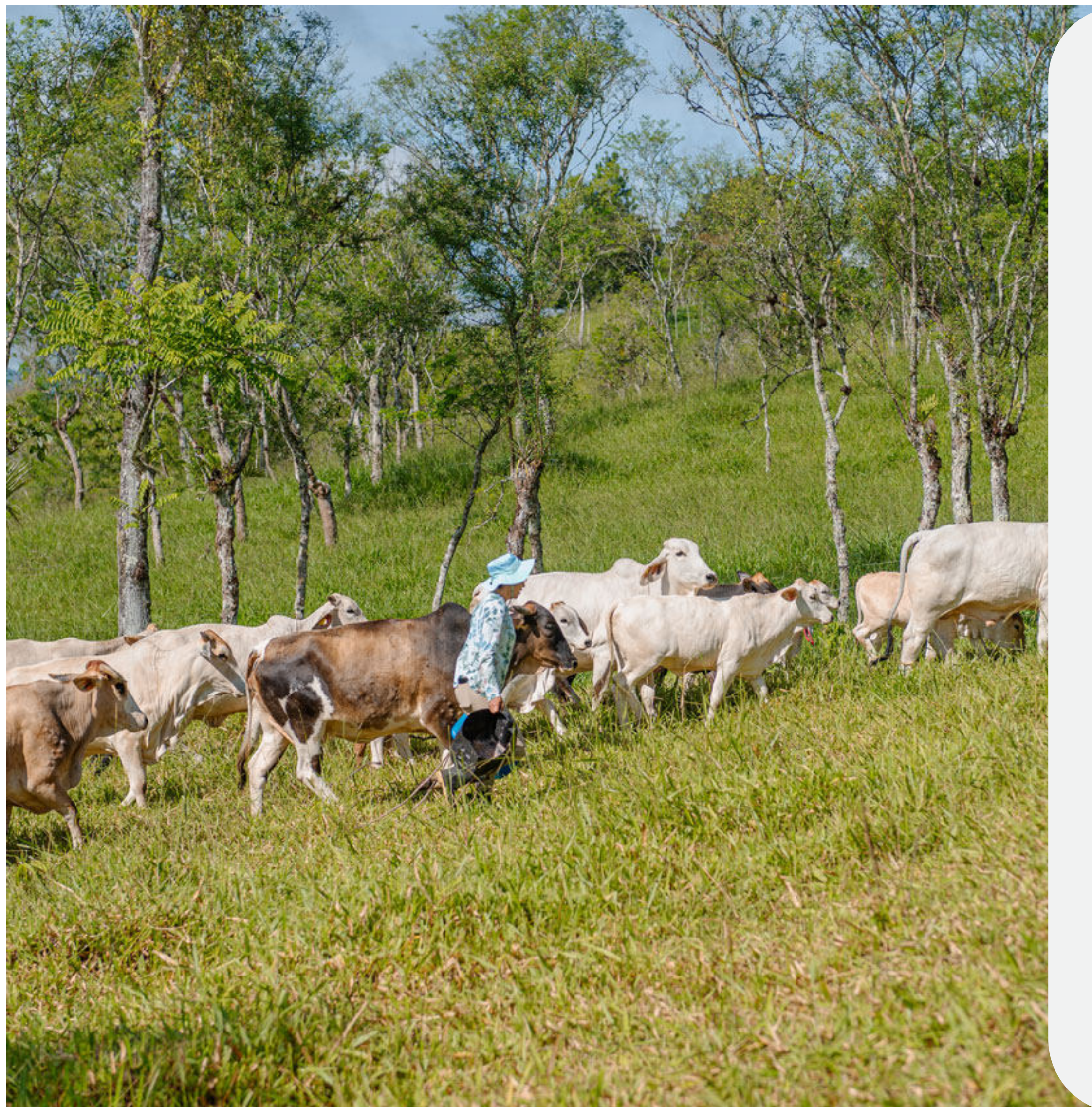


35% are not affiliated with a livestock organization.

60% of those affiliated are not members of the boards.

Women's limited presence in decision-making spaces restricts their power to influence policies and programs that directly impact their work, which excludes them from processes that could transform their reality.





For this reason, one of the objectives of the SCALA program is to analyze and understand the challenges women face in livestock farming.

To achieve this, a diagnostic was conducted, and a three-year action plan was designed to promote meaningful change toward gender equality and foster sustainable development in the livestock sector.



123 women ranchers like Jessenia and Carla shared their experiences, challenges, and perspectives.

Their voices and participation were key in building a deep and authentic understanding of their reality, highlighting their role as agents of change in the livestock sector, as well as their contributions to sustainable development.





"It is necessary to ensure better conditions for women ranchers to access land, credit, resources, and training, allowing them to fully exercise their rights. The information generated by the analysis feeds into dialogue spaces with the government, aiming to jointly build inclusive, comprehensive, and egalitarian development for both men and women in the agricultural and rural sector."

Andrea Padilla

Assistant Representative of Programs at FAO in Costa Rica





"As a woman, I have no obstacles. None. Only limitations in the economic sense."

Carla González Moreno

Woman Rancher, Nandayure, Northern Region



Their story, along with that of many other women, demonstrates that empowerment and gender equality are essential to building a fairer and more prosperous future for Costa Rica's livestock sector.





The SCALA program seeks to promote gender equality and sustainability in livestock farming through various strategies:



- Implementing awareness programs on **gender equality** to train public officials, institutional staff, producers in the livestock sector and their families.
- Developing specialized courses to **strengthen women ranchers' technical and business capacities**.
- Facilitating **access to credit and financing** for women ranchers.
- Encouraging the **creation of women's ranching groups and promoting female leadership** on the boards of livestock organizations.
- **Increasing the participation of women's farms** in the NAMA Livestock Program.





"Guaranteeing equitable access to land ownership, active participation in decision-making, fair economic compensation, and better participation conditions in the sector are key steps to promoting equal opportunity. Fostering these actions will not only empower women ranchers but will also strengthen the social and economic fabric of rural communities."

Sandra Sosa

Resident Representative of UNDP



The stories of Jessenia, Carla, and so many other women ranchers show us that gender equality and sustainability are not only possible but essential to transforming the livestock sector.

Their dedication, resilience, and commitment are an inspiration to build a fairer, more inclusive, and environmentally responsible future.





Learn more about the SCALA initiative:

SCALA Program Costa Rica

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Sources:

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