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Investing in rural people



World Food
Programme



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE
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JOINT PROGRAMME: Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment



TUNISIA 2026 FACTSHEET

Context

Rural women play a vital role in Tunisia's agriculture and food systems but continue to face persistent economic and social inequalities. They have limited access to key productive resources, including land, irrigation, agricultural equipment, financial services, and markets, and remain overrepresented in informal and vulnerable agricultural employment with limited social protection and decent working conditions.

These challenges are compounded by climate variability, water scarcity, inflationary pressures, and changing market conditions. Women-led agricultural activities are particularly affected due to reduced access to assets, information, and decision-making power, limiting their resilience to economic and environmental shocks.

In the governorates of Jendouba and Kairouan, where the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) has been implemented, rural women face additional barriers linked to geographical isolation, limited economic diversification opportunities, and persistent gender norms that constrain their participation in leadership and governance structures.

Tunisia has one of the most progressive legal and policy frameworks for women's rights in the Arab region. The 2014 Constitution guarantees equality between women and men, while subsequent reforms, including the 2017 law

on eliminating violence against women, have strengthened women's protection, participation, and access to rights. Gender equality is further embedded across national development priorities and sectoral strategies.

Despite these advances, a significant gap remains between the legal framework and the lived realities of many rural women.

The JP RWEE contributes directly to these national priorities and addresses the structural barriers that prevent rural women from fully participating in economic and social life. Through interventions that strengthen women's economic empowerment, leadership, access to productive resources, and resilience, the programme helps translate national commitments on gender equality into tangible improvements in the lives of rural women and their communities.

Programme overview

The JP RWEE has been implemented in Tunisia since 2022 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the World Food Programme (WFP) in close partnership with national and local institutions, and supported by Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).

The programme operates across 22 delegations in the governorates of Jendouba and Kairouan, reaching some of the country's most vulnerable rural areas where women face significant socio-economic and climate-related challenges.

Special attention is given to young women, vulnerable rural households, women members of Agricultural Professional Organizations (OPAs), and marginalized groups through inclusive and participatory methodologies that aim to reduce structural barriers, strengthen equitable access to opportunities, and ensure meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

The JP RWEE adopts an integrated and transformative approach to address the interconnected challenges affecting rural women through four mutually reinforcing outcome areas:

-  Improved food security and nutrition;
-  Increased income, decent work, and economic autonomy;
-  Enhanced participation and leadership in rural institutions;
-  A more gender-responsive policy environment.

Key results

Since its launch in 2022, the JP RWEE has reached 2,798 rural women and 577 men across Jendouba and Kairouan, generating significant and measurable improvements across all outcome areas.

Through an integrated approach combining food security, livelihoods, leadership, and policy engagement, the programme has contributed to strengthening rural women's resilience, economic empowerment, and participation in decision-making processes.

Notable progress has been achieved in reducing food insecurity and improving nutrition, increasing agricultural productivity through climate-smart practices, expanding income-generating opportunities, and improving access to markets and productive resources.

At the same time, the programme has strengthened women's leadership and agency while supporting policy advancements, institutional engagement, and awareness of legal rights, contributing to a more enabling and gender-responsive environment for sustainable rural development.

In 2025, the programme has achieved the following results:

 Food Security & Nutrition Improved agricultural capacity and household resilience	
-12% Households with moderate or severe food insecurity decreased	105 Rural women gained access to climate-smart inputs, assets and machinery
36% Average increase in nutritious crop production Driven by climate-smart practices and improved inputs	402 Women adopted climate-smart and value-chain specific agricultural practices Climate-smart and value-chain-specific practices

 Income & Decent Work Increased economic autonomy and financial inclusion	
+37% Average annual farm income increased	+26% Off-farm income increased From USD 500 to USD 629
13% Rural women with improved access to markets, employment or financial services	36% Women accessed formal employment Including through registered agribusinesses, cooperatives and self-employment
16% Women benefiting from gender-responsive financial services and registered economic activities	7,300+ Working days generated Through food-for-assets and food-for-training initiatives

 Participation & Leadership Enhanced involvement in community decision-making	
36% Women now participate in decision-making structures	725 Women and men strengthened leadership, negotiation and decision-making skills through GALS
300+ Women and men engaged in campaigns promoting women's leadership and gender equality	1,000+ People reached through radio and social media campaigns
85% Participating men committed to actively support women's leadership and gender parity	12 Rural organizations applying gender-transformative tools 9 OPAs, 3 associations and citizen enterprises

 Policy Environment More gender-responsive legal frameworks and awareness	
229 Stakeholders engaged in policy processes Through dialogue, capacity-building and institutional strengthening	92 Policymakers strengthened coordination on gender-responsive policies and rural women's empowerment
30% More rural women with improved awareness of legal rights and available policy mechanisms	90 Stakeholders contributed to policy solutions for safer transport and mobility for women agricultural workers
National Action Plan 2030 Programme contributed to development and operationalization of the plan for the socio-economic empowerment of rural women and girls	



Hajer Abidi, Gender Action Learning System (GALS) Facilitator, conducting a Basic Diamond session with seasonal women agricultural workers in Kairouan. The tool was adapted to their specific working conditions to facilitate discussion on challenges, opportunities, and priorities for improving their livelihoods.

Looking forward

As JP RWEE Phase II enters its final implementation stage leading to operational closure in 2027, the programme will focus on consolidating achievements and strengthening sustainability. It will also ensure strong institutional ownership and integration of successful approaches within national systems.

Building on the findings of the Mid-term Review (MTR), efforts will prioritize the institutionalization of key methodologies. The programme will continue supporting producer organizations to strengthen governance, market access, collective action, and long-term financial sustainability.

Particular attention will be given to embedding programme tools and approaches within national and regional institutions, reinforcing policy implementation, and

strengthening partnerships with ministries, Commissariat régional au développement agricole (CRDAs), and local stakeholders to ensure continuity beyond the programme lifecycle.

The national e-commerce platform, strengthened producer organizations, and policy achievements will support more inclusive value chains and improved economic opportunities for rural women and contribute to creating a lasting legacy beyond programme closure.

Throughout 2026 and 2027, activities will increasingly focus on sustainability, knowledge management, capitalization of good practices, policy engagement, and dissemination of lessons learned with a stronger emphasis on scaling up successful models and integrating them into public and institutional frameworks to ensure that rural women remain at the centre of inclusive rural development efforts in Tunisia.

Semia Romdhani, Kairouan

Semia Romdhani lives in Kairouan, a rural region where women face limited income opportunities and unstable work. She lost her mother at age eight and grew up in a household of eight siblings. Early responsibilities pushed her into work as a cleaner and later as an agricultural worker. Her daily life was marked by long hours, low and irregular wages, and unsafe transport conditions on agricultural routes.

For years, her work was defined by survival rather than choice. She had little control over income and limited ability to plan beyond daily needs.

Her path began to shift after she joined the JP RWEE, that introduced the GALS, providing her with tools to guide her own progress. The sessions gave her practical tools to organize work, map priorities, and plan economic activities. More importantly, they built confidence and helped her express herself in spaces where she was previously silent.

With this new confidence, Semia began applying this knowledge in her daily life. She invested in small livestock activities to diversify income and engaged more with administrative services to claim her rights. At household level, she initiated structured discussions with her family and set up a shared savings system to manage irregular income and invest in new activities.

The change extended beyond her household. Recognizing shared difficulties faced by women agricultural workers, low wages, dependency on intermediaries, and transport risks; she began mobilizing women in her community. She encouraged collective organization, wage negotiation, and joint planning of work.

Today she supports weekly gatherings where women exchange experiences, strengthen organization, and build collective initiatives. Her story illustrates how practical tools and collective action can help women overcome constraints, strengthening their agency and improving working conditions. She continues to mentor younger women and works with local groups to strengthen economic resilience and improve working conditions in rural agriculture.



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