EP

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BRIEF



BRIEF. ILO

Studies From 6 Nations Reveal Lasting Impact on Workers and Economies

New country studies from Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, Maldives, Senegal and Sri Lanka reinforce the finding that heat stress poses serious, long-term harm to workers, businesses, economies and societies and it is a growing problem around the world that demands attention in the form of climate adaptation and protection measures.



BRIEF. FAO

71% Of World's Forests Are Publicly Owned, Only 24% Private

According to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025, produced by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 71% of forest area is publicly owned, 24% private and 4% other. Governments are playing a pivotal role in forest conservation, climate action, and sustainable forest management as public control is the predominant position in the world's forests.



BRIEF. WORLD BANK GROUP

$280 Trillion Managed Globally, Only 5-8% Reaches Emerging Markets

Only 5-8 percent of the $280 trillion managed by institutional investors and banks comes to emerging markets. Private capital will contribute to job creation, economic growth and stronger policy frameworks, risk-sharing mechanisms and local capital markets could unlock it, World Bank says at Meetings.



BRIEF. UN DEVELOPMENT

2 in 3 People to Live in Cities by 2050 as 3.4 Billion Face Housing Shortage, UN Warns

Two thirds of the world's population is living in urban areas, and 3.4 billion people are already without adequate housing in the world by 2050. Sustainable growth needs to take into account urban risks while building the necessary systems to make cities resilient, experts say.

International Banking Sector Sees 11% Growth, Euro Gains Ground in Global Credit

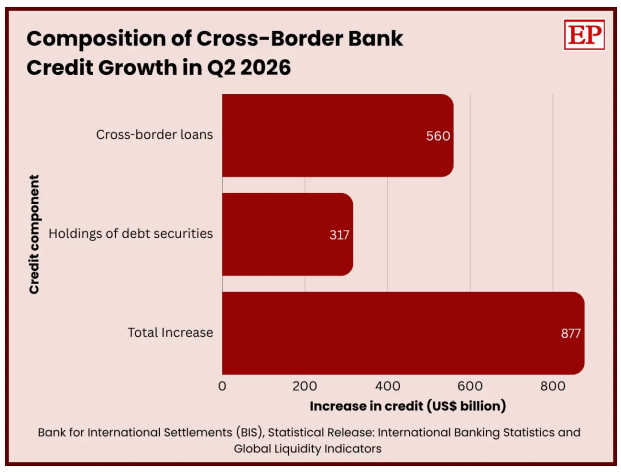
International banking businesses are rising

The international banking industry had growth in the second quarter of 2026. The total amount of international credits supplied by banks grew by 11% from last year to a total of $40.7 trillion. (Bank for International Settlements Statistics). This increase was a result of an increase in cross-border lending and debt securities held by banks. This resulted in overall international credit increasing by $.877 billion. Loans accounted for an increase of $560 billion in cross-border credit provided by banks during the second quarter and $317 billion from debt securities. Clearly there is growth in international banking as a whole as banks are increasing their exposure to international debt securities.

Overall, there was an increase in cross-border claims of $1.3 trillion during the second quarter. This figure excludes currency fluctuations and breaks in the statistics. Claims include more financial instruments than just banking credits. It formed almost half of the total increase, amounting to $424 billion. US dollar-denominated credit added a $383 billion increase in credits in these currencies. An increase of 11% was seen in cross-border credits in both currencies when compared to last year.

Growth in credit is varied in emerging economies

EMDEs witnessed growth in credit around the world despite the variations in figures. According to the BIS, international credit grew by $105 billion during Q2, resulting in an annual growth rate of 8.9%. Emerging Europe saw the highest annual growth with 19%, followed by Africa and the Middle East, which grew by 17%. There was still strong growth in Latin America and the Caribbean with 9.3% annual growth in cross-border bank credit. However, emerging Asia did not see the same trend, with cross-border bank credit growing by $25 billion in the quarter but actually falling 2.9% compared with last year. These regional figures show that not all countries are seeing the benefit from more activity in the global banking sector. Some emerging markets are seeing more cross-border credit, while others are in fact seeing annual negative growth.



Data sources: BIS

Euro Gains Ground in Global Foreign Currency Credit

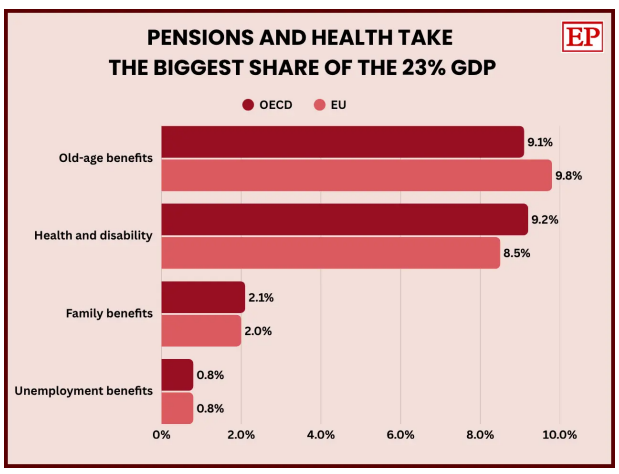
Looking at the BIS global liquidity indicators, we can see that there are some interesting trends in the composition of cross-border bank credit to non-bank sectors. This includes lending to non-bank sectors through bank credit, as well as international debt instruments. Euro foreign currency credit was growing at a higher rate than USD and JPY. International debt instruments have grown by 13% annually in euros, whilst those denominated in USD have only grown by 6.7%. This has meant that more of the foreign currency credit is being offered in Euros since 2022. This includes credit to emerging markets and developing economies. However, this shows that slowly there is a change in the currencies used in international financing, although the USD is still playing an important role.

Overall, this suggests that the international banking sector is increasing. There are changes in the regional and currency composition of credit growth. This can be seen in the continuing growth of cross-border credit to emerging economies and the increase in euro financing.

Aging Populations to Drive Up Pension and Healthcare Costs: OECD Warns of Social Security Funding Gap

Where is the money going?

The largest portion of public spending on social protection is on pensions and health (23% of GDP). In the OECD 9.1% of GDP is spent on old age benefits, whilst in the EU 9.8% of GDP is spent on old age benefits. Health and disability costs make up 9.2% and 8.5%, respectively. Family benefits and unemployment are much smaller with family benefits making up around 2% and unemployment 0.8%.



Data sources: OECD

Why costs will increase

As populations become older, costs will increase. By 2045 pension spending is expected to increase by 1.1% of GDP in the OECD, and health and long-term care spending will increase by 1.5%. However, social security contributions are in danger of becoming a problem. These are mostly levied on wage income and make up about half of public social expenditure. Working-age populations are decreasing, and irregular work is increasing, causing labor income to decrease.

Broadening the base

The OECD suggests that there are limited areas to reduce spending, so governments could look to increase the base. This could include increasing taxes on capital income, inheritance, and property. Benefits that are not linked to employment, such as child support, should be funded by general revenue. It is important to increase coverage. 14% of employment are self-employed in the EU but only pay 4% of contributions. Also tackling undeclared work will ensure workers are protected and the system strengthened. If nothing is done, there could be an increase in the gap between increasing demand and decreasing resources.

Africa's Clean Cooking Revolution: Infrastructure Boosts Shift from Biomass Fuels

African infrastructure investments are starting to boost the development of clean cooking supply chains. The continent is steadily transitioning from traditional cooking fuels. Access to clean cooking is an economic and developmental challenge, since traditional reliance on biomass fuels in Africa still has negative impacts on public health, household welfare, and sustainability. Africa's energy infrastructure investments are starting to play a significant role in facilitating this transition. Enhanced capabilities of storage facilities, electricity grids, and local manufacturing make the creation of a reliable, clean cooking market possible.

Infrastructure Expansion Supports Energy Supply

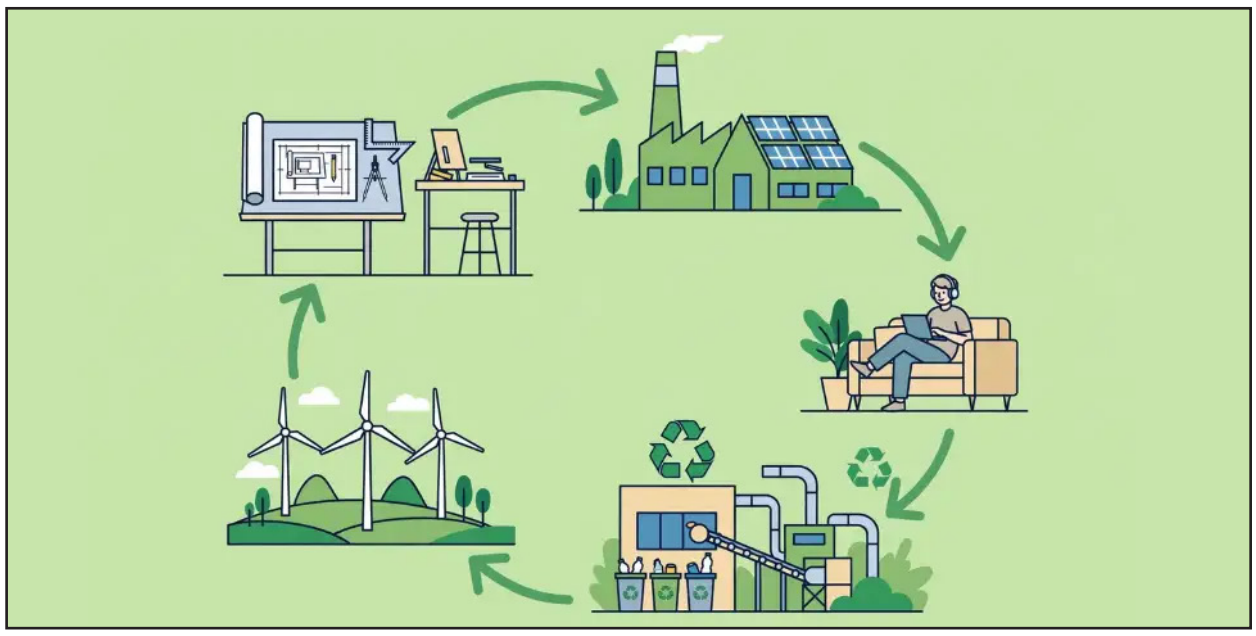
Improvement in capital investment in Africa is benefiting various components of the clean cooking supply chain. An increased storage capacity of LPG has helped in improving infrastructural support for fuel distribution. Expansion of the electrical networks will also support the adoption of electric cooking technologies. Investments in bioethanol and pellet production are also diversifying the alternative cooking fuels' supply.

Investment and Local Manufacturing Drive Market Development

Investment levels indicate the increasing economic significance of the sector. As per IEA, direct investment in the sub-Saharan cooking sector in 2023 amounted to roughly USD 675 million, a 10% annual increase. Most of the investment is going towards LPG activities, indicating the significance of fuel delivery and storage systems. The scale-up of cookstove manufacturing and home fuel production can help create jobs, reduce import dependence, and develop regional value chains. Challenges such as price, lack of access to financing, and lack of infrastructure, however, still need to be overcome for more people to adopt cleaner fuels.

Global estimates by the International Energy Agency suggest that it will require an average annual USD 37 billion of total investment to get the entire region to 2040 inclusive. Therefore, it will be essential to generate public and private capital in order to make infrastructure development into energy and economic prosperity.

Gender Inequality in Agriculture Threatens Global Food Security and Economic Growth



Data sources: FAO

Women in rural areas contribute significantly to the world's food supply, from cultivation, harvest, and post-harvest processing and marketing to the sale of food and water on the street, as well as feeding domestic animals and collecting water and fuel. Rural women are a pillar of the local economy and guarantee access to food for countless households around the world. Rural women are an integral part of the world's food supply, and yet they often suffer from gender discrimination and a lack of power, limiting access to land, financial services, technology, and opportunities.

Based on the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO's) 2023 data, women represented 42% of the overall world agrifood workforce. Women make up 44% of the women working in agrifood systems, but only 37% of the men in their respective groups. These figures highlight the extent to which women depend on agricultural jobs, yet this large presence in the industry does not necessarily translate into an improved economic position, as women are generally overrepresented in physically intensive, insecure jobs—which are affected by unpaid care work and domestic work.

Impact of Gender Disparity in Agriculture: Cost to Economy

More than 2/3 of women workers in agriculture are engaged in production, but women are systematically excluded from access to key factors that would allow them to improve yields. Due to this, women earn very low productivity on their private holdings relative to men. And this is probably attributed to lack of access to farm credit, quality inputs, learning, and technology.

This results in a gender productivity gap of 24 percent between equal-sized plots owned by men and women. Gender inequality is a much broader issue, but in the case of the agrifood sector, the gendered wage gap is a startling 78. For every $1 earned by men, women earn an average of only 78 cents. This pricing of women out of their own income source is not just a serious obstacle to them becoming financially independent but also means less overall household consumption, a lower savings rate, and fewer resources to be reinvested as capital into other productive activities. Gender inequality in agriculture is thus a waste of global productive capacity. Climate change makes matters worse. Women farmers are experiencing the negative impact of higher temperatures and droughts more than their male counterparts. As the Food and Agriculture Organization notes, "Each day of extreme high temperature reduces the total value of crops produced by women by 3 percent relative to men, owing to unequal access to climate-resilient technologies, irrigation infrastructure, and financial safety nets."

Women's Empowerment and Household Nutrition

The economic empowerment of women living in rural areas can lead to improvements in household food and nutrition security. Women with increased access to income, productive resources, and decision-making are more likely to contribute to increased household food consumption and intake, better child nutritional status, and improved access to health care. Also, women's participation in agricultural cooperatives, community groups, and local markets can create pathways to nutritious food. The work of women is not only limited to paid agricultural work. Women's unpaid domestic and care work still remains a big obstacle to their engagement in the economy. Every year, the unpaid care work provided by women and girls across the globe is estimated to contribute USD 10.8 trillion to the economy. This invisible work must be recognized and redistributed.

Invest in Women for a Sustainable Tomorrow

Women's empowerment in the food and agricultural sector is also a smart move for economic gains and social impact. By harnessing the potential of women, the world's gross domestic product (GDP) could be increased by up to USD 1 trillion, the number of food-insecure people could be reduced by 45 million, and 135 million people would be lifted out of hunger, according to the FAO.

This transformation requires concerted actions from governments, financial institutions, agricultural associations, and the private sector. Policies to promote women's land ownership and their easier access to credit, to increase agricultural training, and to develop gender-responsive technologies are critical. Interventions in rural infrastructure, childcare, social protection, and climate adaptation are equally important. 2026 marks the International Year of the Woman Farmer—a moment to spotlight how much women do for agriculture and push for real progress.

Here's the truth: sustainable agricultural development isn't possible if half the people working in it keep running into unfair obstacles. The world needs to face that reality and make lasting changes. A sustainable future for agriculture can be achieved only when the role of women farmers is recognized—not just as producers of the food, but as decision-makers in the future of agriculture.



