

ECON 460: Women, Work, and the World Economy

Reading Guide: “Male and Female Farming Systems”

Chapter 1 of Ester Boserup’s *Women’s Role in Economic Development* is quite short and not particularly technical. After reading the chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. In the African system of shifting cultivation described in the reading, which tasks are generally done by men and which tasks are generally done by women?
2. Based on the map presented in Figure 1, where in Sub-Saharan Africa is male farming the main system of subsistence agriculture? Where is female farming more prevalent?
3. Based on the reading, how can ecological and economic change alter the gender-based division of labor in African agriculture?
4. What is the main takeaway (or what are the main takeaways) from Table 2 on page 13?
5. According to Boserup, how are the plough and the veil related? How is the division of agricultural labor by sex different in regions that do and do not use the plough?
6. Do plough and non-plough agricultural systems differ in terms of land ownership or the use of hired labor? If so, how?
7. Does the chapter support the hypothesis that only men are capable of using the plough, because of their greater upper body strength?
8. What is meant by the saying that “a plough never enters into a farm without servitude entering too” (Boserup, 1970, p. 22)?