



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



MONITORING AND REPORTING OF GENDER EQUALITY IN LANDOWNERSHIP IN ALBANIA

The empowerment of rural women, gender-responsive land policies and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2

Assessment report

2025



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Required citation:

FAO and UN-Women. 2025. *Monitoring and reporting of gender equality in landownership in Albania – The empowerment of rural women, gender-responsive land policies and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2. Assessment report 2025*. Budapest. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd5891en>

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Ledina Mici, a beneficiary of the UNJP/ALB/015/UWN "Gender, Rural Equality and Tourism" project, on her farm in Kuqan village, Elbasan.

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Acknowledgements

This assessment was prepared within the framework of the UNJP/ALB/015/UWN “Gender, Rural Equality and Tourism” (GREAT) project, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy from 2021 to 2023 and co-implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

The text was written by Merita H. Meçe, FAO Albania Gender Expert and Project Coordinator, and Eralda Çani, FAO Albania National Legal Expert, under the overall technical guidance of Anna Jenderedjian, FAO Gender and Social Protection Specialist. Naomi Kenney, FAO International Legal Consultant provided substantive inputs to the chapters on SDG Indicator 5.a.2. This assessment report benefited from the invaluable technical review and fruitful comments of Yonca Gurbuzer, FAO Statistician for SDG 5.a.1, Muriel Veldman, FAO Senior Gender and Land Expert for SDG 5.a.2., Bradley Peterson, FAO Land Tenure Specialist, and Rasmiyya Aliyeva, FAO Regional Statistician. Marianna Bicchieri, FAO Gender Officer, ensured peer review and quality assurance for this publication.

The authors thank Michele Ribotta and Deni Guga from UN-Women Albania, as well as Raimund Jehle, Lorena Pullumbi and Agim Pepkolaj from the FAO Representation in Albania for their valuable comments and guidance regarding this publication.

The authors would also like to thank the gender focal persons and other officials from the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the State Agency for Strategic Planning and Aid Coordination (SASPAC) and the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) who were interviewed and consulted during this assessment and provided their professional support and insights.

Additionally, thanks are extended to the experts at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), SASPAC and UN-Women who reviewed the assessment and provided useful comments and suggestions that enriched its content overall, as well as to the participants of the SDG 5.a.2 workshop in Tirana for their valid inputs.

Abbreviations

CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Committee
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GREAT	Gender, Rural Equality and Tourism
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
IPMG	Integrated policy making group
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
NSDEI	National Strategy for Development and European Integration
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
SASPAC	State Agency for Strategic Planning and Aid Coordination
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security

Executive summary

Agricultural land is an important productive asset for rural populations in Albania. Even though rural women are the backbone of the rural economy, they own only about 11 percent of agricultural land (INSTAT, 2022). The low share in landownership, paired with a lack of gender-responsive policies enabling women's access to resources and services, further hampers their empowerment, well-being and capacity to respond to various shocks and crises (FAO and UN-Women, 2024).

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) recognized rural women's rights to land as fundamental human rights in General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women (CEDAW Committee, 2016, para. 16), requiring State parties to take respective measures to respect and fulfil women's rights. Acknowledging the critical role of gender equality, the inclusion of Target 5.a on landownership and control in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscores its contribution to economic efficiency and its broader positive impacts on achieving several other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including "poverty reduction (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), and the well-being of households, communities and countries (Goals 10, 11, 15 and 16, among others)" (FAO and GIZ, 2018, p. 2).

In its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania, the CEDAW Committee recalled the importance of SDG 5 and "of the mainstreaming of the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination principles throughout all 17 Goals" (CEDAW Committee, 2023, p. 2). It recommended that the Government of Albania ensure women's equal access to landownership and financial resources (*ibid.*). In line with the above, the Government of Albania has affirmed its full commitment to achieving gender equality and has been harmonizing its national legislation to ensure the full realization of human rights and progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. In addition, Albania has established clear links to complement and maximize synergies between its overarching priority for the European Union integration agenda and SDG goals. Assessing progress in monitoring SDG Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 is crucial to ensuring that gender equality in landownership and control moves beyond aspiration to become a tangible achievement.

Responding to the lack of data on SDG Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 in Albania, this assessment, which is conducted within the framework of the "Gender, Rural Equality and Tourism" (GREAT) project (2021–2023),¹ reviews policy frameworks, progress made, challenges faced and key avenues for overcoming them to enable monitoring and reporting. The completion of the assessment has been done in parallel with strengthened advocacy, capacity building and technical support from the Food

¹ This project, co-implemented by FAO and UN-Women with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, aimed to contribute to the empowerment of rural women in Albania in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) over the course of 2023 and 2024. Thus, the assessment captures the results achieved by the end of 2024 and provides recommendations for follow-up action.

From a policy perspective, the National Strategy for Development and Integration of Albania (NSDI) underlines its shared commitment and coherent efforts towards the SDGs. Furthermore, the Priority Policy document 2024–2026 includes agriculture among its policy priorities, with a focus on gender equality and the engagement of farmers and young entrepreneurs to meet the sector’s policy priorities and the ambitions of the European Union accreditation process (Albania DCM No. 447/2023).

Relevant to SDG 5.a.1, due to the advocacy, capacity-building efforts and technical support carried out in 2023 and 2024, the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) has indicated its readiness to collect sex-disaggregated data in the upcoming agricultural survey. However, some technical challenges remain, requiring stronger capacity building and technical support to INSTAT for national data collection. The review and revision of the SDG 5.a.2 questionnaire supports Albania’s reporting process, presenting an opportunity to showcase recent legal reforms that align with the best practices tracked by the SDG 5.a.2 methodology. These efforts should lead to the appointment of a focal person to oversee the updating of the prefilled 5.a.2 questionnaire, alongside providing technical assistance to improve data collection and accuracy. Additionally, organizing a validation workshop to present regional results and share lessons and best practices, are key steps towards strengthening the commitment. The assessment concludes that continuous support is needed for enhancing awareness and technical capacity among national institutions about the critical nature of monitoring and reporting of SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2.

This assessment aims to assist national institutions, FAO in Albania and other interested parties in Albania to improve understanding about SDG Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2, and the methodological considerations for collecting legal and statistical data. It also clarifies the type of support that relevant national institutions require in the data collection process. Data availability should facilitate subsequent evidence-based policy formulation and programming.

1 Introduction and purpose of the assessment

Gender equality in access to land, land rights and control over economic resources is important for enhancing the economic empowerment of women, ensuring equitable economic growth and achieving sustainable development. It is a precondition for poverty reduction, inclusive agrifood system transformation, and households' well-being (FAO, World Bank and UN-Habitat, 2019; FAO, 2023). The inclusion of Target 5.a² in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises that greater equality in the ownership and control over land enables improved economic productivity (UNSD 2024 Metadata). In Western Balkans, as elsewhere it “has positive multiplier effects for the achievement of a range of other SDGs including poverty reduction (Goal 1³), food security (Goal 2) and the well-being of households, communities and countries (Goals 3, 11 and 16, among others)” (FAO and GIZ, 2018, p. 2).

Nevertheless, persistent gender disparity in land rights hinders progress towards sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems transformation (FAO, 2023). Despite women's significant contribution to agrifood systems, they have limited access to and control over land globally and in the Europe and Central Asia region (FAO, 2022). Overall, European Union countries have prioritized SDG 5.a.1 and regularly report on its progress (for instance, Germany⁴). Other countries, such as Sweden and Norway make sex-disaggregated data on landownership freely accessible.⁵ Data on the number of women and men registered landowners are mostly unavailable⁶ or incomplete in the Western Balkans.

In contrast to countries in the European Union, in most countries of the Western Balkans, women own land more frequently as co-owners rather than sole owners. The majority of countries in the region are undertaking reforms to their cadastral systems, aiming to expand land registration and develop systems for disaggregating records by sex (FAO, 2022). Nevertheless, the available regional

² Target 5.a is: “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws” (UNSD, 2025, no pagination).

³ SDG Indicator 1.4.2 measures: “a) Proportion of people with legally recognized documentation of their rights to land out of total adult population, b) Proportion of people who perceive their rights to land as secure out of total adult population, and c) Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to land out of total adult population” (UNSD, 2025, no pagination).

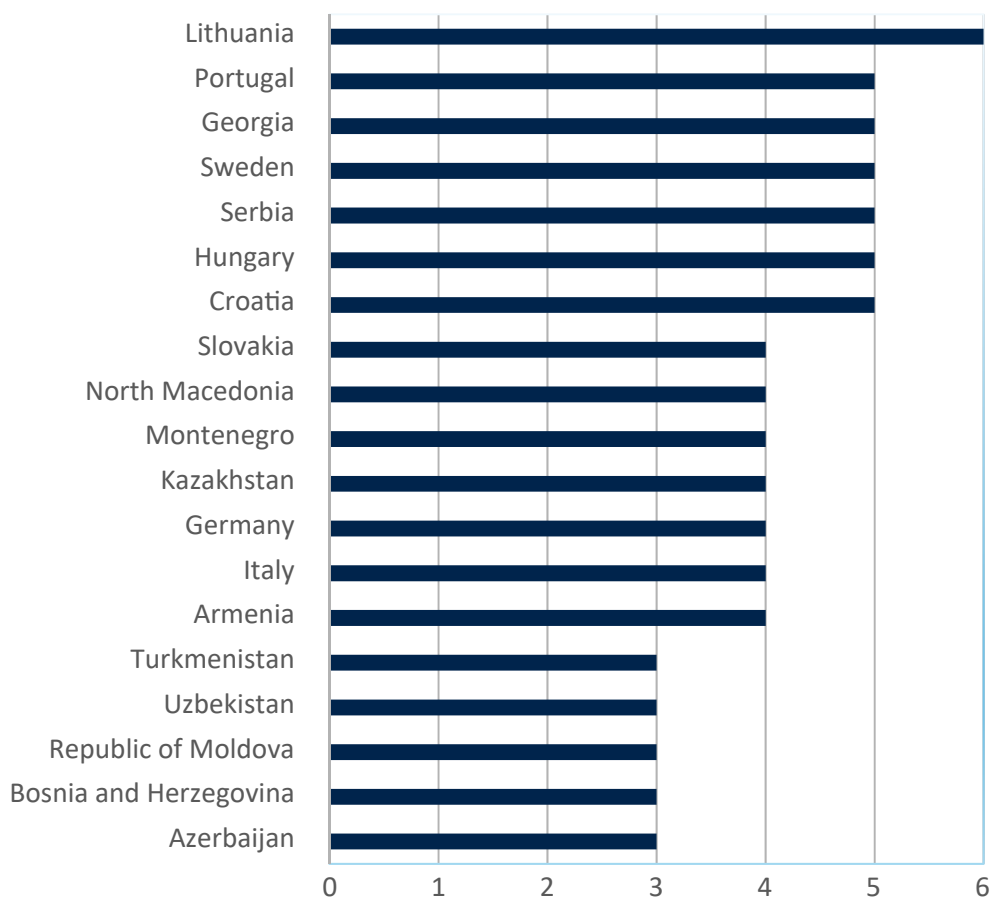
⁴ Further information is available at <https://sdg-indikatoren.de/en/5-a-1/>

⁵ Further information is available at <https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/en/search/?query=women>

⁶ Data on SDG 5.a.1 are not available for any of the Western Balkan countries.

data highlight disproportionately low ownership and co-ownership, despite an increase in the number of women as registered landowners (ibid.). While women represent around one-third of registered landowners or co-owners in the Western Balkans, in some countries within the region, they account for less than one-fifth (GIZ and FAO, 2021). Despite the legal frameworks upholding gender equality, SDG 5.a.2 data show a gap between European Union and non-European Union countries related to the protection of women’s land rights in the law (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Protection of women’s land rights in the law in selected European Union and non-European Union countries in Europe and Central Asia, 2023, based on the SDG 5.a.2 assessment



Source: **FAO**. 2025. SDG Indicators Data Portal: Indicator 5.a.2 Progress Assessment. [Accessed on 11 April 2025]. <https://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-data-portal/data/indicators/5a2-women-s-equal-rights-to-land-ownership/en>. Licence: CC BY 4.0.

While SDG 5.a.2 data coverage in the Western Balkans is relatively good,⁷ there is still scope to improve legal protections for women’s land rights in the reporting countries, to ensure alignment with European Union countries. The protective legal provisions are mostly found in the field of inheritance and marital property only. These findings underscore the continued need to advance women’s land rights through further policy reforms, the implementation and enforcement of existing laws, and where needed, the adoption of temporary special measures. To support these efforts, the development and implementation of programmes, evidence-based and inclusive decision-making, as well as the promotion of good practices, are needed.

⁷ All countries except for Albania have reported on SDG 5.a.2 and many of these reports are now due to be updated.

The Government of Albania affirms its commitment to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Towards these efforts, it conducted a baseline study to prioritize certain indicators in line with national policies and instruments (Ciko, 2018), and conducted its national voluntary review on the progress of the SDGs (Council of Ministers, 2018). A recent roadmap for achieving the SDGs by 2030 prepared by the State Agency of Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC) emphasizes the persistence of highly pronounced gender-based exclusion in landownership. The agency recommends better coordination actions between the main institutions which are involved in property rights indicators monitoring and FAO to determine their responsibilities for SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2 monitoring.⁸ Since no data are available yet for the two land-related indicators (SDG 5.a.1⁹ and SDG 5.a.2), the main purpose of this assessment is to review the policy frameworks, progress made, challenges faced and key avenues for monitoring and reporting.

This assessment is organized into five parts. Following the introduction, a brief overview of land rights and women's land rights in Albania, along with a concise review of the respective methodologies for SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2 reporting, are presented. The second part discusses the methodology used to conduct this assessment, followed by a brief description of the legal framework, mechanisms and structures for SDG reporting in Albania, with a particular focus on SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2. The assessment concludes with the findings and specific recommendations for monitoring and reporting of SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2.

1.1 A brief overview of land rights and women's land rights in Albania

Albania has a total area of 28 748 km² of which 24 percent is agricultural land, mainly in coastal areas and nearby valleys of the western part of the country. The land system in Albania is highly fragmented, fragile and complex (World Bank, 2022). Prior to the change of its political system in 1991, land was mostly owned by 550 agricultural cooperatives and state farms (Kodderitzch, 1999). Following the collapse of the socialist system in 1991, the Albanian government approved a new Law "On the Land" (No. 7501/1991) and started implementing a radical land privatization reform (Cungu and Swinnen, 1999) to allow private landownership as a prerequisite for land market development, agricultural sector growth and food security improvement. Prioritizing individual privatization and de-collectivization, land per capita was equally distributed within each village among former members of the agricultural cooperatives and state farms, transferring property rights free of charge from the state to individuals (ibid.). The total area of agricultural land is 696 000 ha of which "562 000 ha (80 percent) is privately owned, and 134 000 ha (20 percent) is publicly owned" (Albania DCM No. 88/2023, p. 2899).

Currently, there are about 359 000 farms in Albania (World Bank, 2022) and 85 percent of these are small, with an average size of 1.2 ha (Albania DCM No. 460/2022). As shown in the National Strategy for Development and European Integration (NSDEI), comparison of the data from 2011 and 2014 shows a decrease both in the number and size of farms, "from 388 697 registered farms with an average family farm size of 1.26 ha of land owned in 2011, to 352 315 in 2014, with an average

⁸ At the time of writing this assessment, the draft roadmap was under the process of its approval by the government.

⁹ A sole data point for SDG 5.a.1 is available in the "Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017–2018".

of 1.16 ha of land per farmer family. About 46 percent of farms had less than 1 ha of land, and 86 percent less than 2 ha” (Albania DCM No. 88/2023, p. 2899). The implementation of the land privatization reform revealed several discrepancies related to its insensitiveness about the rights of the formerly expropriated owners of the pre-collectivization process of 1945 (Zhllima *et al.*, 2010) and inefficient functioning of the institutions tasked with land rights transfer and enforcement. Particularly in the northern part of the country, about 15–20 percent of the agricultural land was distributed to formerly expropriated owners (or “old owners”) based on common understanding at the community level (Morone, 1997). In some other parts, land per capita was distributed taking into consideration pre-collectivization boundaries (Kodderitzch, 1999).

Almost three decades have passed since the beginning of this reform and the process of agricultural landownership transfer is not completed. In some parts of the country, distributed landownership titles (based on different legal and sub-legal acts of lengthy administrative procedures) overlap or mismatch with the current location of the property they indicate (Olldashi, 2022). Moreover, various surveys and studies conducted in Albania over the years have found that the co-existence of formal and informal land rights, the failure of formal institutions over informal ones for land rights self-management at community level, and corruptive practices, have increased uncertainty and land tenure insecurity (Mathijs, 2002; Stahl *et al.*, 2007; Zhllima *et al.*, 2010; Zhllima *et al.*, 2023).

The right to landownership remains a cumbersome issue in Albania even though the national legislation protects the citizens’ right to property. The Constitution complies with the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols to ensure non-discrimination and gender equality for the right to possession. Despite these efforts to guarantee women’s rights to landownership, the strong influence of the customary law (known as “Kanun”), the appearance of the name of the man in the land title document (as the family head), and the land reform legacy, have increased women’s disadvantaged position in landownership favouring a male-governed system.

Following the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Commission and Albania that entered into force in 2009, the country’s ambitious integration agenda includes continuous efforts to align its national legislation with that of the European Union, including in terms of recognizing gender equality and removing discriminatory provisions. Article 99/1 of this agreement requests Albania to adjust its legislation to respond to the new economic and social requirements, including equal opportunities for women and social protection (Council of the European Union, 2006). However, the lack of harmonization of property rights in the legal framework forms one of the main challenges for the realization of women’s rights to land (Ombudsperson, 2020). Consequently, discriminatory social and customary practices continue to prevail, which affects women more than others, specifically in the context of rural livelihoods. In addition to location and livelihoods, factors related to women’s age, education, income and ethnicity can also increase women’s tenure insecurity and exacerbate gender inequality in accessing land (Zhllima *et al.*, 2023).

These concerns were also highlighted by the CEDAW Committee (2023, p. 11) which recommended the State party to “ensure that women have equal access as men to landownership, markets and financial credit, including low-interest loans without collateral, entrepreneurship, independent businesses, public procurement, as well as information and communication technology so that women may engage in e-commerce and cross-border trade with regard to their goods and products”.

1.2 SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2

The mandate of FAO recognizes the essential role of gender equality to eliminate disparities that persist between men and women in the agricultural sector and rural development, and build resilient, cohesive and inclusive societies. Its 2020–2030 gender equality policy to promote, protect and empower women and girls is guided by CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (FAO, 2020).

As the custodian of SDG Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2, FAO is committed to providing technical support and capacity development to FAO Member Nations to facilitate monitoring and reporting against the official methodologies. Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 5.a.1 is comprised of two sub-indicators that measure: “a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and b) Share of women among owners or rights-holders of agricultural land, by type of tenure” (UNSD, 2025, no pagination). It is a de facto indicator that examines the current situation of land rights and tenure security in a given country for men and women with a particular focus on agricultural land (FAO, 2021).

Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 5.a.2 helps countries assess the extent to which women’s rights to land are recognized and protected in national laws and policies. It is a de jure indicator that monitors progress made in national laws and policies towards increased gender equality in ownership and control of land. As of September 2023, 73 countries had officially presented their reports on SDG Indicator 5.a.2.

It is worth mentioning that as an intergovernmental agency and as part of the One United Nations approach in Albania, FAO has affirmed its commitment to support its government within the framework of the 2022–2026 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in the capacity building of national officials and stakeholders to monitor these two indicators (Council of Ministers and United Nations Albania, 2021). It has developed respective methodologies and tools for their data collection.

The National Gender Equality Strategy (2021–2030) addresses the indicator through Specific Objective 1.2: “Increased access of women, young women, and girls in all their diversity to financial services and products and productive resources” (Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2021, p. 28). One of its expected outcomes includes “a recognized, implemented, and monitored legal and policy framework guaranteeing the enjoyment of ownership rights by women, young women, and girls in all their diversity, including ownership on agricultural land” (ibid., p. 29). Furthermore, Indicator 1.2.a of Specific Objective 1.2 seeks to measure “Number of awareness raising activities in rural and urban areas regarding improved legislation on women’s land ownership rights focusing on agricultural land ownership rights”, while Indicator 1.2.b of the same Specific Objective seeks to measure “The percentage of women, young women, and girls who enjoy ownership, access, and control over agricultural land” (ibid., p. 29). The Strategy has also set the targets for SDG 5.a.1, expecting an annual increase of 2 percentage points. Despite the relevant frameworks, Albania has not prepared a monitoring report to date.

In recent years, FAO has collaborated closely with GIZ to close capacity and data gaps for SDG Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 supporting the responsible institutions in the Western Balkan countries (including Albania) to report on both indicators. Besides the targeted technical support provided, in October 2023, a regional roundtable “Empowerment of rural women and implementation of SDG Indicator 5.a.1 in the Western Balkans” was held to discuss specific roadmaps with the participation

of statistical agencies and relevant ministries.¹⁰ These efforts build upon the FAO and GIZ partnership under the “Gender and Land Rights” (2016–2018) and “Strengthening the Economic Empowerment of Women” (2019–2021) projects aimed at improving gender equality in landownership and control in the Western Balkans.

1.2.1 SDG Indicator 5.a.1 review and methodology

Box 1. SDG Indicator 5.a.1

(a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) Share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

Source: UNSD. 2025. SDG Indicators – Metadata repository. In: *Sustainable Development Goals Indicators*. New York, USA. [Cited 14 April 2025]. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

This indicator helps countries collect statistical sex-disaggregated data on the share of individuals with ownership and secure rights to agricultural land (UNSD, 2025). Together with the results of the SDG 5.a.2 legal assessment, the data can inform policymaking and practices to strengthen women’s access to, and control and ownership of economic resources. This indicator refers to the agricultural land that includes “‘land under temporary crops’, ‘land temporarily fallow’, ‘land under permanent crops’, ‘land under temporary meadows and pastures’ and ‘land under permanent meadows and pastures’” (UN, 2019, p. 4). It also refers to the agricultural population which is defined as “all adult individuals living in households who operated land for agricultural purposes and/or raised livestock over the past 12 months, regardless of the final purpose of the production” (ibid., Annex 2, p. 5). The piloting phase of this indicator showed that its measurement is based on three proxies:

Proxy 1: Having a legally recognized document that includes the individual’s name

Proxy 2: Individual’s right to sell

Proxy 3: Individual’s right to bequeath (ibid., p. 5).

Taking these proxies into consideration, individuals who present at least one of the documents listed above are considered agricultural landowners or holders and have their land tenure rights on it. Since the individuals might be entitled “to sell or bequeath the land in the absence of legal documents, the indicator combines legal documents with alienation rights” (ibid., p. 5). Mathematically, two sub-indicators of this indicator can be expressed through the following formulas (ibid., p. 5):

¹⁰ Participants from the ministries of agriculture and national statistics offices of six Western Balkan countries including Albania were present.

Sub-indicator (a):

Number of people in agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land

Total agricultural population *100 by sex

Sub-indicator (b):

Number of women in the agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land

Number of people in the agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land *100 by type of tenure

The main data sources for this indicator include: a) agricultural surveys; and/or b) household surveys that have a representative coverage of agricultural households; and c) agricultural censuses. The advantage of agricultural surveys relies on: a) their unit of analysis that captures agricultural holdings without requiring any other “prescreening and oversampling to generate nationally representative estimates”; and b) that these surveys can support land tenure rights-related questions because they collect data on “the characteristics of the cultivated land and the rights over the land” (Brunelli and Gurbuzer, 2021, p. 5). On the other hand, some of the advantages of the national household survey to collect data for this indicator include: a) data source availability; and b) broad and flexible scope that can accommodate questions that generate data for this indicator and allow “exploring associations between the individual rights over land and individual and household characteristics, such as education, health, income level, etc.” (ibid., p. 6). Finally, agricultural censuses conducted every ten years represent a large-scale source that employs structural data. They “heavily rely on proxy respondents, an approach which is not recommended when collecting data on individuals’ asset ownership” (ibid., p. 6). As a global indicator, within the context of Indicator 5.a.1, the customization phase guided by two main principles respectively, a) results’ comparability across countries and b) country specifics and characteristics, is needed to reflect the reality of the country (ibid.).

1.2.2 SDG Indicator 5.a.2 review and methodology

Box 2. SDG Indicator 5.a.2

Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to landownership and/or control

Source: **UNSD**. 2025. SDG Indicators – Metadata repository. In: *Sustainable Development Goals Indicators*. New York, USA. [Cited 14 April 2025]. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 5.a.2 allows countries to assess the level of protection in national laws and policies of women’s rights to land. As this legal indicator is not directly measurable, six proxies drawn from CEDAW and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) have been identified to assess progress as follows:

- **Proxy A:** Is the joint registration compulsory or encouraged through economic incentives for land that is jointly owned by the spouses? (UNSD, 2024, p. 7)
- **Proxy B:** Is spousal consent compulsory for land transactions where this land is or is presumed to be owned by the spouses? (ibid., p. 7)
- **Proxy C:** Do “women and girls” have “equal inheritance rights” in estate successions? (ibid., p. 8)
- **Proxy D:** Are “financial resources” allocated “to increase women’s ownership and control over land”? (ibid., p. 8)
- **Proxy E:** “In legal systems that recognize customary land tenure” or customary law, are the land rights of women explicitly protected? (ibid., p. 8)
- **Proxy F:** “Does the legal and policy framework mandate women’s participation in land management and administration institutions”? (ibid., p. 9)

As is the case for all of the SDG targets and indicators, the reporting process for Target 5.a is “global in scope and country-led” (FAO, 2021, p. 14). The methodology for standardized reporting of Indicator 5.a.2 includes six steps presented below:

Step 1: Identification of a responsible national entity

The governments assign “a national entity responsible for collecting data on and monitoring SDG Indicator 5.a.2” (UNSD, 2024, p. 6). Countries, through the national SDG coordination mechanism, designate a focal point to undertake the coordination with relevant national institutions for data collection and validation. Most of the focal points are within the Ministry of Agriculture or Land, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (or related institution), or the Ministry of Justice. Usually, there will be one lead institution.

Depending on the context and needs expressed by the lead agency, other entities are mostly involved in the validation process, such as: the Land Registration Bureau or Cadastre, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Religious or Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Local Government, the National Statistics Office, and the National Law Reform Commission. It is advised that the report is validated by the National Land Reform Task Force, if it exists.

Step 2: Identification of a national legal expert

Because Indicator 5.a.2 is legal in nature, the responsible entity should consider nominating “a national legal expert” to undertake the 5.a.2 legal assessment (FAO, 2021, p. 14). The expert should have knowledge and experience in issues related to gender, land tenure and property rights in their country and “legal research skills, including being able to locate relevant policy and legislation pertaining to land and property rights” (ibid., p. 14).

Step 3: Expert assessment of the policy and legal framework

Reporting of the assessed Indicator 5.a.2 should take place **every four years** (UNSD, 2024, p. 6),¹¹ using a standard questionnaire. A national legal expert undertakes the legal assessment which involves examining and interpreting legal principles, statutes and regulations, to answer the legal questions raised for each of the six proxies. The methodology must be closely followed. The legal assessment can be realized by a desk study which includes the following steps:

- Study the methodology and reporting questionnaire for each of the six proxies.
- Collect and gather the relevant statutes and regulations.
- Read and study the legal sources to gain a good understanding of the relevant legal principles, rules and concepts. Pay attention to the specific provisions, definitions, interpretations and exceptions that relate to the legal issue.
- Apply legal reasoning to analyse the legal sources and assess how they apply to the specific legal issue.
- Cite relevant legal provisions in the reporting questionnaire (Section 2, Form 1) to support and justify the legal analysis, while considering counterarguments. Include a link to the primary or secondary laws or provide FAO with a soft copy.
- Based on the analysis, draw reasoned conclusions in the reporting questionnaire (Section 2, Form 2) as to why the proxies are present or absent, and which exceptions apply. Bills, policies and programmes can be cited as additional information.
- Submit the filled questionnaire to FAO for the quality control and, once the report is cleared by FAO and the responsible institutions, global reporting to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat.

The legal basis for land programmes and concrete provisions from policies and bills must be cited if relevant for a particular proxy, together with explanations as to why they are relevant considering the methodological guidelines (all in the additional information section for each of the proxies).

In principle, the SDG Indicator 5.a.2 legal assessment does **not** require analysis of case law and legal commentary. The de facto situation, or the implementation or enforcement of the legal provisions, is not measured either, as this is to some extent covered by SDG Indicator 5.a.1. If programmes are cited, they must be ongoing, requiring verifying and adding information on their status of implementation. Moreover, two of the six proxies (proxies D and F) look at the adoption of temporary special measures aimed at strengthening the implementation of the relevant laws, and in the absence of such measures, statistical data may be provided.

¹¹ This time interval is set by the United Nations taking into consideration the length of the policy reforms (see <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-05-0a-02.pdf> for more information).

Step 4: Validation of the results by the responsible entity

The responsible entity reviews and validates the results, after which it communicates with FAO. The process should be transparent, “open to the participation of civil society and a cross-section of government institutions” (FAO, 2021, p. 14).

The representatives from the relevant institutions and FAO verify questionnaire responses for accuracy and completeness against codified sources of national law, as often as needed.

Step 5: Communication of the results to FAO

After checking and validating the results, the responsible entity communicates the questionnaire to FAO. Results must be communicated in English, or in the original language with English translations.

Step 6: FAO quality check and submission to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat

Upon receipt of the submitted questionnaire, FAO undertakes a quality check and communicates with the responsible institution in case explanations or any additional revisions are required (FAO, 2021). During this review, “FAO may provide methodological clarifications to ensure conformity with the methodological guidelines” (UNSD, 2024, p. 13).

The national institution subsequently (re)submits the questionnaire to FAO to undergo additional quality control, ensuring that the responses are fully aligned with the established methodology. The finalized questionnaire is returned to the national entity for validation as often as needed (UNSD, 2025).

The final and endorsed version of the 5.a.2 questionnaire will be considered the country’s official report and is to be submitted to FAO and the national SDG coordination mechanism. FAO will seek final confirmation of the lead institution “before compiling all the national results and reporting progress on the indicator at the global level to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat” (FAO, 2021, p. 15). This ensures that the reporting is carried out consistently across all reporting countries.

2 How the assessment was conducted

This report is based on a desk review, primary data, advocacy work, capacity building and technical support. The desk review was mainly focused on the SDG-related legal framework and mechanisms that Albania has in place to achieve SDG Target 5.a in particular.

Primary data were collected through face-to-face open-ended and structured interviews with key informants between October 2021 and March 2023, as well as during the SDG 5.a.2 validation workshop held in Tirana in November 2024 with 12 participants from the main national institutions and independent bodies and structures. They were purposefully selected and represented the main central and national institutions, as well as some intergovernmental agencies including the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP), INSTAT, SASPAC and GIZ. In total, 14 key informants (11 women and 3 men) were interviewed mainly in their places of work. Their positions varied and included gender equality officer, chief of the agricultural statistics sector, chief of the social statistics sector, head of the institution, deputy minister, and consultant or expert of an international organization.

Interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes and relevant information was collected through notetaking. The interview template was divided in two parts: the first part included a set of questions related to the level of involvement of the institution in monitoring and reporting of the two indicators (SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2); the second part included questions related to the challenges and difficulties faced in monitoring and reporting them, including designated tasks, tools and instruments, human resources and skills. During the validation workshop for the SDG 5.a.2 questionnaire, participants provided feedback and comments mainly related to its proxies and their achievement in the context of Albania.

The assessment was validated and enriched with the data from capacity-building events and workshops held within the framework of the FAO-GIZ partnership on improving women's access to land and events organized by the GREAT project throughout 2024. The information was also based on FAO in Albania's engagement in advocacy on SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2 monitoring and evaluation targeting the Prime Minister's Office and SASPAC. The key takeaways and agreements reached through capacity building and technical support provided to INSTAT under the framework of the FAO-GIZ partnership are also incorporated in the final assessment.

3 Legal framework, mechanisms and structures on SDGs in Albania

The SDGs are addressed at both the executive and legislative levels. A dedicated Inter-ministerial Committee established by the Prime Minister guarantees and monitors the implementation of the SDGs at the executive level. The 17 SDG objectives are allocated to relevant Albanian institutions (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, SDG Sub-Commission, 2022). Ministries, subordinated state institutions, and independent institutions such as the Bank of Albania, INSTAT and the Public Procurement Agency, are charged with addressing dedicated targets (Republic of Albania, 2022). The Institute of Statistics undertakes dedicated activities on the implementation of the SDGs in the country, producing reports for more than 61 statistical indicators. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection is responsible for the majority of SDG 5 targets.

Relevant to SDGs 5.a.1 and 5.a.2, Albania reported on SDG 5.1.1 in 2023. The Ministry of Justice in collaboration with civil society organization members, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Centre for Legal and Civic Initiatives, among others, is currently revising the Family Code (2025) and Civil Code (2024). An online platform established by INSTAT for the SDGs provides updates on these indicators. However, at the time of writing this publication, the data were only available for “5.5.1 a Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments”, and “5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions” (INSTAT, 2025, no pagination).

In spring 2023, the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs, an integrated structure established initially in 2017 in Albania to achieve the SDGs and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹² was revised. Prime Minister’s Order No. 28 of 13 March 2023 re-established the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs. The revised Inter-ministerial Committee is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania, who is charged with the role of the National Coordinator for the SDGs.

In addition, the Assembly established a Subcommittee on Sustainable Development under the Commission on Economy and Finance in 2022 (Albania DCM No. 34/2022). Its area of responsibility

¹² Prime Minister’s Order No. 63, dated 12 May 2017, “On the establishment of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the achievement of the SDGs, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, was amended by Order No. 249, dated 28 December 2017, and repealed by Prime Minister’s Order No. 28 of 13 March 2023.

is economic and social development, sustainable economic growth, the realization of the objectives of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda (point II of the Decision). A meeting of this Subcommittee held in October 2022 considered its priorities in the context of the achievement of the SDGs. However, there was no clear indication that SDG 5.a.1 and SDG 5.a.2 in Albania were discussed (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, 2022a).

The National Strategy on Development and European Integration (2022–2030) sets a focus on land management. The Strategy acknowledges that challenges remain in addressing issues of landownership and in the provision of a broad range of services for women, young people and girls in rural areas (Albania DCM No. 88/2023). In parallel, the current National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030¹³ highlights “the need for addressing landownership issues or providing a wide range services” to rural women (Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2021, p. 23). It sets the objectives for improving legislation and ensuring equal rights of women through awareness-raising activities in rural areas and improving the property rights of women legislation focusing on the right to ownership of agricultural land. However, it lacks an emphasis on the need for collecting and monitoring of sex-disaggregated data (ibid., p. 31). While the economic empowerment of women and men is a key strategic objective, specific monitoring of the data relevant for Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 has not received significant attention in either strategy.¹⁴

3.1 National institutional setting in Albania for SDG monitoring and reporting relevant to SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2

The Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs

Prime Minister’s Order No. 28 of 13 March 2023 is the legal framework in force which establishes the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs. It establishes an overall integrated structure to achieve the SDGs and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Albania. The revised Inter-ministerial Committee, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania in the role of National Coordinator for the SDGs, is comprised of the following members:

- Minister for Europe and on Foreign Affairs
- Minister of Finance and Economy
- Minister of Education, Sport and Youth
- Minister of Health and Social Protection
- Minister of Infrastructure and Energy
- Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Minister of Tourism and Environment

¹³ Albania DCM No. 400/2021.

¹⁴ The sole gender-focused strategic monitoring indicator included in the National Strategy on Development and European Integration (2022–2030) is “Number of enterprises run by women, in % of the total”.

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- Minister of Interior
- The General Director of SASPAC.

There is no dedicated national institutional setting for SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 monitoring and reporting established in the country.

As per the Prime Minister's Order (No. 28 of 13 March 2023), the Inter-ministerial Committee's duties and responsibilities include:

- ensuring the government's dialogue with other parties and encouraging, promoting and supporting joint initiatives and actions to achieve the SDGs;
- discussing the guidelines for achieving the SDGs and submitting a report on progress to the Council of Ministers and the Strategic Planning Committee;
- approving plans for achieving the SDGs through the country's strategic framework and national programmes towards this aim, discussing the initial report and progress reports on the achievement of the SDGs for the country, and implementing measures, as well as presenting these to the Strategic Planning Committee;
- recommending necessary legislative measures to encourage dialogue and coordination at a high institutional level within the framework of policies contributing towards achieving the SDGs; and
- promoting and ensuring the planning and financing of measures through medium-term budget programming, as well as in cooperation with development partners, through the integrated planning system.

The Integrated policy making groups

In summer 2023, the Prime Minister issued Order No. 90, dated 1 August 2023, "For taking measures for the implementation of the broad sectoral/intersectoral approach, as well as the establishment and reorganization of the integrated sectoral/intersectoral mechanism", which established the Integrated policy making groups (IPMGs) in six sectors/inter-sectors, including the "Sustainable Regional and Rural Development" group directed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. The duty of the IPMGs is to ensure cooperation in the drafting of policies, their harmonization, and monitoring and reporting in each area, as well as to ensure broad dialogue between the government, independent institutions and development partners, among others, on policies for priority areas and sectors of particular importance. No meeting of the Sustainable Regional and Rural Development IPMG has been reported as yet.

The General Director of SASPAC

The Strategic Programming Department in SASPAC (Albania DCM No. 642/2021) functions as the secretariat of the Committee, substituting the Department for Development and Good Governance in the Prime Minister's Office. The secretariat manages the process for achieving the SDGs in the country. It is this secretariat that:

- ensures the management of the process for achieving the SDGs and the progress of the implementation of the measures and guidelines of the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs;
- coordinates the work between the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs and the technical working group for the SDGs, ensuring “the methodological and technical direction of the work for the preparation of the relevant instruments for the achievement of the SDGs and for the implementation measures” (ibid., p. 15318);
- harmonizes the work between “the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs, public institutions and partners for development, as well as social partners and other interested actors” (ibid., p. 15318);
- organizes the meetings and presents the issues for discussion, prepared in cooperation with ministries and other actors, at the Inter-ministerial Committee on the SDGs and for implementing measures; and
- performs any other tasks as assigned by the Committee.

The recent draft roadmap prepared by SASPAC for achieving the SDGs by 2030 sets measurable goals for indicators according to their respective United Nations-approved methodologies. In close collaboration with all national institutions and based on their assessment or projections, goals were set for 66 SDG indicators by 2030.

INSTAT

INSTAT in collaboration with UN-Women released “Men and Women 2023”, which includes a wide range of gender data. While the publication lists SDG 5.a.1 within the “minimum set of gender indicators”(INSTAT, 2023a, p. 159), relevant data are not included in the report. Therefore, it is necessary to collect and periodically update data for the relevant indicator.

During the same year, INSTAT also published a report on the state of play of 61 statistical SDG indicators. Relevant to SDG 5, the data for the following indicators were included: “5.5.1 a (percentage of seats held by women in the national parliament)”, “5.5.2 (percentage of women in management positions)” and “5.5.1 b (percentage of seats held by women in local governments)” (INSTAT, 2023b, p. 31–33).

It is worth mentioning that in 2020, INSTAT released the calculation of the Gender Equality Index (GEI), which measures “gender equality in six core areas: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health” (Ministry of Health and Social Protection and INSTAT, 2020, p. 1). The index is comprised of 31 indicators with reference to 2019 data. While INSTAT reported on some indicators for SDG 5, no data were published in reference to SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2.

The Assembly of the Republic of Albania

The Assembly of the Republic of Albania confirmed its will and commitment to the 2030 Agenda with unanimous approval on 4 December 2018 through the Resolution “On the objectives of the sustainable development of Agenda 2030 of the member states of the United Nations”. This resolution emphasizes the commitment of the Assembly to providing “support to governing institutions at the local level to implement and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals, acknowledging that they

are closer to the citizens and often have responsibility for important issues in achieving the SDGs”. In 2022, the Assembly held a meeting dedicated to the SDGs, however, no clear information was shared for Indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, SDG Sub-Commission, 2022b). The Assembly, through the Subcommittee on the Sustainable Development Goals, held two meetings in 2023 where it established a requirement to report SDG implementation in the country through quantitative data as well, using standard formats. There is no further information on the latest developments in this regard (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, SDG Sub-Commission, 2022a, 2022b).

Other stakeholders

As part of a commitment by all stakeholders to the process, on 24 October 2017 (United Nations Day, the annual anniversary of the United Nations Charter), an agreement was signed by “25 public and private universities in Albania” to play an “active role” in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Council of Ministers, 2018, p. 29). Other organizations from civil society and the private sector also agreed to actively participate in this process by integrating the SDGs into the business models and activities that they carry out in Albania. However, there is no report on the role of civil society stakeholders in achieving the SDGs in Albania.

4 Conclusions

4.1 The monitoring and reporting of SDG 5.a.1

Interviews with the key informants have highlighted that the following challenges and steps are required to facilitate Albania's reporting process on SDG 5.a.1:

- Various land title issues¹⁵ (including overlapping and outdated information about land cover) combined with lengthy court procedures have complicated the process of land registration. Even though the farm register is updated, "it is not fully aligned with the EU *acquis*" (European Commission, 2024, p. 87) hindering the alignment of the SDG 5.a.1 target with the NSDI (2021–2030) targets.
- INSTAT is the main producer of official statistics in Albania (Law No. 17/2018) and its programme is regularly updated (Law No. 30/2022). It carries out an agricultural census every 10 years and conducts annual agricultural surveys. The role of INSTAT and MARD in producing these statistics, along with their frequency, is clarified in the respective law (Albania DCM No. 53/2016). Currently, "agricultural statistics are partly aligned with the EU *acquis*" (European Commission, 2024, p. 59). However, so far, the data needed for SDG 5.a.1 have not been collected for several reasons pointed out by the respondents:
 - ◆ The last agricultural census was carried out in 2012, while the next one is planned for 2026. There have been some delays in this process, which means it has exceeded its expected timeframe.
 - ◆ The 2012 agricultural census used the concept of "land user" instead of "landowner", which complicates the distinction between these closely related concepts. No questions were included on respondents' landownership documents, making further references and distinction between land use and ownership challenging. There is an indication that the number of registered farmers with an individual tax number in Albania (70 000 farmers) is significantly lower than the total number of small farms.

¹⁵ This is a complex problem affected by different factors including various types of land documents (land acquisition acts, landownership certificates), lack of clarity of the land size in land documents due to faulty land registry maps, unclear ownership rights (when the registered owner was more than one person), lack of a transparent procedure to deal with overlapping cases, and corruptive property registration processes, among other factors.

- ◆ Annual agricultural surveys have been carried out since 2016 with a sample of 12 600 farms/units (randomly selected) or about 3.6 percent of the total population that has farms in rural areas/villages. The template of this survey has two specific rubrics: the first one collects data about land based on self-declaration, while the second one collects data about agricultural families disaggregated by gender. No questions on land title documents were asked. In addition, the results have not been published because of the incompatibility issues between the 2012 census weights and the administrative data.
- ◆ Sensitivity around landownership arises from deeply rooted discriminatory and exclusive community-bound practices, often embedded in the customary law, which further restricts women's land rights and hinders open discussions on the subject.
- Lack of reporting mechanisms relevant to landownership titles disaggregated by sex between MARD and INSTAT.

While the country currently lacks the requisite data to report on SDG Indicator 5.a.1, it is noteworthy that the coordinated efforts of GIZ and FAO in 2023 and 2024 have been crucial in supporting INSTAT. As part of this initiative, INSTAT was supported to pinpoint the most suitable survey source for acquiring essential data to facilitate reporting on SDG Indicator 5.a.1 and this led to the modification of an annual agricultural survey questionnaire that was selected as the best survey source to collect the data needed for this indicator. Subsequently, a pilot test involving 20 families from two villages – ten families in the north and ten in the south of the country – was conducted to evaluate the efficacy of the questionnaire.

The cooperation between GIZ, FAO and INSTAT underscores the commitment to advancing data collection initiatives and achieving the goals outlined in the Sustainable Development Agenda.

4.2 The monitoring and reporting of SDG 5.a.2

Interviews with the key informants revealed several challenges that hinder Albania's reporting process on SDG 5.a.2:

- There is limited awareness among national institutions about Target 5.a and its related Indicator 5.a.2, which affects the vigour of gender-responsive policy formulation, implementation and monitoring in the context of Albania.
- There is a lack of a designated lead institution responsible for coordinating the review and validation of the already completed draft questionnaire.

Along with the above-mentioned challenges, the indicator requires only legal expertise, making the reporting less resource-intensive in comparison to survey-based indicators. This advantage has not been fully leveraged. Addressing these gaps in coordination and awareness is essential to ensure timely and accurate reporting on progress towards gender-equitable land rights in Albania.

5 Recommendations

The findings from this assessment have contributed to the development of a set of recommendations to ensure monitoring and reporting of these two land-related SDG indicators.

On SDG 5.a.1

For INSTAT

- While INSTAT has indicated its readiness to incorporate a relevant module in the upcoming census based on the insights gained from the pilot survey conducted in autumn 2023 and capacity building, technical support should be sought from FAO to overcome the pending methodological challenges. It is advisable to include the module in the annual surveys to collect and report more updated information.

For FAO

- FAO should continue extending its technical support to INSTAT in view of the upcoming nationwide data collection.

For United Nations agencies

- UN-Women, FAO and other United Nations agencies should continue to raise the awareness of national institutions, ministries and other stakeholders on the importance of SDG 5, particularly the value of monitoring the evidence on women's access to and control over land.

On SDG 5.a.2

For SASPAC

- The review and revision of the SDG 5.a.2 questionnaire supports Albania's reporting process, presenting an opportunity to showcase recent legal reforms that align with the best practices tracked by the SDG 5.a.2 methodology. SASPAC should designate an institution for SDG 5.a.2 monitoring to lead the process of updating the prefilled 5.a.2 questionnaire.

For FAO

- FAO10 should support respective institutions (mainly SASPAC and the designated institution for SDG 5.a.2) in the process of updating and validating the prefilled 5.a.2 questionnaire, providing technical support to strengthen data collection and enhance data accuracy.

For United Nations agencies

- UN-Women, FAO and other United Nations agencies should continue to raise the awareness of national institutions, ministries and other stakeholders on the importance of SDG 5 and women's access to and control over land, and specifically Indicator 5.a.2 monitoring and reporting.

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Budapest, Hungary

With the financial support of the Italian Agency for
Development Cooperation

