EVERYWOMAN

THIS IS A PHOTOCOPY to Africa's everywoman, the continent's 500 million women who did not make it onto our list. They toil daily fetching water and firewood. They make ends meet and suffer the consequences when they don't. When food on the table is scarce, they bear the burden. When there is no money to pay for a midwife, they struggle to survive. These women are the weavers of Africa's breadbasket. They are the traders in its markets, the labourers in its fields and the entrepreneurs processing its fruits. According to a 2007 World Bank study, 80% of Kenya's food production labourers and 70% of agricultural workers were women — but were only 5% of its registered landholders.

Take women such as Suzanne Mutam, managing director of Muyisa Farming, Democratic Republic of Congo. She manages five hectares of land outside Kinshasa, where she grows maize, cassava and beans, employing five people regularly and another 20 occasionally. In 2010, Muyisa's turnover was $22,000. Her plan is to expand to another 70 hectares and then open her own shop in Kinshasa's market. She intends to mechanise her farm, expand pig breeding and install a butchery.

It is entrepreneurial everywomen like these who could really do most to change the continent's future. Some banks and microfinance companies are beginning to extend services to smallholder women farmers, but they will need much more financial help to buy tractors, processing equipment and better fertilizer. Women like these must no longer take a backseat. With better schooling, women will be able to introduce innovation in their fields, better market their produce, fight for land tenure, get their agendas onto the tables of politicians and create a better world for their daughters.